



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 (NIV)*

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 a hopeful answer to 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 those 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 (NIV)*

Read the following reflection on John 2 and the intro to the rest of the week’s stories. When you gather with your group, spend a few moments reflecting together on the discussion questions.

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). The foreboding reference to His own death was lost on those within earshot.

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 took on flesh to save us from sin and death wants us to experience life right here, in the flesh.

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 Zambia, Kenya, and Honduras that highlight the perils of life without clean water, as well as the transformation water can bring to an entire community.

About 40 percent of people in sub-Saharan Africa do not have basic, or safely managed, access to clean water. And only one in four have the use of basic sanitation facilities.

Clean water is more readily available to a majority of people in Latin America. But in Honduras, some people live in remote communities deep in mountainous terrain. There, nearly 1 in 10 people still drink surface water from unprotected sources.

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:

Nivesh

A young girl in Zambia whose education is at risk.

Michael and Gertrude Chisimba and their son **Elijah**

A family in Zambia whose life was transformed by the gift of clean water.

Julia Lolem and her daughter, **Kamama**

A newly widowed mom in Kenya who struggles to provide for her children.

Johanna Hernandez and her sons, **David and Noe**

A family in Honduras who survived a near-tragedy.

Pedro Antonio Goday Sosa (Don Pedro)

A grandfather who demonstrates persistence in serving his community in Honduras.

Noe Rodriguez

A World Vision water and sanitation expert in Honduras who works to solve a community's water crisis.

WATER FACT

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

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time with your small group reflecting on this week's passage using the following questions.

1. Did anything surprise you about the story of Jesus turning water into wine?
2. What do you think is significant about this being 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 (1 Peter 2:21), 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 exhibits a similar power when He turns 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
Bath 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 (NIV)*

Read the following reflection on John 4 and the story of Nivesh. When you gather with your group, spend a few moments reflecting together on the discussion questions.

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—much as it 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?

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.

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.

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.

WATER AND DIGNITY: NIVESH

I have never encountered so many people who were so ashamed to be dirty as I did on a trip to Zambia. Mother after mother told me how they wouldn’t go to church—how they were either busy collecting water and couldn’t go, or feeling so dirty that they didn’t want to mingle with other people.

When you are hopeless, you need community. A lack of water—and how dirty the water was when they finally found it and got it back home in a bucket—was denying these women dignity and community.

“When you come to school dirty, people laugh at you,” 11-year-old Nivesh told me. “They say, ‘You can’t even wash your own clothes.’”

Nivesh told me she would spend an entire day walking to collect water so she could go to school the next day. ... but she had to make the journey three times each day. And the weight of the water was too heavy for her.

... She was a girl whose dreams were dying before they had a chance to take flight.

... On that night in town [Choma], Nivesh took her first shower. She sat on her first real toilet—her school doesn’t even have a latrine. She turned on a tap and water flowed. ... She even slept in a bed.

The next day we saw Nivesh. ...[she] was a new person She was clean and fresh. She now had a dream. Nivesh said she would try even harder to go to school so that someday she could live in Choma, a place she couldn’t even have imagined before.

—Blog excerpt from World Vision communicator Kari Costanza

The effects of dirty water are well known to the people of southern Zambia. Diarrhea and cholera are common. Children like Nivesh must walk long distances for water that is filled with bacteria that makes them sick ... if the journey doesn’t kill them first.

The time spent getting dirty water, and the illness it can cause, mean fewer opportunities for education (for girls) and time spent caring for the family (for moms).

In Zambia, as in our Bible example, collecting water is widely seen as women's work. A boy might not have to collect water, so he can go to school—but education is merely a distant dream for a girl like Nivesh.

She can relate to the Samaritan woman in other ways, too. Like her, Nivesh lives on the margins—too dirty to feel like she has a place in her community.

When World Vision came offering both spiritual and physical care, Nivesh began to see herself in a new way—like Jesus sees her. Like he saw the woman at the well.

