



World Vision®



Living water

Six weeks of reflection and activities from the
book of John for groups and individuals

Living water



“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters.”
—*Isaiah 55:1*

Introduction

Life began with water. Before the first day of creation, water covered the earth—and God’s Spirit covered the water (Genesis 1:2).

Life depends on water—which is another way of saying that life depends on God, since it is God who gives water. When Hagar and her son Ishmael were exiled to the desert, God showed them a well (Genesis 21:8–21). When the Israelites wandered a barren wilderness, God led them from one source of water to the next (Exodus 15:22–27). When there was none to be found, He brought water from the sunbaked rock (Exodus 17:1–7).

God used water to rescue people from oppression and injustice. The baby Moses escaped genocide among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. Years later, as he led a nation of just-freed slaves through the Red Sea, the waters crashed down behind them on 400 years of oppression. In John’s Gospel, which we’ll explore further in this series, Jesus described salvation as being “born of water and the Spirit” (3:5).

It’s no surprise that water features prominently in the Bible, since all the Bible’s stories took place in part of the world where access to water could not be taken for granted—as in many parts of the world today.

Even a relatively short period without water exposes the extent of our fragility. Without water, flesh and blood turn to dust. For we are dust, and to dust we will return (Genesis 3:19).

But there is hope for this sobering reality: God is the Giver and Sustainer of all things. He is our true source of refreshment. He brings life to dust. God sent Jesus to unleash streams of living water within us (John 7:37–38), just as He unleashed water from a rock in the desert. He wants people to experience fullness of life—in this world and the next.

Over the next few weeks, we'll explore what it means to see Jesus as "living water," looking at six stories from the Gospel of John. We'll see how God invites us to be part of His thirst-quenching endeavor, sharing the gift of water with people in need, both physically and spiritually.

We can be renewed when we drink—and share—God's living water.



WEEK 1

Water is life



In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD's house and will water the valley of acacias.

—*Joel 3:18*

Read the following reflection on John 2 and the intro to the rest of the stories. Spend a few moments reflecting on the discussion questions on your own or with your small group.

JESUS TURNS WATER INTO WINE (*John 2:1–11*)

At first glance, it seems strange that Jesus' first recorded miracle was so ... frivolous. Turning water into wine? At a party where the guests may have had enough to drink already (2:10)?

Initially, Jesus seemed to feel the same way. He appeared to dismiss His own mother's request, saying, "My hour has not yet come" (2:4). We don't know why he was reluctant to start performing miracles and displaying His godly power.

Perhaps out of deference to His mother, Jesus intervened after all. He instructed the servants to fill six stone jars. These weren't just any jars. They were ritual purification jars; the water they normally held was used to wash away impurity. In Jesus' hands, they served an altogether different purpose: bringing new life to the party.

Jesus' miracle made no more sense to the master of ceremonies than it does to us. It was extravagant. Gratuitous. Excessive. And that's the point. The jars of choice wine became a picture of God's abundant grace, illustrating that Jesus did not come just to meet our spiritual needs. He came that we might flourish in every way. He came to offer hope and joy, for this life and the next.

The God who became a man to save us from sin and death wants us to experience life right here, in our bodies.

At Cana, Jesus transformed a symbol of spiritual purification into an even more powerful symbol of new life—abundant, overflowing, and all-encompassing.

TURNING WATER INTO LIFE

Over the next six weeks, we'll read five stories from around the world that highlight the perils of life without clean water, as well as the way water can transform an entire community.

Globally, 771 million people lack access to clean drinking water.

In the developing world, people walk an average of 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) each day to find water that's often dirty and makes them sick. It's mostly women and girls who make this dangerous and time-consuming journey. That means girls miss school to get water for their families, which holds them back from reaching their full potential.

As we'll see in these stories, the lack of clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) can mean the difference between life and death in water-starved areas around the world.

Some of the people we'll meet:

Krishna

A student in India who's forging a bright future thanks to clean water.

Mrs. Balkissa

A midwife in Niger who had to help deliver babies without any water at the health facility.

Vivian

A girl in western Kenya where clean water has changed societal norms that kept women and girls back from reaching their God-given potential.

Genrri

A Honduran coffee farmer who's rallied his community to protect creation so clean waters flow freely.

Ireen

A girl in Malawi whose long walk for water once determined her future—until her family got clean water close to home.

WATER FACT

More than 30 children under 5—the number in an average U.S. classroom—die every hour from diarrhea caused by contaminated water, poor sanitation, and unsafe hygiene practices.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time reflecting on this week's passage using the following questions.

1. What surprises you about the story of Jesus turning water into wine?
2. Why do you think it's significant that this is Jesus' first miracle?
3. How does this story challenge some of the perceptions we might have of Jesus?

4. What do you think this miracle says about the kind of life Jesus wants people to experience?
5. Since we are called to imitate Jesus' example (John 15:11–12), what can we learn from His miracle at Cana about serving others?

DAILY MEDITATIONS

Take a few moments each day to meditate on the following Scripture passages:

Monday: Psalm 33:6–9

In this song of praise, the author declares God's power over the waters of creation.

Tuesday: Psalm 107:33–38

The psalmist praises God's ability to turn deserts into springs. Jesus exhibited a similar power when He turned everyday water into choice wine.

