

# Cross Current



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## Water Colours



It looks like a rainbow melted into the river.

In a remote national park in southern Colombia is Cano Cristales, which means *crystal stream*. The river has a stark, rugged beauty all year long but, for a season, it explodes into a palette of unparalleled pigments that makes it the most

colourful body of water in the entire world.

For much of the year, Cano Cristales looks like most other rivers. A cool, blue current cascades over grey, granite rocks turned green by moss as the water cuts through the merciless terrain of the Andes.

During the dry season, when the radiant sun illuminates the riverbed, there isn't enough water to support the astonishing array of marine life native to Cano Cristales. Yet, when the rainy season comes, the abundant water moves fast and deep, hiding the river bottom and keeping the sun away from the mosses and algae who need it to survive.

But for a short time between those two extremes — when the river level is just right — a wide range of plants thrive in the sun and the clear water, erupting into a kaleidoscope of colour. That's why Cano Cristales is often called "the river of five colours" or "the river that ran away to paradise". It's awash with red, yellow, green, blue and purple. The water is so clean you can see white sand, 15 feet down.

Until recently, relatively few people witnessed the breathtaking spectacle, except for the photos all over the Internet. Colombia closed the region to tourists three years ago because of violence by antigovernment rebels, and environmental damage done by visitors. It didn't help that no roads lead to the river, which is a two hour walk from the



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by whitewash!**

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est town of La Macarena.

Now though, the area is open again and safe from rebel attack. Locals concede their reputation still scares people away. "But people who visit us are amazed," says resident Luseyda Amaya. "They come away enchanted by the beauty."

In the Bible, a river runs through it — from the Tigris and Euphrates in the Garden of Eden, to the River of Life in Revelation. It represents life, and eternal life. And just like the Cano Cristales, the river of *our* life tends to be one of extremes.

As we wend our way through this often inhospitable world, our spirits are sometimes so shallow we can't bring forth the full potential placed within us by God himself, even though the Son radiates around us. We need the Holy Spirit, "the living water" to course through the core of our beings, to bring life and colour to what is otherwise an ordinary existence at best. According to the Bible, the Spirit is a gift of God, given to those who seek him and respond to his love with gratitude and submission to his will.

But we must also avoid another extreme in which our zeal to embrace the spiritual obscures what Jesus wants to do in our lives. The truth is, some Christians become so heavenly minded they're no earthly good. Their love for others grows dark and cold under the depths of a faith that prizes religiosity above relationships, which often leads to pride masquerading as false humility, harsh judgement of others, and apathy towards the needs of "sinners".

Instead, we need to find that perfect balance where the Holy Spirit waters and nurtures our souls while letting the warmth, illumination and power of the Son reach to the depths of who we are and desperately want to become. That balance will bring spectacular spiritual growth, colouring our lives, not only with the many hues of inner holiness but also with the rich, vibrant tones of personal fulfilment that springs from service to others.

It's hard to keep that balance, so we have to be candid about our weakness and inconsistency. Even then, our Christian reputation will scare some people away. But when others see the Son and Spirit working upon us, they'll be enchanted by the beauty within. So let God bring out *his* true colours.

*Rick Gamble*