World Vision's water work includes teaching on sanitation and hygiene and, in cooperation with local churches, support for local pastors to make the connection between the life Jesus gives and the life clean water provides. It's a powerful metaphor for all of us. Because clean water comes so easily to us with the touch of a tap handle, we can miss the spiritual lesson, which Nivesh understands more profoundly because of her experience.

WATER FACT

Handwashing alone has been shown in developing countries to result in children growing smarter and stronger.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time with your small group 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 Nivesh, the lack of clean water negatively impacted her self-esteem. 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 God's love for them?

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 (NIV)*

Read the following reflection on John 5 and the story about the Chisimba family. When you gather with your group, spend a few moments reflecting together on the discussion questions.

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.

NO LONGER ROBBED OF JOY

Michael Chisimba used to work from about 8:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. in Zambia, making bowls and other items out of sheet metal. He yearned for more hours in the day to focus on his job so he could care for his family. But Michael has a leg condition as a result of contracting polio at age 8, so he limps and uses a stick for support. And it takes him longer to get around.

If he wanted to bathe after his hard day's work, he had to close up shop and get to a stream a third of a mile away by mid-afternoon. That meant he lost out on potential income. What's more, the dirty water in the stream caused terrible sickness for Michael, his wife, Gertrude, and the nine children in their household, as they had nothing else to drink.

In one especially frightening episode, the couple's now 9-year-old son, Elijah, became so sick that they worried he might die. Michael says, "We had to go to the hospital in Kasama. I've never see him get sick that way."

But in 2015, their community partnered with World Vision to install a mechanized water system. Today, safe water is only 30 feet away from their home.

"It gives me great joy because someone has extended my day," says Michael, who is now able to work till 5:30. "My income has gone up because I'm able to make more products."

On top of that, two of their children are sponsored through World Vision. Their school-aged kids are healthy and in class. The youngest ones don't even know what it's like to be late or miss class to walk for water.

"From the time we've started drinking from this well, we don't have diarrhea and don't get sick anymore," Michael says. "We are so grateful to the donors for the water they provided.

"Now I'm bubbling with joy because I have water. Before, with the diarrhea and when my children were sick, it would rob me of that joy. This joy is unspeakable joy now that we have water. Because of water ... I'm able to do my work."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time with your small group 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 safe water, like Michael and his family before their community got the well. How might this deprivation affect your spiritual condition?
4. What does Michael'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: 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.

Thursday: Matthew 14:13-21

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

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 in Zambia and other parts of 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 is 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 must go through several more steps of purification before it is 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 (NIV)*

Read the following reflection on John 6 and the story about Johanna, David, and Noe Hernandez. When you gather with your group, spend a few moments reflecting together on the discussion questions.

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 kill.

People in the ancient world looked with wariness upon the waters of the sea. 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 the 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 feeding 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 storm.

Jesus invites us to share in this calling, to come to the aid of those 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.

WATER THAT HARMS

We don't usually associate a lack of water with countries like Honduras, where a majority of the population has clean water. But for the nearly one in 10 people in Honduras who don't, the situation is as dire as any in Africa.

Every day, Johanna Hernandez, 23, would walk 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) to get water for her family. Three times each day she'd fill a wheelbarrow with empty soda bottles and take her sons, David and Noe, to a contaminated river in the Jamastran Valley. Shivering, she'd wade knee-deep into the cold, chocolate-colored water while the boys played on the bank.

Filling the bottles was tedious—and dangerous. Once, 5-year-old David was caught in the current and swept away until a big rock stopped him. “He almost drowned,” remembers Johanna. David survived with a deep cut on his lip as a reminder of his brush with death.

At the local primary school, dirty river water is stored in a *pila*—a cement tank. The school's janitor, Lionel Arriola, worries about the students. “Sometimes their thirst is so big they go to the *pila* and drink water,” he said. “One hour later, they are vomiting.”