Wednesday: Isaiah 35:1–7

Gushing springs of water feature prominently in Isaiah's vision of renewal.

Thursday: Isaiah 55:1–3

Isaiah invites the exiles of Judah to come to God for refreshment.

Friday: Jeremiah 31:7–12

God promises to bring His people safely home, leading them alongside streams of life-giving water.

WEEKLY ACTIVITY: AWARENESS

Water gauge

The average person in America uses between 80 and 100 gallons of water per day, compared to just 5 gallons per person in some parts of the developing world. How do you compare?

Track your daily water consumption this week using the simple chart on the next page. Here are some basic guidelines for estimating your usage, based on data from the U.S. Geological Survey and the Environmental Protection Agency:

Bathroom faucet (washing hands, brushing teeth, shaving, etc.):
New faucets: 1 gallon per minute
Old faucets: 2 gallons per minute

Toilet:
New toilets: 1.5 gallons per flush
Old toilets: 3 gallons per flush

Bathing:

New showerheads: *2.5 gallons per minute*
 Old showerheads: *4 gallons per minute*
 Filled bathtub: *36 gallons*

Laundry:

High-efficiency washing machine:
25 gallons per load
 Traditional washing machine:
40 gallons per load

Dishes:

Dishwasher: *20 gallons per load*
 Hand washing, running tap: *20 gallons*
 Hand washing, closed tap: *10 gallons*

Outdoor watering: *2 gallons per minute*

Drinking: *8 glasses = ½ gallon*

Use this chart to log your water usage in the categories shown, estimating the number of gallons used per day for each. Note any additional uses not listed above, like cooking and animal care.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Bathroom faucet							
Toilet							
Showers							
Laundry							
Dishes							
Outdoor watering							
Drinking							
Cooking							
Animal care							

A new identity



“To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.”

—*Revelation 21:6*

Read the following reflection on John 4 and the story of Krishna. Spend a few moments reflecting on the discussion questions on your own or with your small group.

JESUS AND THE WOMAN AT THE WELL (*John 4:4–42*)

Typical man, she might have thought when Jesus asked her for some water. In the ancient world, collecting water was women’s work—as it still is in many parts of the world today.

But something about Jesus’ request seemed odd to the woman at the well: He was Jewish, while she was Samaritan.

Everything about her would have sent most respectable Jewish rabbis running the other way. Her ethnicity. Her gender. Her reputation. Certainly, there was no love lost between Samaritans and Jews. Most Jews viewed their northern neighbors with contempt ... and Samaritans returned the favor. Not 20 years before the woman’s path crossed Jesus’, some of her countrymen had desecrated the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

But it’s a good bet she had more immediate concerns weighing on her mind that day. Her string of five marriages suggests she wasn’t used to men treating her with dignity and respect. Likely, she was marginalized by her peers as well because of her relationship track record.

None of this deterred Jesus. One minute He was asking for a drink; the next, He was offering to give her “living water.” Imagine her shock. Since when do men offer to get women water, living or otherwise?

LIVING WATER

In the ancient world, “living water” referred specifically to a source of flowing water—such as a stream or river—that offered cool refreshment. Such waters were contrasted with “dead” or stagnant waters. “Living water” became a powerful image for the life God offers.

In the exchange that followed, Jesus utterly transformed the woman’s identity. He treated her like an equal, engaging in a lengthy conversation—the longest recorded dialogue anyone has with Jesus in the Gospels. He restored the woman’s dignity, refusing to cast her aside when the unsavory bits of her past came to light.

From that day forward, she was no longer just a “woman at the well.” She became one of the very first evangelists—one of the first people in John’s Gospel to tell others about Jesus. Many of her fellow Samaritans put their faith in Jesus because of her influence (4:39).

The woman at the well received the living water Jesus came to offer. And she and her community were never the same.

BRIGHTER FUTURES IN INDIA: KRISHNA

Today, like in Jesus’ day, entire communities can be transformed with the gift of water. And it can make all the difference for girl’s futures. At Krishna’s village in Pratapgarh, life centers around water. People of all ages gather at the village’s hand pump and well. “Children struggle to attend school on time because sometimes they don’t have water at home and collecting water from the well takes up a lot of the time. They sometimes miss school because of that,” says Ram Lal, a World Vision India staff in the community.

In the dry months, from February to June, Krishna’s village of around 100 households depends on one well—the rest of the hand pumps and wells dry up. Krishna is in the 10th grade and has to walk over a mile to school. For a 15-year-old student, her daily chore of getting water was burdensome. “We walked to the well three to four times in a day. I used to spend around two hours a day getting water,” says Krishna.

For Krishna’s mother, Rekha, it seemed like their lives revolved around water. Rekha and her husband, Karulal, are farmers. They grow soybean, maize, wheat, and other crops, and face water shortages for farming and for their households’ needs as they raise five children.

Krishna’s morning chores included collecting two to three buckets of water for the family’s needs. But during the dry season, when the well gets crowded, she’s missed school while waiting in line.

To help with these water challenges, World Vision India provided 200 families in Pratapgarh with an innovative solution: water wheels. These have a 45-liter capacity container attached to a handle that can be pushed or pulled easily, even by children.

