

LIVING WATER

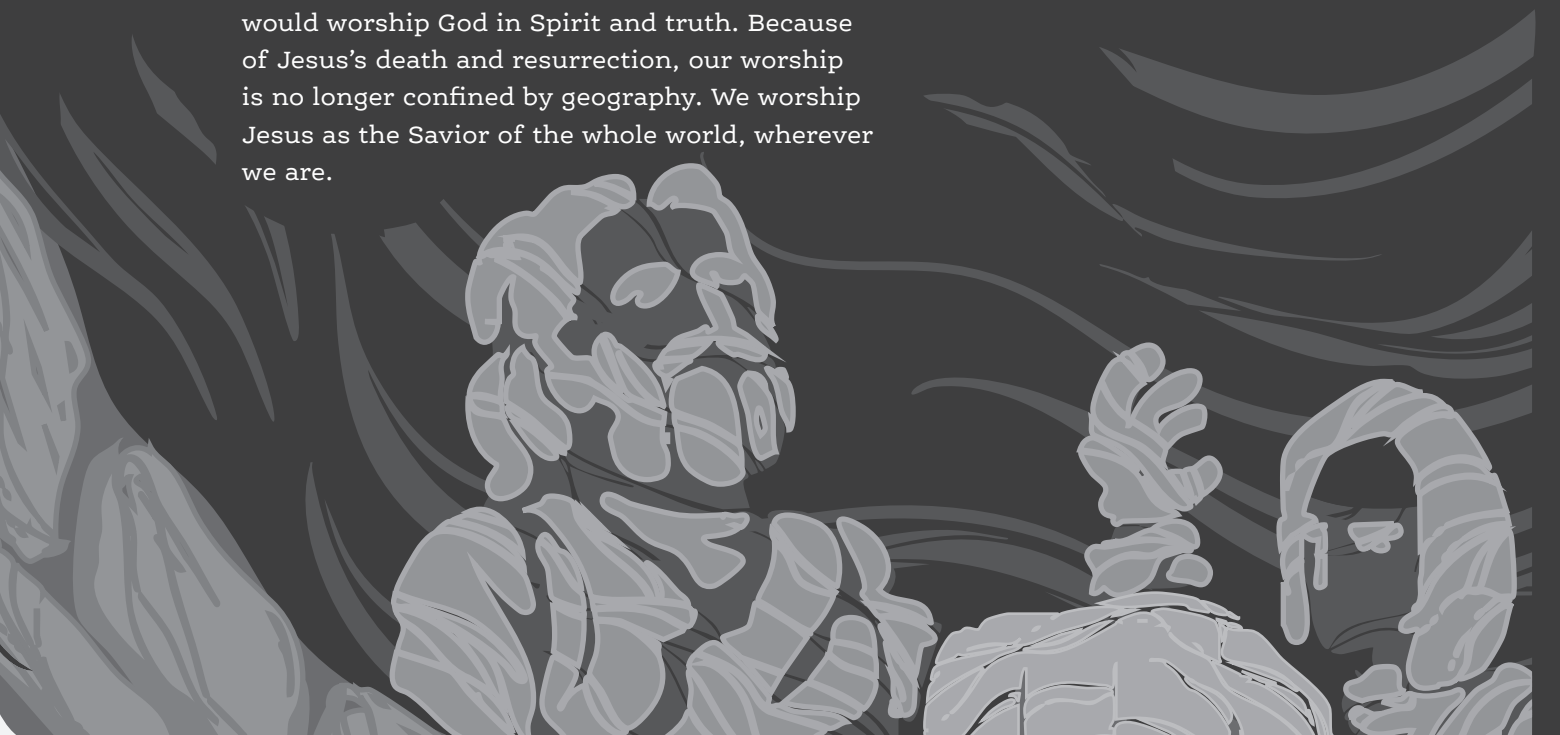
MAIN POINT.

Jesus knows us fully and still loves us deeply.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus told the Samaritan woman that a day was coming when worshipers would not focus on the physical location of their worship, but they would worship God in Spirit and truth. Because of Jesus's death and resurrection, our worship is no longer confined by geography. We worship Jesus as the Savior of the whole world, wherever we are.