Drinking dirty water has affected all of life here, creating perpetual health problems. “We found it was contaminated with Hepatitis A and poisons,” said Dr. Zulema Lopez, who blames the animals who drink and drop waste there and the pesticides that trickle into the river from the coffee and tobacco fields that provide residents with a meager income.

The clinic routinely sees children who are malnourished, suffering from diarrhea, and infected with cholera. Tragically, some damage can never be undone. “It affects their cognitive development,” said Dr. Lopez.

If that wasn't enough, the clinic has been getting its water from the very source of so much illness—the Hato River. When Nurse Ana Lainez opened the tap in the delivery room, brown water would flow out. “We can't even wash our hands in it,” she said.

WATER FACT

World Vision now has more than 800 water experts working in over 50 countries, using a variety of methods to deliver clean water: drilling boreholes, installing rainwater harvesting systems, and more. When combined with hygiene education and improved sanitation, these efforts dramatically reduce waterborne illness and death, especially in young kids. Working through local staff for an average of 15 years in a community, World Vision builds trust and effective working relationships that bring lasting change.

But in 2017, World Vision coordinated efforts with the government, a generous U.S.-based company, and the people of Jamastran to install a well. The drillers hit water on the first try! Then 600 enthusiastic community members began four months of labor, moving rocks and digging nearly 25 miles of trenches to lay pipe and bring the water to their homes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time with your small group reflecting on this week's content using the following questions.

1. Think back to a stormy period in your life—whether an illness, job loss, or other trial. In what ways did Jesus make His presence known to you in the storm? How did others embody Jesus' presence to you?
2. Has your experience with life's storms made you more attuned to those going through storms of their own? 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. Imagine your neighborhood had only one source of water—like Johanna's—and it was polluted with animal waste and pesticides. How would you feel? How would this affect your community?

DAILY MEDITATIONS

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

Monday: *Mark 4:35-41*

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

Tuesday: *Psalm 107:28-31*

The psalmist praises God for His power to calm the storm and still the waves, using language that calls to mind Jesus' miracle in Mark 4.

Wednesday: *Jonah 1:1-15*

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

Thursday: *Psalm 69:13-15*

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

Friday: *Isaiah 25:4, 6-8*

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

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. Share the following points:

- About 844 million people struggle to survive without 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 largest 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 water, sanitation, and hygiene efforts, 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 (NIV)*

Read the following reflection on John 7 and the story about Don Pedro. When you gather with your group, spend a few moments reflecting together on the discussion questions.

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER *(John 7)*

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

Since the Israelites’ story began in the 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 spring from a rock (Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:1-13). Without these interventions, the Israelites would likely have perished 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 in which their ancestors dwelled 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 process 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: namely, that Jesus is the Giver of new life. The river that brought life to the garden in Genesis 2:10-14, the river that flows through the eternal city of God in Revelation 22:1-2—that river is Jesus, bringing life and hope to all.

WATER THAT HEALS

Pedro Antonio Goday Sosa was miserable. Every day, he watched families slog down a muddy trail to the filthy, chocolate-brown Hato River in eastern Honduras (which we read about in week 4). The 70-year-old grandfather, known affectionately as Don Pedro, saw how drinking from the river was making people sick, and he was determined to find a solution.

At a community meeting with World Vision in 2016, Don Pedro appealed to Noe Rodriguez, one of the organization's water and sanitation experts—begging him for help on behalf of the children.

After consulting with staff in the national office, Noe learned that a well had just been planned into the budget for their community for 2018. But Don Pedro couldn't let the children continue to suffer for two more years.

He continued to pursue the issue, making phone calls to Noe "morning, noon, and night." Noe was at a loss for how to help. Then, a breakthrough came. "Our colleagues [from the U.S.] came to visit," says Noe. "We went to the river for them to see the community's situation, and we saw that they were really moved by the suffering. Three months later, [they] returned with good news." A company called Refined Technologies, a chemical decontamination company, had watched a video of the community at the filthy river and pledged the funds needed for the project.

