



Out of the Pit Conference 2010 – Water in the Desert



Highlights

Well what a weekend it was. Steph and I flew from Sydney into Perth early Friday morning then drove seven hours across the desert to Kalgoorlie. This year we'd handed over the organisation of the conference to Graham 'Tomo' Thomson, so had the pleasure of turning up as a delegate!

We knew we'd be in for a treat because Tomo and the LMS team are the masters of hospitality, being very experienced with the organisation of the Diggers and Dealers convention, amongst other things: the largest mining convention in Australia.

And we were right. Things were organised to a tee, from name badges and pens to an airport shuttle, and a big buffet dinner on the Friday night which awaited us on arrival at the Miner's Hall of Fame.

We were welcomed by Rob Hicks, CEO of the Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission and Traditional Elder, Aubrey Lynch. Peter Van Der Val, Pastor of local fellowship 24-7 Metachurch then addressed us on the importance of communities that point to Jesus. Ron Mosby, Chairman, Kalgoorlie Boulder Chamber of



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Commerce and Industry shared how God had given him strength and wisdom to become the man he is today: a follower of Christ, an ever improving husband and father, and a successful businessman. Then we wrapped up the night with larrikin Dallas Atkins, who had a poke at all things religious and raised many an eyebrow!



We woke up the crack of dawn, Kalgoorlie style, and shared breakfast with everyone at the Family Centre. It was great to meet such a range of people from all over the place, including some school teachers and chaplains who are passionate about this vision because they see the influence miners have on their children and vice versa. I shared my story and the vision of Out of the Pit with the breakfast crowd, and I think there were a few nods of agreement, though you can never be sure whether they were just nodding off!

Back over the hall of fame, and we launched into worship with the worship team from Metachurch. It was great to sing those old hymns with everyone. There was such a diverse range of expressions of worship, from the more conservative hands in pockets, to hands spread to the heavens praying ecstatic utterances! I don't know about you, but I love this freedom, reassured that it is the same Holy Spirit working through us all. (1 Corinthians 12:6)

Allan Thomas from Kalgoorlie Baptist then preached on keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus and Heaven: being able to see the city from the garden, and our role in building this city. Father Dick Scallan brought us the Word – putting the lamp on the lampstand, and being upfront as Christians. (Luke 8:16). Bill Kirkland from Oasis Church exhorted us to keep living in fellowship rather than alone, and allowing God to bring us to our full potential. Graeme Wilmot of Wilmot Engineering shared some of the joys and challenges of running a busy engineering business and balancing family life.





Others that presented, included Diana Chapman from Challenge Newspapers, who has a heart to reach FIFO workers by handing out papers at Perth airport, Bill Rowlands from the International Miner's Mission talking about outreach to miners in the Philippines, Richard Goscombe from Bush Church Aid, who's setup a church and chaplaincy in frontier town, Wickham WA, Peter Palmer talked about Chaplaincy at Prominent Hill mine, the Gideon's International presented their global and local work, and the school chaplains were

also able to talk about some of their triumphs and struggles. Most of the churches were represented in town, and it was awesome to see most of the church pastors able to not only attend but participate in the event. What an incredible witness to the unity of the Holy Spirit.

Thanks must go to everyone who prayed, planned and participated. If anyone has not been acknowledged here, you have not been forgotten. Everyone contributed to make this weekend a great time.





Closing thoughts

The underlying theme of the conference was 'Water in the Desert', something that the Holy Spirit had been impressing on a number of us when planning the conference.

The two main uses of water are:

1. To quench our thirst
2. To cleanse ourselves

Jesus says to the woman at the well that he has 'living water' and by this he means, he can:

1. Quench our deepest thirst and longing to relate to our Heavenly Father well
2. Cleanse us from the sin and dirt that gets in the way of this.

Water molecules by themselves don't quench thirst or cleanse – they just make the atmosphere humid, sweaty and annoying! Water molecules, when they fall to the earth and come together, form streams, rivers and lakes: the source of all life.

Likewise Christians by themselves become isolated and ineffective, and this is not the way it is meant to be. If we've become separated from others through pride, we need to humble ourselves under God. If we've become isolated through circumstances, we need to pray to God to bring brothers and sisters along. This is the way it was always meant to be, and the way God intends to build his Church.

When people look on from outside and see Christians together, demonstrating the love of Jesus, the concepts of grace and love suddenly become tangible reality.

At Out of the Pit 2010, I saw a group of people from all four corners of this industry, from all seniority levels, from all denominations, warts and all, following one man; one God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is this a call to throw out doctrine? No. Is this a call to throw our discernment? No. Do we tolerate sin? No.

Are denominations ok? Yes. Is there a time to separate? For a season. Can we call wrong, wrong? Yes, as one wrong doer to another.

This is a call to follow Jesus Christ, laying down all any pride that puts us above one another, and seeing what he does in and through us, as we serve Him in the mining industry. This is a call to connect with one another, whether you are a pastor, chaplain, worker, manager. The sum of us are stronger than the individual.



We look forward to seeing you all next year at Out of the Pit 2011 – ‘Pure Gold’. Stay tuned for details on the website.

In the meantime, I pray every blessing for you and your families this Christmas.

In Jesus Christ

Richard Fortune



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