EXPOSING SIN LEADS TO FREEDOM

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

John 4:1-42

GOD'S LOVE BREAKS BARRIERS

JOHN 4:7-14

7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. "Give me a drink," Jesus said to her, 8 because his disciples had gone into town to buy food. 9 "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" she asked him. For Jews do not associate with Samaritans. 10 Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would ask him, and he would give you living water." 11 "Sir," said the woman, "you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this 'living water'?" 12 You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock." 13 Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. 14 But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up in him for eternal life."

GOD'S LOVE SATISFIES

JOHN 4:15-30

15 "Sir," the woman said to him, "give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and come here to draw water." 16 "Go call your husband," he told her, "and come back here." 17 "I don't have a husband," she answered. "You have correctly said, 'I don't have a husband,'" Jesus said. 18 "For you've had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." 19 "Sir," the woman replied, "I see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem." 21 Jesus told her, "Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. 23 But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth." 25 The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will explain everything to us." 26 Jesus told her, "I, the one speaking to you, am he." 27 Just then his disciples arrived, and they were amazed that he was talking with a woman. Yet no one said, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" 28 Then the woman left her water jar, went into town, and told the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" 30 They left the town and made their way to him.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Jesus knows us fully and still loves us deeply.

Leaders: Spend time praying for students who struggle with being known fully because of their shame. The way you love them can soften their hearts to receive God's love and forgiveness.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

GOD'S LOVE BREAKS BARRIERS

JOHN 4:7-9

"The surprise on the part of the woman was not just that Jesus was talking to her—a woman, a sinner, and a Samaritan—but that he wanted to drink from a vessel a Samaritan had taken a drink from. The hatred of the Jews for the Samaritans was so strong they considered themselves unclean for even touching, much less drinking from the same cup as, a Samaritan."¹⁶

JOHN 4:13-14

"The promise of living water is written throughout the pages of the Bible, and with it we find the result of rejecting the living water—the barrenness of seeking satisfaction apart from God. We see it when the prophet Jeremiah spoke God's words to the people of Israel: 'For my people have committed a double evil: They have abandoned me, the fountain of living water, and dug cisterns for themselves—cracked cisterns that cannot hold water' (Jer. 2:13). The chosen people of God had the fountain of living water open and available to them. Their thirst could be quenched, their souls satisfied by God! Yet tragically they abandoned God. They turned from the all-satisfying source of life and strength and attempted to find satisfaction elsewhere. Instead of drinking freely from the fountain of life God offered, they took out their hammers and chisels and started carving out little bowls and digging wells. Yet every time they poured water into their handcrafted vessels, it leaked out."¹⁷

GOD'S LOVE SATISFIES

JOHN 4:15-26

"We often act as if the gospel can best be shared through big programs and events. We think it can be a large-scale, automated, impersonal process. God always works personally, and he sends us to individual people to tell them about Jesus. Jesus went to an everyday place—a well—and found a woman who needed him, and he told her the good news."¹⁸

CONTEXT



Samaria was the region north of Jerusalem. When Assyrians attacked and destroyed the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC, they exiled the Jews living there and brought in other conquered people groups to repopulate the area. Once the exile ended, Jews returned to the region, and though they weren't supposed to marry foreigners, many married the people living in the area. This resulted in a group of people who weren't purely Jewish—people the Jews despised and excluded. The Samaritans eventually built their own temple and acknowledged only the five books of Moses. Tension continued between Jews and Samaritans, and we see evidence of the strain in a conversation between Jesus and a Samaritan woman. Jews weren't supposed to interact with Samaritans, but Jewish men were discouraged from publicly interacting with any woman. Jesus chose to travel through Samaria, a region Jews avoided at all cost, to sit at a well with a Samaritan woman. When Jesus spoke with her and drank from her cup, He broke major barriers and pointed to the hope of the gospel: Salvation had come for all people.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION



Christ as Reconciliation

Ever since the fall of the first man and woman in the garden of Eden, God and human beings have been estranged. Sin resulted not only in an estranged relationship with God but also in creating opposition between God and humanity. Sin is an infinite offense against an infinite God. Thankfully, God loves His enemies and has sent Christ to be the reconciler between us and God. Through Christ's death, God provides the means for that broken relationship to be restored and renewed (Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:18-19).

LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, WE'VE SEARCHED FOR MEANING AND HAPPINESS APART FROM YOU. WE'VE FACED DISAPPOINTMENT EVERY TIME WE'VE TRIED TO FORCE WORLDLY COMFORTS INTO A SPACE ONLY YOU CAN FILL. WE'RE LEFT WITH A VOID. THANK YOU FOR OFFERING US SALVATION AND FOR GIVING US YOUR SPIRIT SO THAT WE NEVER THIRST AGAIN. HELP US TO LONG FOR YOU.



KICK STARTER

DID YOU KNOW?

Water is everywhere, but roughly 97% of earth's water is salty and undrinkable. Then another 2% of earth's water is in glaciers and icecaps, leaving only about 1% available for our use!¹⁹

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

HUNGER AND THIRST

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHAT'S THE LONGEST YOU'VE EVER GONE WITHOUT DRINKING WATER?**
- **HOW OFTEN DO YOU GET HUNGRY DURING THE DAY?**
- **CAN WE IGNORE HUNGER AND THIRST? AT WHAT POINT DO THEY BECOME IMPOSSIBLE TO IGNORE?**

Hunger and thirst both serve an important purpose: They alert us to real, physical needs. We can ignore hunger and thirst for a little while, but if we don't meet the needs, our body will begin to shut down. God designed us to hunger and thirst spiritually too. We can ignore the signals and even try to meet spiritual needs through other things, but the only way to satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirst is through Jesus.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

We're a culture that chases emotional highs and runs after adrenaline. We seek what makes us feel good. But the problem is that feeling good wears off after a while. Emotions fade; adrenaline diminishes. When we begin to feel sad, bored, lonely, or empty, we look for the next fix—for anything we can find to make us feel better. In a way, we've learned to numb the voice deep within us saying, "This isn't enough. This isn't what you need. There's something better." The truth is that temporary highs will disappoint us, and chasing them will wear us out. Why? God didn't design us to chase worldly comforts. He designed us for a relationship with Him. He designed us to depend on Him for peace, joy, and contentment. Since Eden, we've searched everywhere else but in a relationship with God to fill an emptiness that only grows and deepens without Him. In Jesus, we find real satisfaction that lasts—even when life is stressful, lonely, and sad—because it's rooted in the assurance of eternal life with God.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

Jesus knows us fully and still loves us deeply.

GOD'S LOVE BREAKS BARRIERS

READ JOHN 4:7-14

HOW DOES THE WOMAN REACT TO JESUS SPEAKING TO HER?

Leaders: Share context about the Samaritans. We can almost hear the woman's surprise because against all social customs, a Jewish man spoke to her in public. Jews didn't interact with Samaritans because of their mixed heritage. They avoided traveling through Samaria, even though it added many miles to their journey. But Jesus had to go through it (4:4). **Jesus had previously met with Nicodemus, a well-known religious leader, but in Samaria, He broke all barriers to meet with an outcast—a woman shunned even by her own people, forced to go to the well at noon to avoid interaction.** He saw her. He spoke to her.



HOW DOES CULTURE VALUE SOME PEOPLE MORE THAN OTHERS? WHAT DOES JESUS'S INTERACTION WITH THIS WOMAN TEACH US ABOUT OUR WORTH?

Culture assigns value to people, ranking them by social status, cliques, material possessions, wealth, or beliefs. From an early age, many of us experience—at least once—the feeling that we don't matter as much as others matter. We don't fit into a certain group because we don't meet its standards. We quickly learn to interact with people who are like us and who understand us. Jesus went to a woman His peers would've avoided. Why? He valued her. She mattered, regardless of what His culture taught. **We all have great worth—so much that Jesus gave His life for ours.**



READ JEREMIAH 2:13. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WELL WATER AND THE WATER JESUS OFFERED? HOW DOES THE *LIVING WATER* CHANGE OUR LIVES?

