

The Well of Living Water

This week, we overhear a series of conversations and receive helpful advice about conversations that change hearts and minds. The Israelites are thirsty in the desert; Jesus is thirsty at the well. Thirst is universal. The theme of thirst threads through this week's readings and inspire unlikely conversations between the generations of God's people.



Focus scripture

John 4:5–42

Additional scriptures

Exodus 17:1–7

Psalms 95

Romans 5:1–11

John 4:5–42

The story of the woman at the well in John 4:5–42 is an example of the kind of conversation with God that causes us to experience love. The woman had many reasons to avoid Jesus and Jesus was under cultural expectation to ignore her as well. Nevertheless, Jesus initiates a conversation by asking her to meet his need for water. They speak openly about her life and, at the end of the story, “many Samaritans from that city believed in Jesus because of the woman’s testimony...they asked him to stay with them...” The woman moves from avoidance to engagement because a stranger invited her to reflect on her life. Sometimes we tell this story as though Jesus is harsh and judgmental when he tells her about her life. Perhaps he used a gracious tone. The woman experiences Jesus’ way of telling her story as a miracle. Jesus may have been asking her to look beyond the men in her life and the choices she has made that brought her to this point. He doesn’t pass judgment; he simply asks her to consider the true source of life and love.

The disciples then enter the conversation, urging Jesus to eat. Jesus, however, is more concerned with doing the will of God. Jesus expands on the food theme by pointing out the harvest of spiritually hungry and thirsty people around them. There was no need to wait between sowing and reaping – the harvest was already waiting. The Samaritan woman had already started “harvesting.”

Exodus 17:1–7 “The people quarrelled with Moses” which, we discover, is the same as quarrelling with God. This may sound as

though Moses equates himself with God. Moses was chosen to lead God’s people, but we know he does not compare himself to God. Moses was a reluctant leader. He had quarrelled with God about the call on his life and the mission God had given him. Moses learned early that God calls and leads but doesn’t ignore our complaints and arguments.

The psalmist invites us into a worshipping posture in **Psalms 95**. We are reminded of the way people hardened their hearts against God at Massah and Meribah, a story that is told in Exodus 17. God answered in a way worthy of praise when God responded to the people’s anger by providing for their immediate need, and then providing a way for them to learn and experience what it means to rely on God’s guidance. We are created to listen to God and respond with gratitude, but we don’t always know how to be in conversation with God.

In **Romans 5:1–11**, Paul describes what it means to be justified by faith: we are restored to a right relationship with God through Christ, and this brings peace. Even our suffering can teach endurance, build character, and lead to hope. Christ’s death and, even more, Christ’s life will lead us to life with God.

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Engaging strangers in conversation teaches us how to engage the stranger parts of God’s love for us. If we can invite each other into the conversation, surely, we can speak with the lover of our souls. Who do you speak to when you are thirsty?

God, you offer us the water of life. We turn to you in trust, knowing that your faithful provision can meet all our needs. May our gratitude propel us out to share the good news of new life with other thirsty people. Amen.

Lecture Connection

links current events with this week’s scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 5–12

Younger children in this group will tend to be accepting of others no matter how different they are but by the age of eight or nine, some children may begin to exclude others on the basis of differences. Older children in this age group regularly form groups of “best” friends and the groups often change weekly, even daily. These cliques can be a support for the child seeking friends but they can also be heartache for the child who is excluded. It is possible that there may be children in your group who, for some reason or other, feel different and have been excluded by others in numerous ways.

Older children have a strong sense of justice and they know that to exclude others is unfair. This week’s session offers an

opportunity to explain some of the history of antagonism between the Jews and Samaritans. This will help the children see how Jesus, a Jewish man, reached out to welcome and engage in conversation with a Samaritan woman.

The focus scripture is a long story, and like much of John’s gospel, includes more than one theological thread. This session will focus on only part of the story, omitting verses 16–30. Older children in the group who are moving to more abstract thinking will also be encouraged to explore the metaphor of “living water.” Pray that the children will grow in their understanding of welcome, respect, and faith as they explore the living water that Jesus offers.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week’s focus scripture, John 4:5–42, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 19).
- ❑ Set a worship space with purple cloth, candle, and Bible with bookmark placed in focus passage.
- ❑ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2) and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 6) and *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 6), and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ❑ Bring purple construction paper, and a glass or jug of water.
- ❑ Bring, if possible, song “*Jesu Tawa Pano/ Jesus, We Are Here*” (p. 24 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 6; #14 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 6).