This simple apparatus solves many issues Krishna and girls like her faced. The main well is deep and poses a risk for both children and adults. Reducing the number of visits reduced that risk. “It’s easy to push this container, so we don’t have to put in a lot of effort. Before, we were able to carry only 10 to 15 liters at a time. It saves us a lot of time and energy. Now we can get water two times a day, and it’s enough,” says Rekha.

Now, Krishna and her siblings have more time for studying and playing. Krishna is sponsored through World Vision, and she’ll be the first in her family to attend college. Her parents never even had the chance to attend school. She has also been part of World Vision India’s children’s club since it began in 2011.

The village's overall transformation is notable. "Before, girls dropped out of school after eighth or ninth grade and were married off. Boys were encouraged to study but not girls. This has changed today. There are girls from the children's club studying in 11th grade," says Krishna.

Collecting water is still a routine chore. But with the water wheel, life has been much easier for Krishna and her family. "I'm getting more time to study now. I want to be a government officer. I know it will take a lot of effort, but I want to dream," says Krishna. With water more accessible, Krishna's future is bright.

WATER FACT

Around the world, about 771 million people don't have access to clean water within 30 minutes of their home.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time reflecting on this week's content using the following questions.

1. Think back on your own spiritual journey. In what ways has Jesus transformed your identity?
2. What does "living water" signify to you?
3. Imagine you had to spend an hour or more each day just collecting water for yourself and your family. What other activities would you have to sacrifice? How would those sacrifices impact your overall well-being?
4. For Krishna, the lack of water threatened to derail her future. What are some other ways that poverty and deprivation—whether it's hunger, a lack of economic opportunity, or injustice against women—might make it harder for people to realize their God-given potential?

DAILY MEDITATIONS

Take a few moments each day to meditate on the following Scripture passages:

Monday: Genesis 24:1–27

Read the story of another man’s encounter with a woman at a well—and the extraordinary kindness she demonstrated.

Tuesday: Exodus 15:22–26

In this story, God miraculously transformed bitter, undrinkable water into something fresh and life-giving for His people wandering in the wilderness.

Wednesday: Numbers 19:17–21

Notice how important fresh water—that is, “living water”—was in ancient Jewish cleansing rituals.

Thursday: Zechariah 14:1–9

Living water plays a key role in Zechariah’s vision of Jerusalem’s renewal.

Friday: Revelation 7:13–17

In John’s vision of the end, God forever satisfies the thirst of those who endure tribulation for Him, safely guiding them to “springs of living water.”

WEEKLY ACTIVITY: EXPERIENCE

Five in 24

Choose one day this week to budget your water, using only 5 gallons in a 24-hour period. At the start of the day, fill a clean bucket with 5 gallons (about 20 liters) of tap water. That’s how much water the typical person uses each day in many parts of the developing world. Use only this water for all your drinking, washing, cooking, and cleaning needs that day. If multiple members of your family choose to participate, allocate 5 gallons of water for each of them.



Water for the whole person



In their hunger you gave them bread from heaven and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock ...

—*Nehemiah 9:15*

Read the following reflection on John 5 and the story about the Kayan community. Spend a few moments reflecting on the discussion questions on your own or with your small group.

THE HEALING AT THE POOL (*John 5:1–15*)

Like the jars of water that Jesus turned to wine in John 2, the waters of Bethesda were normally meant for purification. The pool was likely a *mikveh*, a Jewish ritual bath where people ceremonially washed away their impurity.

But this *mikveh* went beyond the norm. The waters of Bethesda were thought to have healing powers. People with all sorts of ailments would gather, like the disabled man in John 5—all hoping for the same thing, all desperate for a miracle when they entered the pool. Whether anyone was ever healed by the waters or whether it was a folk legend that kept people coming to the pool, we don't know. One thing is certain: the disabled man in this story had found no relief for his ailment from the waters at Bethesda.

When Jesus arrived, the disabled man barely looked up. He was fixated on the waters, which lay just beyond reach. The pool and its supposedly curative powers were all he could see—that and the crush of people who always managed to get there first. The man didn't realize that if he would simply turn around, he'd be face to face with Living Water incarnate. He didn't realize that the One standing next to him had the power to heal any infirmity.

Even after Jesus' miracle, the man had no idea who had healed him (5:13). It was only after another not-so-chance encounter in the temple that his eyes were truly opened. Now that he was healed, he could see Jesus for who He really was and understand that it was Jesus who had made him well.

LIFE-GIVING WATERS FOR MOMS AND BABIES: MRS. BALKISSA

Water is still one of the most important means of health for people around the world. A few years ago in Niger, the community of Kayan, had no access to clean water. Imagine these living conditions. Now imagine giving birth here.

The health clinic had no water to help women giving birth. Pregnant women had to haul their own water when they came to the clinic to deliver their babies.

“After childbirth, when the water brought by the women was not enough, which was very common, I had to wait for the arrival of another jerrycan of water,” Mrs. Balkissa, the community’s midwife, says. “The case that saddened me the most was one night when a woman gave birth at 3 a.m. and there was blood everywhere, but until 10 a.m. the room was not cleaned since they had no water.”

In rural areas of Niger like Kayan, when women give birth they have to bring rags with them to clean themselves—and the clinic. When Kayan’s clinic lacked water, there was no way to wash these dirty rags, let alone water for the mother and baby to bathe. Often the mothers returned home without being able to clean themselves.

