

# Wanna Go Swimming?

**By Gil Michel**

As a pastor of an inner-city church—and one who has been involved with the ministry of prayer in the United States for the past 30 years—I have been both encouraged and discouraged by the range of engagement I've seen by the local church. Let me highlight a Scripture that serves as a backdrop to my observations.

In Ezekiel 47:1–12, we witness a scene where the prophet is viewing water coming out from under the threshold of the temple, particularly near the altar. He sees a man measuring every 1,000 cubits, and he is astounded by the increasing depth to the water. The Lord is so intent on Ezekiel understanding the progression that He asks, “Son of man, do you see this?” (vs. 6).

## **The Progression**

The first stage of water is ankle-deep. This is the stage where many local churches may find themselves. They may not have an established prayer ministry and are elated if five people show up to pray for the needs of their congregation. After all, the experience of just getting wet is better than nothing.

The next level involves standing knee-deep in water. This can be a frustrating level because you don't feel like you're going very far in prayer. Perhaps a prayer rhythm hasn't really been established—and consistency is not always reality.

The next stage involves finding oneself in waist-deep waters. This stage is pivotal because it can determine whether a prayer initiative is impactful or just full of activity. This

is where staffing and scheduling becomes more involved, and the possibilities seem endless.

The final stage is described this way: “. . . and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one *must* swim” (Ezek. 47:5, nkjv, emphasis mine). Oh, that we would enter realms of prayer that are too deep for us—rather than sticking with experiences we can control!

I believe we are in a season that calls for the Church to enter realms where we *must* swim. When the Church engages in this level of prayer, there are two very clear benefits.

## **The Benefits**

The first benefit felt by this river of water is *fruitfulness*—a healing of the land, if you will. When the prophet returned and saw the effects of these waters, he realized a “great number of trees” had grown on the banks on either side of the river (vs. 7).

I understand that we don't always see the immediate effects of our prayers. Not every meeting generates the results like Peter experienced when an angel released him from prison in real time (Acts 12:12–14):

When this had dawned on [Peter], he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, “Peter is at the door!”

However, I believe that when we are given over to prayer and we relinquish full control to God, we enjoy a level of fruitfulness that just doesn't happen otherwise.

*Healing* is the second benefit when we allow God's waters to

rise. The passage tells us in verse 8 (nkjv) that “when it reaches the sea, its waters are healed.” The far-reaching influence of the prayers of the saints have tremendous power.

We, as a Church, must give God free reign. We must relinquish control. It will mean the healing of nations, governments, families, and souls.

Abandoning ourselves to the ministry of prayer creates a groundswell so poignant that it heals whoever is in its path.

## **Desperate Need of Our Land**

As I connect with intercessors and prayer ministry leaders, I see a rising tide emerging within the Church. People increasingly realize that we are thirsty, dry, and in need of Living Water.

In this Scripture passage, you would expect the deepest waters to be at the source. However, the waters got increasingly deeper as the prophet moved farther away from the altar (the place of intercession).

If we want to see change in the world of education, media, government, and other spheres of influence, then our humanistic approach of trying to change these centers will fall futile. We must swim in the source of the rivers that proceeds from the altar.

So, let's pray. Put on your swimming gear and let's swim in the ocean of God's power to bring fruitfulness and healing to a desperately needy world.

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