Physical thirst signals us to hydrate. So, we go to a source—some type of well that can provide what we need. Ideally, we'd drink water, but many times, we grab something that only dehydrates us even more. We suffer from spiritual thirst too. Our soul longs for our Creator and Sustainer. Signals can feel like loneliness, worry, anxiety, restlessness, depression, confusion. We go to a source—some type of well that provides relief. **We lower our buckets into waters of worldly comforts, drinking from the well of relationships, sports, social media, popularity, good grades, approval.** Even when we get these things, we still struggle with emptiness. The thirst returns, so we return to the well. **Any relief we feel eventually fades because spiritual needs can't be satisfied by worldly pleasures—broken cisterns, incapable of holding water.** When we belong to Jesus, we accept His gift of living water, the Holy Spirit. Our quality of life radically changes. When we thirst, we are satisfied with peace, security, and joy. We have the promise of eternal life, and even when we thirst here, we know eternal peace waits for us. This hope reminds us to keep returning to Jesus, our only source of life—the One who meets our needs.

GOD'S LOVE SATISFIES

READ JOHN 4:15-30

READ VERSES 19-24. WHAT POINT WAS JESUS MAKING?

The Samaritans weren't welcome in the temple, so they built their own temple, a major source of the Jews' hatred and outrage. When the woman realized Jesus was a prophet, she questioned Him about the situation. Jesus responded by telling the woman that a day was coming when worship would happen everywhere, even outside of Jerusalem. Jews considered the temple to be the only acceptable place for worship, so these words were bold and pointed to the truth that salvation was for all people—even Samaritans, even her. Jesus's death changed everything. **We are living temples, dwelling places for the Holy Spirit! We worship God with our lives, through our obedience to His Word—in Spirit and in truth.**



WAS JESUS'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WOMAN CONDEMNING OR SOMETHING ELSE? WHAT DOES THIS SHOW YOU ABOUT HIS HEART?

Jesus knew the woman's past sin and the truth about her living situation at the time. Yet, He still chose to speak to her. Jesus approached her to offer life, not shame. But she needed to confront her sin before she could experience freedom. Jesus knows our sin too. He knows the shame we feel and our struggle to let go of sinful habits. **He confronts us with our sin, not to shame us, but to lead us to freedom. Before we can drink from the living water Jesus mentioned, we first have to realize our thirst—our great need for something, for someone, to satisfy our souls forever.** We have to recognize our sin before we can be reconciled, or made right, with God.



WHAT DID THE WOMAN DO AFTER JESUS EXPOSED HER SIN? WHAT DOES THIS HELP YOU REALIZE?

The Samaritan woman was face-to-face with the Messiah. He knew everything about her, even the pieces of her life she desperately tried to hide. Jesus brought her sin into the light, but instead of feeling judged by Him, she ran joyfully to tell others! She didn't hide, argue, or justify her sin because exposing it led to her freedom. When God brings our sin into the light, we often respond with anger or shame. If the Holy Spirit uses other people to hold us accountable, we get defensive and claim that they're judging us. **God opening our eyes to sin is proof of His great love for us, not judgment.** He wants us to experience freedom and to run joyfully to share His love with others.

WRAP-UP



WHO AROUND YOU NEEDS TO HEAR THAT GOD LOVES AND VALUES THEM? HOW CAN YOU INTERACT AND SHARE HOPE WITH PEOPLE CULTURE IGNORES?

We get comfortable and feel safe in our groups. But God calls us out of comfort to share the gospel. Sure, we should do this with our friends and family, but **if we stop there, then we assign value and worth only to people we're comfortable around.**

People in your classes, on the bus, at the store, in the cafeteria—people you may never interact with naturally—need the hope of the gospel. They're marching toward eternity without God. As believers, we can ask God to open our eyes and make us aware of the spiritual needs around us. We can ask Him to draw us out of our comfort and to make us bold. Notice how Jesus first approached a woman other Jews would've avoided: He asked for water. He found a common need and initiated conversation. You don't have to approach everyone with a Bible in your hand, ready to point out their sin. **You can look for small ways to connect—a common class, a common interest, offering help. Noticing and treating others like they matter goes a long way.**

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