In December 2021, World Vision equipped the health center with a water supply, latrines, and garbage cans. Now the health center and the community have access to clean water.

“With the availability of water there is no longer a problem. Women even come in greater numbers to give birth. In the courtyard and in each room there are [water] pumps. It makes the work easier,” says Mrs. Balkissa. “I thank World Vision very much for this very important achievement for the community.”

Fati Djibo, a 37-year-old mother who recently gave birth to her eighth child, confirms the change.

“I’ve been living here in Kayan for 22 years. I did all my prenatal consultations at the Kayan health center. During my previous births, we had to go to the city to get the water. I remember that at my third delivery we went to fetch water late at night, but we didn’t find any, so we had to leave with the dirty clothes [for] home,” she says.

Fati says that women didn’t want to give birth at the health center—especially at night—because of the lack of water. “There is no woman who would like to give birth at home, but if labor starts, especially in the middle of the night, women don’t want to come to the health center to give birth,” she says. “They see the distance they will have to travel by cart or on foot to finally run out of water after giving birth. So they prefer to stay at home.”

Fati’s eighth delivery was completely different. “I am very happy because this birth was very easy for me and for the one who accompanied me. Just after giving birth, we washed the clothes and cleaned the room,” says Fati.

Having water at the clinic means that new mothers like Fati know that they’ll be able to bathe after giving birth. It makes women eager to go to the clinic for their deliveries.

“I thank World Vision very much [and hope] that God rewards them for this help because now women want so much to come and give birth in our health center because they are sure to be in good conditions,” Fati says. “Really, the whole village as well as the neighboring villages are happy because we all enjoy this water.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time reflecting on this week's content using the following questions.

1. In John 5, it seems as if Jesus' presence barely registers with the disabled man. Why do you think that is?
2. The story in John 5 ends on an abrupt note. Jesus gives the man a terse warning, and the man tells the religious leaders it was Jesus who made him well. Do you think his heart was transformed as a result of his encounter with Jesus?
3. Imagine you had no access to water when you were sick, like the people of Kayan before their community got water. How might this deprivation affect your spiritual condition?
4. What does the Kayan community's story show about the connection between our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs? Why do you think it's important to minister to the whole person when helping others?

DAILY MEDITATIONS

Take a few moments each day to meditate on the following Scripture passages:

Monday: 2 Kings 5:1–14

Read the story of how God used another body of water, the Jordan River, to heal someone.

Tuesday: Ezekiel 47:1–12

In this vision, Ezekiel sees a river that freshens the toxic waters of the Dead Sea—a powerful image of the transformation God offers.

Wednesday: Matthew 14:13–21

Notice how Jesus spends all day healing people and then, instead of sending them away, satisfies their physical hunger.

Thursday: Luke 4:14–21

Addressing people's immediate needs—proclaiming good news for the poor and offering freedom for prisoners, sight for the blind, and liberation from oppression—is central to Jesus' ministry.

Friday: James 2:14–26

According to James, faith is meaningless when not accompanied by a commitment to actively meeting the needs of others.

WEEKLY ACTIVITY: EDUCATION

Water filter

Supplies needed:

- Dirty water
- Sand (1 cup)
- Hammer
- 2-liter plastic bottle
- Charcoal (2-3 cups)
- Coffee filter
- Glass jar
- Scissors or knife

Thanks to the near-ubiquitous presence of water treatment plants in the developed world, most of us never have to worry about contaminants in our water. But millions of people around the world live with a different reality. The water they use for drinking, cooking, and cleaning is polluted with contaminants, both visible and invisible.

This activity will demonstrate on a small scale what goes into filtering dirty water. To begin, collect some dirty water from outside. (If there's none nearby, you can add dirt to some tap water.)

Then make your homemade filter. Using the scissors or knife, carefully cut the bottom off of your 2-liter plastic bottle and poke a small hole in the middle of the cap. Turn the bottle upside-down so the cap is on the bottom. (You may need to set the bottle in a larger container to keep it upright.) Position the coffee filter in the bottom of the bottle. Crush the charcoal into small pieces using the hammer and pour it into the coffee filter. Then carefully pour the sand on top of the charcoal.

Hold your homemade water filter over the glass jar and slowly pour the dirty water into the filter. When you've poured half of the water, stop. Take a moment to compare the water before and after filtration. Which would you rather drink?

IMPORTANT NOTE

*This activity is for illustrative purposes only. **Do NOT drink the filtered water**, as it may still contain contaminants. Dirty water goes through several more steps of purification before it's safe to drink.*

Troubled waters



Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me.

—*Psalm 69:1–2*

Read the following reflection on John 6 and the story about Vivian and her community. Spend a few moments reflecting on the discussion questions on your own or with your small group.

JESUS WALKS ON WATER (*John 6:16–24*)

When water is clean and calm, it can bring life and refreshment. But water in other contexts can just as easily cause harm.

People in the ancient world looked with wariness upon the ocean. In their stories, the sea represented chaos and judgment. It was sometimes called “the abyss” or simply “the depths.”

It took a good deal of courage to venture out onto these waters—and for good reason. The sea was unpredictable. Even a relatively small lake, like the Sea of Galilee, could be transformed without warning from still waters into a churning tempest.

