

Study Guide November 5, 2017

Theme: Living Waters **Genesis 1:1-10; Psalm 42:1-4; Isaiah 55; John 4:1-26**

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was a formless void, with only a roaring ocean covered with darkness. But the Spirit of God was moving over the water gives birth to creation by bringing shape and order to watery chaos. Think about this: In the beginning both water and darkness existed alongside of God. When the Jewish scriptures were finally being written, water had played an important role in story of the ancient Israelites (Noah, Red Sea, Wilderness, Exile). So it's no surprise that water would be an important starting point for their story.

In the bible, connotations about water are as diverse as you can get. It is the source of life, a means of cleansing and renewal, a place of danger, and a fulfillment of God's promises, just to name a few. In fact there are 770 references to water in one form or another. There is not enough space or time to cover it all, but do a simple Google search for "water in the bible" and you will find a lot to chew on (or swallow).

READ: Genesis 1:1-10; Isaiah 55

As the ocean, lakefronts and riversides often provide space for peace and rest in God's awe, storms, pollution and flooding remind of the chaos that is found in the water. It is both life giving and life taking. The prophet Isaiah uses the water motif to remind us of the precious gift that God gives us in his promise and faithfulness.

- Q:** How have you experienced water as a means of knowing God's peace?
- Q:** How have you experienced water as a source of chaos or fear?
- Q:** What symbol would you give water that might tell another about your faith?

Read: Matthew 3:13-17; 10:40-42; Mark 4:35-41; John 2:1-11; 4:5-15

These are just a sampling of the different ways Jesus interacts with water. We see Jesus' humanity in his self-immersion into the waters of baptism. We also see his divinity as he shows that he too can control water; quieted a chaotic storm, walked on water, and turned water into wine. Jesus also pushes his disciples on a boat out into a storm, he preaches alongside the seashore, and when pierced by the sword on the cross it is water that comes out of him.

- Q:** How does it help you understand Jesus' humanity and his divinity?

Read: John 4:5-26 *(As you read it, try to imagine you are the one whom Jesus is talking to. You are the one who comes to the well. You are the one with the bucket. You are the one who can help Jesus quench his thirst.)*

Jesus meets you at the well, and asks for water. During your conversation, Jesus reveals his big secret...he is the Messiah (v. 26). If only Jesus knew what kind of person you were...oh wait, he does!

Let me quickly put this idea into context. Imagine the hatred between Serbs and Muslims in modern Bosnia, the enmity between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland or the feuding between street gangs in Los Angeles or New York, and you have some idea of the feeling and its causes between Jews and Samaritans in the time of Jesus. Both politics and religion were involved. On top of that, but she was also a woman whose past is questionable.

Q: What tradition or rule would you be willing to break to bring the good news to a stranger? And what might it look like?

Notice Jesus initiates the conversation. What does he say to you? And how do you respond? Can you think of any reasons why Jesus shouldn't be talking to you?

Notice Jesus is the stranger. This woman knows of Israel's story, and has even heard about the coming Messiah, but she does not see Jesus for who he really is.

Q: Would you recognize Jesus in the face of a tired and thirsty person? The hungry, the sick, the poor? (Matthew 25:34-40)

Notice Jesus is the one who is thirsty. Perhaps he is asking for a drink of water so you can have a chance to recognize the face of Christ, the Messiah, in a stranger!

Q: How can a little cup of water, offered in love, be the beginning of your salvation journey?

In the western world, we are accustomed to having access to clean drinking water at the turn of a tap. Yet more than one billion of God's people lack immediate access to clean, safe water and two million people die each year due to diseases carried through contaminated water. The quest for clean water consumes the time, energy and resources of many of the world's poorest people.

Slow Read: Psalm 42:1-4 (or Isaiah 55)

Who's face can you see as you read and reread these verses? Is it yours? Maybe it's a stranger or a close friend? How is the Holy Spirit speaking to your heart?

Prayer: Lord God, my heart longs to be with you. And I thirst night and day for your mercy and grace. Come to me today to fill my spirit until my cup overflows. Have mercy on me and cleanse me from myself so that all who come to me may find you, and glorify your holy name. Amen.