

Like Deer, We Run *continued from page 13*

We can look in the woods, at the end of a fishing rod or through the scope of a hunting rifle. We can look for it in a lover, in the Bible, in science, in a diary or photo album or road atlas.

But it is my belief that we would not even thirst unless water existed, something to satisfy our hearts and deepest needs.

One of my mentors, a French-Canadian priest in Chicago, tells me that one of the great perennial lies is that the world is a place of scarcity. "If we can learn to see as God sees," he whispers from behind thick glasses, "we see that we have been surrounded by abundance all along."

Yes, father. This is true. But aren't there different kinds of abundance?

The abundance of New York is not the abundance of Zagreb, Croatia. The abundance of Los Angeles is not the abundance of Jerusalem. Providence, Rhode Island is rich, Missoula, Montana is rich, Spokane and Seattle and Astoria, all rich in their own ways. Portland is rich.

Vernonia too. But some riches are hidden.

"Like the deer pants for streams of water..." one of the Bible's most beautiful songs begins. "... so my soul pants for you, O God."

We are like deer. We are thirsty creatures. With needs, instincts at every season of our lives. We all pant for a stream that can satisfy.

The stream for which I most deeply thirst—for which I have always thirsted—I can now name as God, the great Creator in whose likeness we are

made and from whose love we spring. From those depths all things flow—every good and wild creature, every good and wild longing, every good and wild home. In the deepest of ways, I believe we come from our Creator. In the wildest of ways, we run and pant, searching, moving, our every thirst pointing to the existence of some perfect Water, which we can never see until it has been tasted.

I see now that so many of us run like thirsty deer, searching for what we think we lack. The thing we feel we need. It would be a lie, a cop-out to say that it was there all along.

Sometimes it isn't. But it often is.

It is good to long for bigger, brighter, *other* things. To search for clear streams, for the Holy Grail, for that elusive something over the hill. It strengthens and expands us.

The poet T.S. Eliot, searching for something he could not name, once saw the ghost of a good man in a garden hedge. He then knew that

*...the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

The thing, you see, that we thirst for is often the thing we feel that we are running from.

Through the unknown, unremembered gate

Eliot continues,
*When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall...*

"Deep calls unto deep," the Bible's old song says, and we thirst at even the mention of that voice. But it



Paul at Hearst Castle, 2001

is a very rare creature who can desire something that does not exist.

Like deer, we run, heart-shaped prints trailing behind us. Life becomes a search for what we thirst for. But the search is not enough. Our exploring must have an end.

An end, like that of a deer, running by the longest river, listening for the roar of the hidden waterfall. The satisfaction of a good thirst that we can barely name.

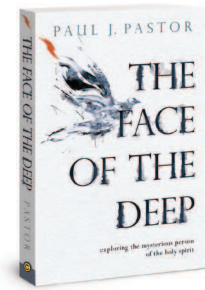
The deer prints stood by the river for a while. Mine covered them now, my oversized boots following them down to the stream, sinking into the mud. From where I stood on the spit, I tracked their hooves with my eye, saw a smeared spot where

one had slipped and scrambled, before leaping to join its friends on the bank.

I walked back up into the woods, leaving the river to flow, following their trail into the woods, over the hill.

I needed to see where they were going.

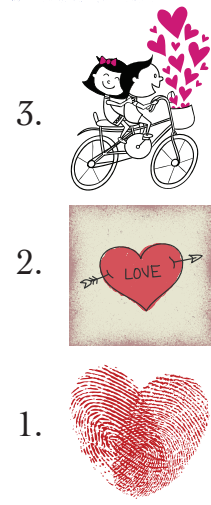
Paul J. Pastor is a former Vernonia resident and author of *The Face of the Deep: exploring the mysterious life of the Holy Spirit* (David C. Cook, 2016), available for pre-order at www.pauljpastor.com/book. Look for the first piece of this series, "Like Rain, We Fall," in the December 3rd edition of Vernonia's Voice and a third, "Like Salmon, We Return," in the February 4th edition. A Vernonia author event for Paul's book will be announced soon.



Valentine Classified Ads

Join us in wishing our loved ones a Happy Valentine's Day!
It's not ALL about Sweethearts... it's about LOVE!

Remember grandparents, parents, children, spouses, grandchildren, aunts & uncles,
nieces & nephews, best friends, pets, even your hunting buddy!







It's easy!
1. Write your message (30 words or less) _____



2. Choose your icon # _____
3. Send this ad and a check for \$5 for each classified to:
Valentine Classified PO Box 55, Vernonia, OR 97064
4. Deadline Monday, February 1st. Valentine Classifieds to be published in the February 4th issue.
Additional messages: _____

_____ Icon # _____
_____ Icon # _____



 Little Brown Bat, I'm so glad you are here to enrich my life. Thanks for being such a good friend.
 Trevor & Sophie, we love and miss seeing you! Your Vernonia Aunt & Uncle

 Mom, Thank you for always being there for me. I love you to the moon and back. Bill
 Monkey Puzzle, my love for you has such depth and meaning. Thanks for sharing this crazy life with me.

 Gabby & Olive, we make a good pack. Happy Valentine's Day.
 Laslo, you're the best playmate ever. I love you. Okemah