That’s what happened when the disciples set out for Capernaum by boat after Jesus fed the five thousand. Not only did the rough waters threaten to swamp their vessel; a strong headwind kept them from advancing, effectively trapping them in the storm (see Matthew 14:24).

Even a seasoned fisherman like Peter must have found it difficult to maintain courage. So, when a shadowy figure appeared, walking toward the boat among the waves, the disciples were understandably terrified. Their shock only increased when they realized who it was.

The storm died down the minute Jesus climbed aboard (see Mark 6:51). The boat immediately reached its destination. The disciples were amazed, and rightfully so. They were in the presence of One with power to calm the troubled waters. Standing in front of them was God in the flesh, who had come to rescue people from the troubles of sin and death.

Jesus invites us to share in this kingdom work, to come to the aid of people trapped in life’s storms. In the preceding story, when the crowds around Jesus grew faint with hunger, He turned to the disciples, saying, “You give them something to eat” (Mark 6:37).

When we see others caught in the storms of life, we must not look the other way. We must not act as though it's someone else's problem. Jesus calls us to embody His presence to those in need—to walk through the storm with them and help them safely reach the shore.

A SAFER COMMUNITY FOR GIRLS: VIVIAN

At midday in Mongorion Village, Kenya, the heat from the scorching sun is intense. Cows moo and goats bleat as herds come home to water. Vivian, 12, is ready to water her family's herd, one of her easy chores. The task is so simple that she only opens a tap and watches water flow.

"I have my day well planned out," Vivian says. "I don't struggle to do anything or even leave home. With the availability of tap water in our home, I can cook, clean, and perform all my daily chores with ease as well as find time in the day to play with my peers and even do my homework."

But Vivian's community hasn't always enjoyed these benefits—this area was once a place where getting water posed life-threatening danger to girls like her. "It's interesting how things have changed," says Irene, Vivian's mother. "To imagine that you have water this close like my daughter does was a pipe dream. I used to wake up in the wee hours of the morning to start the tortuous 4-mile journey to the River Kapedo downstream to fetch water. Depending on luck, that is if I happened to find few people queuing, I could make a return trip back home early to prepare breakfast for my older children going to school." But even after coming home, the water wasn't enough for a household's needs, as Irene only carried a 20-liter container. She had to continue this cycle of looking for water the whole day to make sure she had enough water for the family.

Girls of Vivian's generation, in contrast, don't know what it means to lack water, and they can barely comprehend the challenges their mothers endured in search of the precious commodity. Growing up as a girl in this community used to be downright dangerous. Irene remembers, "We shouldered the responsibility of looking for water early in life and doing all manner of household chores. Our community looked down upon girls and nobody cared about education for girls. We were considered beasts of burden. Most of my peers were married off early in life, almost the same age of Vivian." In fact, she says, "It was dangerous for them, as men would waylay girls on the roads, abduct [them], and force them into marriage—something that the society accepted as normal. All this happened as most girls fetched water."

When a 45-mile piped water project was completed by World Vision 12 years ago—the same year Vivian was born—everything changed. The mammoth water project was handed over to the community to manage, and the water is still flowing strong, serving thousands of people like Vivian's family. Women like

WATER FACT

As of 2019, almost one in three schools in developing countries lacked clean drinking water for students, and more than four in 10 lack handwashing facilities with soap and clean water.

Irene rejoiced—the days of facing physical harm, struggling to get contaminated water from riverbeds and shallow wells, and spending up to an hour to fill one 20-liter container were over.

Women now have time to spend in economic activities like gardening or starting small businesses instead of looking for water the whole day. And Vivian's generation doesn't have to fear a simple chore.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time reflecting on this week's content using the following questions.

1. Think back to a stormy period in your life—maybe an illness, job loss, or other trial. How did Jesus make His presence known to you “in the storm”? How did others embody Jesus' presence to you?
2. What experiences of your own have made you more attuned to those in difficult situations? How do you respond differently as a result?
3. What do you think it means to walk alongside someone through the storms of life?
4. If getting a basic necessity of life like water put you at risk of harm, how would you feel? How would it affect your relationship with God and with others?

DAILY MEDITATIONS

Take a few moments each day to meditate on the following Scripture passages:

Monday: *Psalm 69:13–15*

The psalmist begs God to rescue him from “the miry pit” and the deep waters of the abyss.

Tuesday: *Psalm 107:28–31*

The psalmist praises God for His power to calm the storm and still the waves, using language that foreshadows Jesus' miracle in Mark 4:35-41.

Wednesday: *Isaiah 25:4, 6–8*

Anticipating God's plan to renew the world, Isaiah praises Him for providing shelter from life's storms.

Thursday: *Jonah 1:1–15*

Jonah runs from God's call to help save Nineveh from a storm of judgment—and runs right into trouble himself.

Friday: *Mark 4:35–41*

The disciples face yet another storm at sea. This time Jesus is in the boat with them ... asleep.

WEEKLY ACTIVITY: ADVOCACY

Bottled water

Fill a clear reusable water bottle with water and add dirt until the water is noticeably brown. Carry this bottle with you everywhere for an entire day—to work, school, while running errands, at church, etc.