Engage

- ❑ Bring resource sheet “[A Drink of Water](#).”
- ❑ **Feelings group:** paper cups, stickers
- ❑ **Drama group:** costumes or headaddresses (optional; see ideas on resource sheet “[Bible-times Costumes](#),” p. 117)

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- ❑ **Lent zone:** recording of song “Behold, I Make All Things New” (#p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 6; #4 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 6), and lyrics printed on a flip chart
- ❑ **Art zone:** copies of resource sheet “[A Water Fountain](#),” small jars or tins, kitchen foil, florist foam or modelling clay, blue paper cut into strips, blue and/or sparkly silver pipe cleaners
- ❑ **Craft zone:** strips of craft foam (2.5 cm/1 in width), narrow ribbon, self-adhesive stickers and craft foam shapes
- ❑ **Outreach zone:** blue poster board, brown construction paper, denominational mission magazines
- ❑ **Quiet zone:** copies of resource sheet “[Well Words](#)”

Bless

- ❑ Bring, if possible, song “As We Go Now” (pp. 6–7 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 6; #28 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 6).



March 15, 2020

The Well of Living Water

Scripture

John 4:5–42

FOCUS To hear a story about living water when Jesus met the woman at the well

Gather

Welcome the children and remind them that we are in the season in the church year called Lent. Invite newcomers to trace around one of their feet on purple construction paper, cut out their footprints, and print their names in the middle of these. As they work, explain that Lent is a time to think about God and learn more about what it means to follow in God's ways.

Opening ritual

Gather in the worship space and point out the purple cloth, reminding children that it is the colour for Lent. Purple is a colour that reminds people in the church to be sorry when they forget to follow in God's ways and to keep trying to follow Jesus' example. Light the candle. Invite

the children to place their footprints around the worship space. Explain that these footprints are a sign that we are ready to travel with Jesus through Lent.

Sing or listen to, if possible, the song "Jesu Tawa Pano/Jesus, We Are Here" (p. 24 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 6; #14 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 6).

Pray (Invite children to repeat each line after you.)

Loving God,
thank you for the special Season of Lent.
We are glad that you are always with us.
Help us to grow strong in your love. Amen.

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Connecting with the focus

Place the glass or jug of water in front of the children. Invite them to name ways that they and their families use water and list their answers on newsprint or a chalkboard. Look at the list together and point out the importance of water in people's everyday lives. Then explain that the Bible story today is about a woman who had to go to a well each day to get all the water that she and her family needed.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship area and use the bookmark to open it to the gospel of John. Recall that there are four gospels in the New Testament, each one telling the story of Jesus in a different way. The gospel of John has some stories about Jesus and some of Jesus' teachings that are not found anywhere else in the Bible. Last week's story was one of these. Briefly review the story of Nicodemus (John 3:1–17). And this week's story is another. It takes place in a region called Samaria and in Jesus' time the Jews and the Samaritans generally had very little to do with each another. Although they both worshipped the same God they disagreed about many religious things.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet "[A Drink of Water](#)" to tell this week's story based on **John 4:5–15, 31–42**.

Wondering questions Use some or all of the following questions to wonder together:

- **What are some of the surprises in this story?**
- **What exciting news does the woman tell the rest of the people in the town?**
- **If you could ask Jesus a question about God's love, what would you ask?**
- **What are some ways that people today tell others about Jesus?**

Exploring the story further

(To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to their interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.)

Feelings group *(for younger children)* This group will have the opportunity to explore some feelings in the story. Invite children to imagine that they have just gone for a long walk on a hot day. Wonder about how the woman felt going to the well to get water in the middle of a hot day. Give each child a cup of water. As they drink imagine how good it felt for Jesus to have a drink of cold water on a hot day. Have them decorate their cups with stickers and help them print “a gift of living water” on their cups.

Drama group *(for older children)* This group will have an opportunity to imagine further the conversation between Jesus, the Samaritan woman, and the rest of the people in the town. Invite children to put on biblical costumes if desired and guide them in acting out the meeting at the well,

and imagining what else Jesus and the woman might have talked about together, and what kinds of questions the people in the town might have asked Jesus.

Reporting Invite the feelings group to share some of their thoughts and invite the drama group to present a short scenario.

The Bible story and us

Ask children to remember what kind of water Jesus offered the woman. Explain that the word “living” described water that is running or flowing rather than stagnant. When Jesus helped the woman to feel welcomed and included it was like a drink of fresh, living water on a hot day.

