



*Streams in the Desert**

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Streams in the desert : 366 daily devotional readings / [compiled by]
L. B. Cowman : edited by James Reimann.

p. cm.

First published in 1925.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-310-28589-2

1. Devotional calendars. I. Cowman, Charles E., Mrs. (1870-1960)

II. Reimann, James.

BV4810.S8425 1997

242'.2—dc21

96-48454

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Interior design by Sue Vandenberg Koppenol

Printed in China

Introduction to the Updated Edition

October 24, 1995, is a date I will never forget. I was called out of a business meeting with the terrifying news that my second-born son, Aaron, had just had a massive brain hemorrhage while away at school. After having won a scholarship to college and spending only six weeks there, he had been found in a park near the school, calling out for help. After a number of people ignored him, a “good Samaritan” finally stopped to help. She called 911—saving him from certain death. Aaron had emergency surgery to remove a blood clot that had grown to the size of a tennis ball.

Since then Aaron has undergone months of therapy and has gracefully endured numerous changes in his life. It is continuing to take much time and hard work, but he is determined to regain what he has lost. And when I look back on the past year, I am also reminded of a number of other changes and trials our family has endured. Yet as a result, each of us has seen the sovereign hand of God at work.

Two days after my son’s surgery, Zondervan Publishing House tried to contact me to see if I would be interested in writing an updated edition of *Streams in the Desert*. They had no way of knowing that I was still sitting with my son in intensive care, and from the outset I have seen this timing as sovereign—not coincidental. As I have worked on this book God has ministered to me in a mighty way—meeting me at the point of my own personal need.

Streams in the Desert’s enduring power is the result of the selections being firmly based on the truth of Scripture. As the editor of the updated edition, I have endeavored to maintain the beauty of the original without altering its meaning, giving it the same care I gave the updated edition of *My Utmost for His Highest*, which I edited several years ago.

For those of you familiar with both *Streams in the Desert* and *My Utmost for His Highest*, you may be interested in knowing something of the tie between these two best-selling daily devotional books of all time. Not only were they originally published during the same time period (*Streams* in 1925, and *My Utmost* in 1927), but L. B. Cowman, who compiled *Streams in the Desert*, and Oswald Chambers had ministered together. They met when Cowman and her husband were missionaries to Japan and Chambers traveled there to preach. Also, both were greatly influenced by Charles Spurgeon, the

great English preacher of the late 1800s. Chambers came to a saving knowledge of Christ through the preaching of Spurgeon, and Cowman selected more of Spurgeon's writings for *Streams in the Desert* than those of any other person.

I trust you will enjoy reading *Streams in the Desert*. As mentioned before, God has ministered to me in a mighty way as I have worked on this book, and I would like to share one very special example.

One morning as I was reading the Scriptures and praying, all of the events of the past several months seemed to be crushing in on me. My family and I were dealing with a number of changes in our lives including the sale of a business we had owned for twenty years, my oldest son leaving home to join the Navy, and Aaron leaving for college. All this was then followed by Aaron's brain hemorrhage and surgery. The next month, my mother had to have emergency surgery, was hospitalized for thirty days, and my wife and daughter were in a car wreck and suffered whiplash. As I reflected on all of this, I found myself complaining to the Lord about my circumstances and all of the things that seemed to be afflicting my family and me.

After I finished my prayer time, asking God to remove all my afflictions, I resumed my work on *Streams in the Desert*. To my amazement, especially since I was not in the best frame of mind, the next devotion I worked on was the one for February 19. You may want to turn to that one now to see how providentially it applied to my situation. The message of this devotion was exactly what I needed to hear, and was a great encouragement to me that God certainly is not finished with me yet. And I could honestly say after working on that devotion that my heart was reopened to the words of Paul, who said, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances" (Phil. 4:11).

My prayer is that God would also minister to you through *Streams in the Desert* in a similar way. I know firsthand the power of Christ that lies within these pages, and the hope, encouragement, comfort, and strength that comes from His Word being applied to our hearts. I trust these insights into God's Word will be like "*Streams in the Desert*" to you during the difficult times of your life, for He has said, "Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert" (Isa. 35:6).