When people ask about the dirty water, tell them you're carrying it to raise awareness for those who don't have access to clean water, as well as World Vision's efforts to provide sustainable access to water, sanitation, and hygiene behavior training. Share the following points:

- About 771 million people around the world don't have access to clean water.
- Every day, more than 800 children under 5 die from diarrhea caused by contaminated water, poor sanitation, and unsafe hygiene practices.
- World Vision is the leading nongovernmental provider of clean water in the developing world, reaching one new person every 10 seconds and three more schools every day with clean water.

To learn more about World Vision's WASH work, visit worldvision.org/water.



All who thirst



Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

—*Psalm 107:8–9*

Read the following reflection on John 7 and the story about Genrri. Spend a few moments reflecting on the discussion questions on your own or with your small group.

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER (*John 7*)

To the ancient Jews, “living water”—fresh, flowing water—was an important symbol of the life God offers.

Since the Israelites’ story began in a desert, they knew the importance of water—and the perils of having none. During their 40-year sojourn in the wilderness of Sinai, God miraculously provided water for the entire community.

On one occasion, He purified a bitter spring, effectively turning “dead water” into “living water” (Exodus 15:22–26). Two other times, He caused water to flow from a rock (Exodus 17:1–7; Numbers 20:1–13). Without these interventions, the Israelites would likely have died in the desert.

Later generations commemorated their ancestors’ journey by observing Sukkot, also known as the Feast of Tabernacles. Sukkot was one of three pilgrimage festivals during which Israelites would travel to Jerusalem. Families would live in temporary shelters for a week, in remembrance of the tents their ancestors lived in for 40 years.

Each day of Sukkot, priests would draw water from the Pool of Siloam and carry it back to the temple, passing through the Water Gate. They would walk around the altar as the choir chanted psalms, then pour out the water as an offering to God. An even more elaborate version of this ceremony took place on the last day of the festival, when the priests would proceed around the altar seven times.

It was at this moment—the high point of the festival—that Jesus shouted His invitation to come and drink living water from Him. This scene is the capstone to all the other scenes involving water in John’s Gospel—the water turned to wine, the water from the well, the waters of Bethesda, and the stormy waters of Galilee. Each story is another step toward the big revelation at Sukkot: that Jesus is the Giver of new life. The river that brought life to the garden in Genesis 2:10–14 and the river that flows through the eternal city of God in Revelation 22:1–2—is Jesus, bringing life and hope to all.

WATER THAT HEALS: GENRRI

“I always say when you want, you can,” Genrri Herrera Ramirez says. This determined streak has put him on a journey of restoration—ecosystem restoration in his home village, that is. Describing his Honduran coffee-farming community 25 years ago, he says, “We needed water, but not just water. We needed water suitable for human consumption. We needed to protect our community. It was a huge mess of contamination, and we couldn’t pass this down to our future generations.”

Genrri’s story starts in the mid-1990s, when his town, San Marcos, began growing too fast to keep up with the area’s existing infrastructure. When the community decided to use the nearby Río Hondo as their water source, leaders quickly realized the need to protect the river from surrounding farming contaminants. Though the town bought a piece of land, and some protective measures were taken initially, it wasn’t enough. Fires and unrestrained logging exacerbated widespread deforestation, and the community just couldn’t get enough clean water for their increasing needs.

At that time, the river’s flow was weak and its water unclear. Genrri explains, “There was no diversification in crops. People only planted coffee and ... many times water arrived contaminated because the cattle passed through the micro-basin or [there was] contamination from the waste of coffee [processing]. Before, when tests were carried out in the Río Hondo, the water flow only reached 240 gallons per minute, which was very little for communities that were growing so much in population.”

Genrri and other coffee producers called a meeting. They’d realized another vital layer of the water problem: Their own coffee waste was going into the river and polluting the water they needed for their coffee production.

“It was a disaster!” Genrri says. “A change was necessary, because we were destroying our community.”

With business support from World Vision, in 2008, Genrri and his wife, Marisol, expanded their coffee cooperative from not only selling the coffee the members grew but also to processing the coffee cherries into salable beans (a water-intensive process). While this was done initially to get better quality beans, with this shift, he says, “we needed the water from the Río Hondo, so we got in completely because we thought, ‘Well, we are getting milk from the cow; we have to feed it.’”

The initial protected area San Marcos bought for the watershed around 1998 was 1 acre. When abundant clean water was still scarce a decade later, Genrri and the other farmers knew a bigger commitment was needed. “We made the decision to buy a piece of land in order to reforest it,” Genrri says. “We didn’t do it for money. We didn’t do it for the cooperatives. We did it to reduce water pollution.”

WATER FACT

More than 2 billion people globally don’t have a place in their homes to wash their hands with soap and water.

While they put up fences around the watershed to keep loggers and cattle out, farmers like Genrri also committed to stop using chemicals in their coffee production. “Now we have the entire area protected, including land purchased by the municipality, by the cooperative, by the San Marcos Ecological Association and other institutions, although there are still some private areas. We have a total of 11.3 acres of protected, lush forest.”

And the watershed? In Genrri’s words, the change “is something extraordinary, something that is priceless.” Today, the Río Hondo watershed gushes out almost 3,000 gallons of crystal-clear water each minute—more than 12 times its initial output!