Noe raced to tell Don Pedro the good news. "I told him, '... Your problem is solved. The water project ... is a reality.'" The two hugged each other in jubilation, giving thanks to God for His provision.

In August 2017, the backbreaking work to bring water to 3,000 people began, and months later water was flowing in the community.

Today, clean water in the Jamastran Valley is seen as a gift from heaven. "The power of God has [been] shown here," says water committee member Julian Ordonez, a father of four. The community is thankful to World Vision staff like Noe. And they're thankful to the donors who stepped forward to fund a dream.

How everyone came together as a team was something that could only have been orchestrated by the Almighty. "God put his eyes on us," says Julian. As for Don Pedro, his perseverance paid off. "My dream will be achieved," he says. "I fought for children. Now they will have clean water."

WATER FACT

Water is fundamental for life, which is why it's often one of the greatest needs in communities where World Vision works. Efforts to bring water are always part of World Vision's plan to address many factors that make extreme poverty hard to overcome, bringing long-lasting improvements in nutrition, health, education, livelihoods, and spiritual well-being.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time with your small group reflecting on this week's content using the following questions.

1. Jesus' timing was a fly in the ointment for the religious leaders presiding over the festival. What would your response have been as a religious leader? How would you have dealt with Don Pedro's phone calls?
2. How is Don Pedro'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. Julian Ordonez attributed the clean water to God's power. How was God's power seen in this situation?
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.

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 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 either your whole church or your small group. 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 simple phrase "Lord, have mercy."

Let us pray to the Lord.

For the 844 million people who have no access to safe drinking water, let us pray to the Lord.

For the 2.5 billion people without access to adequate sanitation, let us pray to the Lord.

For 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 drinking 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.



A photograph of two young girls with long dark hair in braids, wearing a grey hoodie and a purple sweater, with their hands clasped in prayer. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

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

—*Isaiah 55:1 (NIV)*

Waters of transformation



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

Read the following reflection on John 13 and the story about widowed mom Julia Lolem. When you gather with your group, spend a few moments reflecting together on the discussion questions.

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

Foot washing 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 upon 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 wash their master's feet, not the other way around.

When Jesus gathered with the disciples for one last meal, He did the unthinkable. He took the role of a servant upon Himself—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 who 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

Life is hard for all single moms, but it was especially hard for Julia Lolem.

In 2014 tragedy struck Julia's family when her husband, Daudi, was killed in an accident. She worried that she wouldn't be able to keep the children in school, which had been her husband's dream for them. And the lack of clean water in their community made the situation worse. Julia had to walk three hours each day to collect water from the river, leaving little time to farm or maintain her household.

World Vision and the family's church helped keep them afloat and boosted her courage. "When discouraged and things felt very difficult, I thought about God's plan," says Julia. "... in that plan, I need to manage for my family. I have authority."

In 2015, World Vision and community members—including Julia—carried out a project that would change everything: tapping a mountain spring and piping water down to their community. Since then, her family and neighbors have experienced the transformation that clean water brings.

The 13-mile-long gravity-fed pipeline carries water to 15 public water kiosks, serving over 880 households as well as the church, school, and health clinic. Each of the kiosks is managed by a water committee made up of people who live nearby. The community decided together where kiosks and troughs for livestock would go.

Today, Julia's 5-year-old daughter, Kamama, can walk to the nearest water kiosk with her mom in less than seven minutes—a round trip of just 252 yards. And they no longer have to compete with cattle and goats.

Julia is relieved. With more time for farming, she and her children tend their crops of maize, beans, millet, and fruit trees of mangoes, oranges, lemons, and guavas. They have maize to eat from their harvest, even in years with low rainfall.

Kamama recently entered her second year of school. "She can go to school early and study well, wear clean clothes, and not be tired or sick," says her mother proudly. For Julia, meeting these daily needs requires work, but it's manageable.

The clean, accessible water has lifted a burden—the children can play, study, laugh, and dream for their future. Julia says, "To drink clean water and keep your children clean, this is a good life."