Jim Reimann
Editor

January 1

The land you are . . . to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end. (Deuteronomy 11:11–12)

Today we stand at the threshold of the unknown. Before us lies a new year, and we are going forward to take possession of it. Who knows what we will find? What new experiences or changes will come our way? What new needs will arise? In spite of the uncertainty before us, we have a cheerful and comforting message from our heavenly Father: “The LORD your God cares for [it]; the eyes of the LORD . . . are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.”

The Lord is to be our Source of supply. In Him are springs, fountains, and streams that will never be cut off or run dry. To those who are anxious comes the gracious promise of our heavenly Father: If He is the Source of our mercies, mercy will never fail us. No heat or drought can dry the “river whose streams make glad the city of God” (Ps. 46:4).

Yet the land we are to possess is a land of valleys and hills. It is not all flat or downhill. If life were always smooth and level, the boring sameness would weigh us down. We need the valleys *and* the hills. The hills collect the rain for hundreds of fruitful valleys. And so it is with us! It is the difficulty encountered on the hills that drives us to the throne of grace and brings the showers of blessing. Yes, it is the hills, the cold and seemingly barren hills of life that we question and complain about, that bring down the showers. How many people have perished in the wilderness valley, buried under its golden sand, who would have thrived in the hills? And how many would have been killed by the cold, destroyed or swept desolate of their fruitfulness by the wind, if not for the hills—stern, hard, rugged, and so steep to climb? God’s hills are a gracious protection for His people against their foes!

We cannot see what loss, sorrow, and trials are accomplishing. We need only to trust. The Father comes near to take our hand

and lead us on our way today. It will be a good and blessed New Year!

*He leads us on by paths we did not know;
Upward He leads us, though our steps be slow,
Though oft we faint and falter on the way,
Though storms and darkness oft obscure the day;
Yet when the clouds are gone,
We know He leads us on.*

*He leads us on through all the unquiet years;
Past all our dreamland hopes, and doubts and fears,
He guides our steps, through all the tangled maze
Of losses, sorrows, and o'er clouded days;
We know His will is done;
And still He leads us on.*

Nicholaus Ludwig Zinzendorf

January 2

The side rooms all around the temple were wider at each successive level. The structure surrounding the temple was built in ascending stages, so that the rooms widened as one went upward. A stairway went up from the lowest floor to the top floor through the middle floor. (Ezekiel 41:7)

Still upward be your onward course:

*For this I pray today;
Still upward as the years go by,
And seasons pass away.*

*Still upward in this coming year,
Your path is all untried;
Still upward may you journey on,
Close by your Savior's side.*

*Still upward although sorrow come,
And trials crush your heart;
Still upward may they draw your soul,
With Christ to walk apart.*

*Still upward till the day shall break,
And shadows all have flown;
Still upward till in Heaven you wake,
And stand before the throne.*

We should never be content to rest in the mists of the valley when the summit of Mount Tabor awaits us. How pure is the dew of the hills, how fresh is the mountain air, how rich the food and drink of those who dwell above, whose windows look into the New Jerusalem! Many saints are content to live like people in coal mines, who never see the sun. Tears sadden their faces when they could be anointed with heavenly oil. I am convinced that many believers suffer in a dungeon when they could walk on a palace roof, viewing the lush landscape and Lebanon. Wake up, believers, from your lowly condition! Throw away your laziness, sluggishness, coldness, or whatever is interfering with your pure love for Christ. Make Him the Source, the Center, and the One who encompasses every delight of your soul. Refuse to be satisfied any longer with your meager accomplishments. Aspire to a higher, a nobler, and a fuller life. Upward to heaven! Nearer to God! *Charles H. Spurgeon*

*I want to scale the utmost height,
And catch a gleam of glory bright;
But still I'll pray, till heaven I've found,
Lord, lead me on to higher ground!*

Not many of us are living at our best. We linger in the lowlands because we are afraid to climb the mountains. The steepness and ruggedness discourage us, so we stay in the mist of the valleys and never learn the mystery of the hills. We do not know what is lost by our self-indulgence, what glory awaits if we only have the courage to climb, or what blessings we will find if we will only ascend the mountains of God! *J. R. M.*

Too low they build who build beneath the stars.