Genrri is as surprised as the next person about the massive change. “We never imagined that the water would increase so much. We never planned to go from 240 to almost 3,000 gallons. Imagine that! This is daily and per minute. That is a big surprise. It makes me think that what we’re doing is worth it.”

“I think that by our example we’ve made people see the changes that occur if we try. People who knew that area 20 years ago know that it was a desert, full of farms, a complete mess. Now anyone who goes to that mountain can see its beauty from every point of view. There is commitment, and that is why the results are so clear!”

These farmers’ commitment to the land is making waves throughout the coffee community, especially in Honduras. “Many producers have come to know what we have been doing to take care of the environment. People have come here from Guatemala; people from almost all over Honduras have come to see this experience.”

Genrri shows how people empowered with knowledge and resources who are committed to their homes, farms, communities, and their children’s futures can not only stop and reverse environmental degradation, but also wipe out poverty.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time reflecting on this week’s content using the following questions.

1. Jesus’ timing was troubling to the religious leaders presiding over the festival. What would your response have been as a religious leader?
2. How is Genrri’s persistence an example of how God tells us to seek His help?
(See Luke 18:1–8.) What do you need to persist in asking God for?
3. How is Genrri’s care for God’s creation biblical?
4. How do you think providing clean water to those in need can open their hearts to the living water of Jesus?

DAILY MEDITATIONS

Take a few moments each day to meditate on the following Scripture passages:

Monday: *Isaiah 44:1–5*

This passage, which may have been the inspiration for Jesus' statement in John 7:37–38, predicts that God will pour out His Spirit like water on His people.

Tuesday: *Isaiah 58:6–11*

God offers to make His people like springs “whose waters never fail” when they serve those in need.

Wednesday: *Joel 2:28–29*

God promises to send the Holy Spirit, the event to which Jesus refers in John 7 when He invites people to receive living water.

Thursday: *Acts 2:1–12*

The event promised by Jesus in John 7 finally takes place, as God pours out His Spirit at Pentecost.

Friday: *Revelation 22:16–17*

At the end of the biblical story, Jesus repeats His invitation to come and drink “the free gift of the water of life.”

WEEKLY ACTIVITY: PRAYER

Water vigil

Organize a water vigil with your small group or with your whole church. Feel free to use some or all of the brief liturgy below.

Opening prayer

Almighty God, who provided living water for Your people in the desert, sustain and strengthen us that we may serve all who thirst, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture readings

Isaiah 41:17–20

Psalm 63:1–3

Revelation 7:14–17

Luke 4:14–21

Prayers of the people

Note: Allow a moment of silent reflection after each statement below. Or invite participants to respond to each with the phrase “Lord, have mercy.”

Let us pray to the Lord.

For the 771 million people who have no access to clean drinking water, let us pray to the Lord.

For the 1.7 million people without access to adequate sanitation, let us pray to the Lord.

For the women and children who walk hours every day to collect water, braving dangers known and unknown—including the very water they drink—let us pray to the Lord.

For children who are robbed of an education by water-related illness, let us pray to the Lord.

For the more than 800 children under age 5 who died today because of water-related disease—and for those who will die tomorrow—let us pray to the Lord.

For the will to act, helping others gain access to both clean water and the living water of Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

WEEKLY ACTIVITY: PRAYER (cont.)

Prayer of confession

Note: Invite participants to speak this prayer in unison.

Almighty God, whose Spirit hovered over the waters at creation, we confess that we have not always been faithful stewards of the gifts You have entrusted to us. We have misused the gift of water—consuming more than we need, polluting it, and taking it for granted. We have forgotten the blessing that water represents. We have not always acknowledged our neighbors' need or quenched their thirst. We humbly repent. Forgive us our sin and renew us, that we may serve those in need by sharing the gift of clean water as well as pointing them to what it represents: Your living water, which quenches spiritual thirst. To the glory of Your name, Amen.

Benediction

May the Lord give us clean hands and clean hearts to serve all who thirst. May justice roll on like a never-failing stream, watering this world and renewing God's creation. Amen.



“Come, all you who
are thirsty, come to
the waters.”

—Isaiah 55:1



Waters of transformation



“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”
—Mark 14:24

Read the following reflection on John 13 and the story about Ireen. Spend a few moments reflecting on the discussion questions on your own or with your small group.

JESUS WASHES THE DISCIPLES' FEET (*John 13:1–17*)

Washing feet was a hygienic necessity in Jesus' day. Imagine traveling everywhere on foot—either barefoot or sandaled. Imagine walking all day along dusty roads and dirt paths shared with animals. By the time you reached your destination, your feet would have accumulated layers of grime.

In a world where honor was paramount, foot washing was also an important act of hospitality. Failure to wash a visitor's feet—or to offer water so they could wash their own feet—signaled grave disrespect. Jesus had firsthand experience of this, having been slighted in this way by a Pharisee who had invited Him to dinner (Luke 7:36–50).

Typically, foot washing was a job for the lowliest servant or slave. This arrangement reinforced the established social order: servants washed their master's feet, not the other way around.

When Jesus gathered with the disciples for one last meal before His crucifixion, He did the unthinkable. He took the role of a servant—pouring water into a basin, kneeling before each dumbstruck disciple in turn, and cleaning the grime from their feet.

