



**Women of Action  
July 2024**

**Paddling in Streams**

**Psalm 98:8**

Let the streams make sounds of joy with their hands; let the mountains be glad together,

**Isaiah 35:3-6**

<sup>3</sup> Strengthen the feeble hands,  
steady the knees that give way;

<sup>4</sup> say to those with fearful hearts,  
“Be strong, do not fear;

your God will come,  
he will come with vengeance;

with divine retribution  
he will come to save you.”

<sup>5</sup> Then will the eyes of the blind be opened  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

<sup>6</sup> Then will the lame leap like a deer,  
and the mute tongue shout for joy.

Water will gush forth in the wilderness  
and streams in the desert.

There are numerous references to water, streams and rivers in the scriptures. Images of comfort and calm, of thirst being quenched, of being washed clean, of baptism, of a new place of refreshment, of new life, the water of life! There are also images of streams turning into boiling oil (Isaiah 34:9), streams being made dirty (Ezekiel 32:2), and turning to blood (Psalm 78:44). Scripture is

indeed fascinating and keeps us on our toes - the imagery challenges us and as ever, opens doors as to how we can apply what we read to our lives.

What does the image of **a stream** conjure up in your imagination? What do you recall?

Childhood picnics? Paddling with friends? Stepping stones? Watching ducklings tentatively waddling towards the shallow water, unsure of whether to plop straight in and go for it? Trousers rolled up and skirts tucked in, toes avoiding the sharp stones and slippery pebbles covered in slimy green stuff? For most of us, thinking back, streams (unlike rivers) pose little threat, and are a place of play, of beauty and a summer spot to enjoy the great outdoors on a bright day.

One of my favourite 'stream' illustrations is Isaiah 35:6 – "...Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert". I love this line because of the verses that come before it.

A stream in the desert sounds like a complete contradiction. Deserts and wilderness places – these are often metaphors. Seasons and spiritual conditions, not just geographical places. By reading the verses before verse 6, you get this picture more clearly. Be strong! Do not fear!

I think of the times I have needed to be reminded of these words, that the Lord has the situation! Yet I have been seemingly stuck in my own sandy, dry and lonely desert. During these desert times I have been so desperate to paddle in a stream! To enjoy splashing in the summer sun, surrounded by the innocent joys of my childhood memories when I had so very little to worry about. Paddling, laughing with friends – sharing a sandwich made by my mum while watching my cousins on the stepping stones.

And yet... so often, when we are 'older' we can forget the places that brought us so much joy – and forget why they are used in Scripture. It is helpful when in our own little deserts (or big ones for that matter) – to remember the streams that God provides and the love we found in them.

The desert, although a dry place, is also the place that God is. Both geographically and spiritually. God is in the desert, just as much as He is in the stream. Indeed, things grow in the desert that would not grow anywhere else. Plants that are resilient to the scorching sun.

When I look back over the really tough times in my life, the 'wilderness and desert' places I found myself in – I know that God planted in me things that would not have grown had I been in any other place. I met new people, that I simply would never had met (who have been such a blessing in my life) had they not found me in the desert.

And now, I have new friends who I can go paddling with. And perhaps we can help each other over the stepping stones to share sandwiches together, on the other side.

Like the Psalm reminds us – leave the other 'stuff' to God, that is His domain – He WILL indeed save you, and there WILL be streams in the desert.

May God continue to bless you wherever you find yourself.

Jo