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 unique model that engages people in maintaining their community's wells, as in Julia's story.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time with your small group 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—especially those newly single—face a host of challenges. How does your church/ 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 is your vision of "a good life" the same as Julia's? How is it different?

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

Walk or run for clean water

You can be a change-maker for people like Julia, Michael, Nivesh, and thousands more.

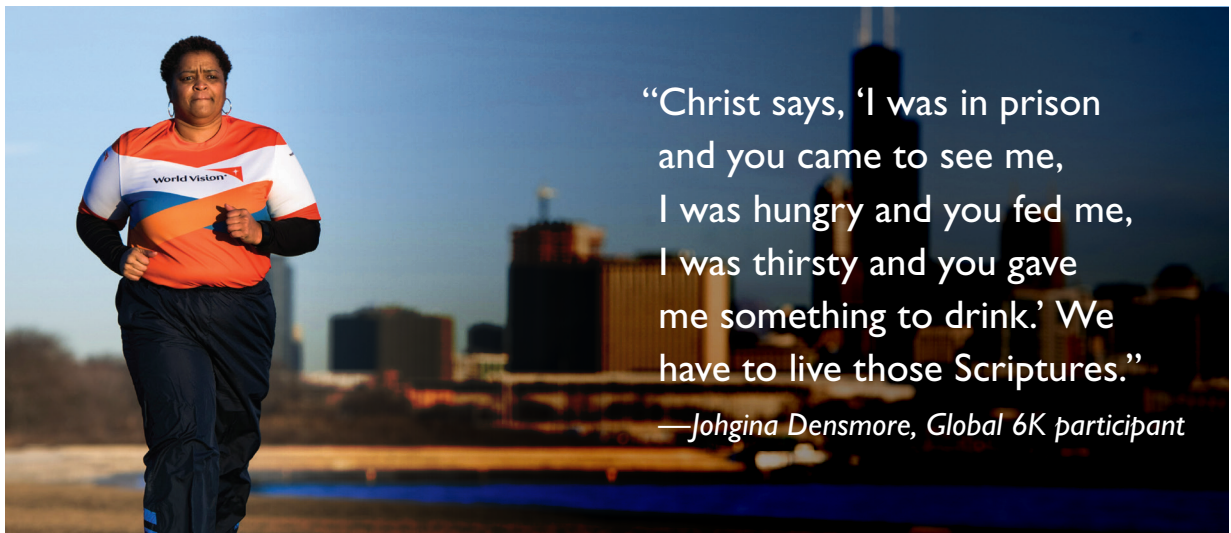
Participate in World Vision's Global 6K for Water on May 19, 2018. You'll be making an impact that has ripples well into the future. (Pun intended!)

Why 6K? It's the average distance people in the developing world walk for water every day. Every Global 6K for Water participant provides clean water for one person in need through their registration fee of \$50. When you and thousands of others cross the finish line, you'll be helping change the lives of women and children by freeing them from a life spent collecting dirty water. Plus, every participant will wear a unique race bib with the photo of a child benefiting from clean water, and go home with a T-shirt and finisher medal.

Register today at worldvision6k.org

A Global 6K participant for the last three years, Johgina Densmore says, "I am not a runner. I am a zero runner. I walk, jog, walk—and my jog is just a little faster than my walk." But she stepped up anyway when she learned about the need through her church. "I was ignorant to the lack of clean water," she explains. "Just to think that there are kids that don't have access to clean water, and the water they do have access to is dirty and contaminated ... I try to share this as much as I can ... so others' eyes can be opened too."

Like Johgina, nearly everyone can walk or run World Vision's Global 6K—it's fun for the whole family!



“Christ says, ‘I was in prison and you came to see me, I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.’ We have to live those Scriptures.”
—Johgina Densmore, Global 6K participant



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Statistics taken from "Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene" 2017, published by World Health Organization and UNICEF. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2017/launch-version-report-jmp-water-sanitation-hygiene.pdf>

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, we serve alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

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