If the shock of seeing their teacher debase Himself wasn't enough, Jesus drove the point home by telling the disciples they were to follow His example by washing one another's feet. This was the same group who liked to argue about which of them was the greatest (Luke 9:46–48; Mark 10:35–45). Jesus demonstrated another way. A few decades later, the apostle Paul echoed this call, urging Christians to emulate Jesus' servant attitude. “In humility value others above yourselves,” he wrote to the Philippians (2:3).

With nothing more than a basin of water and a towel, Jesus taught an unforgettable lesson about living water. When He invites us to come and drink, it's not just so we can live forever. It's so we can live transformed—right here and now. Water changes the way we live; it transforms us into servants who reflect Jesus' unconditional love.

TRANSFORMED BY CLEAN WATER: IREEN

Nine-year-old Ireen is from Malawi. Her mother, Chimwemwe, the Chichewa word for happiness, is a single mother raising four children on her own. She desperately needed the change that comes with access to clean water. She didn't want her bright daughter, Ireen, to follow the rugged path she's had to walk: dropping out of school early to work on farms, marrying too young, eking out a living, and rising before dawn to collect water from a dirty stream, one of many trips per day to satisfy the needs of her family.

In August 2020, World Vision's drilling team in Malawi did the unthinkable as COVID-19 raged. With 150 excited villagers watching from a distance, the drillers struck clean water. It took persistence and prayer. "God has fought for us," says lead driller Golden Bhikha. "We have been praying for Ireen to get water. And now God has helped us and now we have water."

But it wasn't easy. Drilling Ireen's well took days.

"We did meet a lot of problems," says Golden. "We had to drill at least three places. We didn't find water." The fourth try—drilling 150 feet into the earth—was a charm.

"I am very happy in my heart," says Golden. "Our whole group. We know that now Ireen has clean water. That is going to be very helpful in her upbringing. More especially, when you look at her health. More especially, when you think about the coronavirus. She will now have clean water to be using during this period."

Ireen is overjoyed.

"I was so happy, like I've never been in my life," says Ireen. "My prayers have been answered. The water is very close now."

The drillers already know the impact their work will have as well.

"She will no longer be late for school," says Golden. "She will no longer have to walk a long distance, meeting all kinds of things (such as snakes and hyenas) along the way. She is going to live a very healthy life."

And a happy life too. Ireen's now sponsored by Ruth in Washington state, who read her story in World Vision magazine. Other children in Ireen's village are now sponsored too.

Instead of walking what the average woman in developing countries walks for water daily—6 kilometers, or about 3.7 miles—Ireen and her mother now walk less than four minutes for clean water right in their village.

WATER FACT

World Vision's work results in water that continues to flow. An independent 2014 study conducted in Ghana by one of the leading academic groups in water research, the University of North Carolina Water Institute, found that nearly eight in 10 wells installed by World Vision were still operational after two decades—significantly higher than industry standard. A big part of this is World Vision's water committee model that engages people in maintaining their community's wells.

Happiness, who had been the number one student at school before she had to drop out, has a new calling as a member of the water committee that will ensure the borehole lasts.

“We were taught how to fix this thing,” she says. “So, we know what we are supposed to do.”

For Happiness, clean water is an answer to prayer. “I am so happy that God has actually answered my prayer,” she says. “I will continue praying so ... He can take care of us and He will take care of our borehole.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time reflecting on this week’s content using the following questions.

1. Put yourself in the disciples’ shoes (or sandals). How would you react if Jesus knelt in front of you and began washing your dirty feet? Would you feel humbled? Grateful? Uncomfortable?
2. Single parents like Happiness face a host of challenges. How does your church or community support them? What more can be done to help make the burden lighter?
3. One act of service can often be the catalyst for a greater sense of harmony or unity. What are some practical ways you can serve others to strengthen your community?
4. How has God fought for you, like Golden said? Where has He showed up in unexpected places?

DAILY MEDITATIONS

Take a few moments each day to meditate on the following Scripture passages:

Monday: Genesis 18:1–12

Abraham welcomes three mysterious visitors, providing water for them to wash their feet. The encounter forever changes his life.

Tuesday: Ezekiel 36:24–27

God promises to restore His wayward people, cleansing them with water.

Wednesday: Romans 12:1–8

Paul reminds Christians that we are part of a larger body, and we are called to serve the whole community.

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 3:5–9

Using the analogy of planting and watering a seed, Paul describes how people should work together in common service for the benefit of all.

Friday: Philippians 2:1–11

Paul echoes Jesus' call to serve, urging readers to think first about the needs of others.

WEEKLY ACTIVITY: ACTION

World Vision's Global 6K for Water®

EVERY STEP YOU TAKE IS ONE THEY WON'T HAVE TO.™

In the last few weeks, you've learned about the global water crisis and the toll it takes on children and families in the developing world. Now, it's time to put your knowledge into action—join the world's largest 6K for water to do something about the need for clean water!

Why 6K? As you learned, it's the average distance women and kids in developing countries walk for water every day. Every \$50 registration fee equips one person in need with lasting access to clean water through World Vision projects. This is a great way to equip families like the ones you've met here with one of life's essential building blocks!

Discover all the details of the Global 6K at worldvision6k.org.





worldvision.org

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Statistics taken from "Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene," June 2021, published by the World Health Organization and UNICEF. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/progress-on-household-drinking-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-2000-2020/>

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