- **How could we help others feel welcomed and included at our church?**
- **What are some of the ways that people in our church share the “life-giving water” God’s love today?**

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

❑ **Lent zone: Music** Many songs and hymns of the faith speak of God’s life-giving love. Display the lyrics for the song “Behold, I Make All Things New” (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 6) and read in unison. Listen to a recording of the song (#4 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 6) and then lead the group in singing the song together, inviting them to echo the words, line by line, after you. Talk together about the things that are being made new in your community and in the world.

❑ **Art zone: Fountain** *(for older children)* Jesus offered living water to the woman at the well. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “[A Water Fountain](#)” and follow the instructions for preparing the “fountains.” Help children find the passages in their Bibles and choose the words or phrases to print on the paper slips. Encourage them to take their fountains home as reminders of God’s life-giving water.

❑ **Craft zone: Bracelets** *(for younger children)* We can follow Jesus’ example by sharing God’s love with everyone. Distribute craft foam strips and invite children to make and decorate two bracelets each, one to keep and one to give away. Help them print the word “Welcome” on their bracelets and demonstrate how to attach self-adhesive squares. Have them use the craft supplies provided to decorate their bracelets.

❑ **Outreach zone: Poster** The woman couldn’t wait to tell the rest of her community about her encounter with Jesus. People today share “living water” in many different countries. Invite children to make a poster for the church hall showing how people in their denomination are sharing God’s life-giving water with others. Have them draw a shape (such as a large water droplet or a river) on blue poster board and fill it with images of people and projects cut from denominational mission magazines. Choose a title for the poster, and add words to describe the projects, if desired.

- ❑ **Quiet zone: Word puzzle** The Samaritan woman's life was completely changed when she met Jesus, and others in her community were also changed when she shared that love with them. Distribute copies of the resource



sheet "Well Words" and invite children to work individually or in pairs to complete the puzzle (*Answer: God loves everyone*) and fill in the speech bubbles. Share these "conversations" with the rest of the group.

Bless

Gather around the worship area, light the candle again, and invite children to spend a few moments in silence looking at the flame.

Sing if possible, the song "As We Go Now" (pp. 6–7 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 6; #28 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 6).

Pray this prayer or one of your own:

O God, thank you for
the good news of your life-giving love.
Help us show that love to others. Amen.

Blessing Offer the following blessing: "God's refreshing love is for you."

Reflect

What aspects of today's story caught the children's attention or drew them to share their own experiences? How might you encourage and support them as they continue to help one another feel included and welcomed?

Looking ahead: invite an adult from the congregation to present the biblical story on p. 32 for the next session.



A Drink of Water

(based on John 4:5–42)

Use your body to tell the story too. For example, show the shock of the disciples when they found Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman.

Jesus and the disciples had been walking for a long time. They started in the early morning when it was cool. Now, at noon, the sun was blazing hot and they were hungry, thirsty, and dusty. They were at the village of Sychar in Samaria. Jesus sat down by the well and looked around.

Most Jews would not walk through Samaria. Instead, they went out of their way to avoid the country and anyone who lived in it. The Jews thought the Samaritans did not give God praise and glory in the proper way. The Jews wanted nothing to do with the Samaritans. They didn't want to talk to them, eat with them, or ask them for anything. But here were Jesus and the disciples, all Jews, walking through Samaria.

Noon is lunchtime, so Jesus told the disciples to go into the town to find food. As Jesus waited, a Samaritan woman came to get water from the well.

"Please," said Jesus, "could you give me a drink of water?"

The woman knew this man was not Samaritan. "Why would you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink of water?" Besides that,

a strange man would not talk to a strange woman in public. This was most unusual!

"I can give you water and you will never be thirsty," said Jesus.

The woman looked around. This man didn't have a bucket. "How can you get water without a bucket?" she said.

"My water, living water, is a gift from God."

The Samaritan woman and Jesus talked and talked. They talked about God and how to praise God. Jesus told the woman, "I am the one, the Christ, sent from God."

After a while, the disciples came back. They were shocked to see Jesus talking to a woman, and a Samaritan woman, at that! They looked at one another, but no one said anything to Jesus. They were getting used to such surprises from Jesus.

The woman left quickly, so quickly that she forgot her water jar. She wanted to tell the people in her town what had happened. "Come," she said, "I have met a man who told me all about myself. Could he be the one God has promised?"

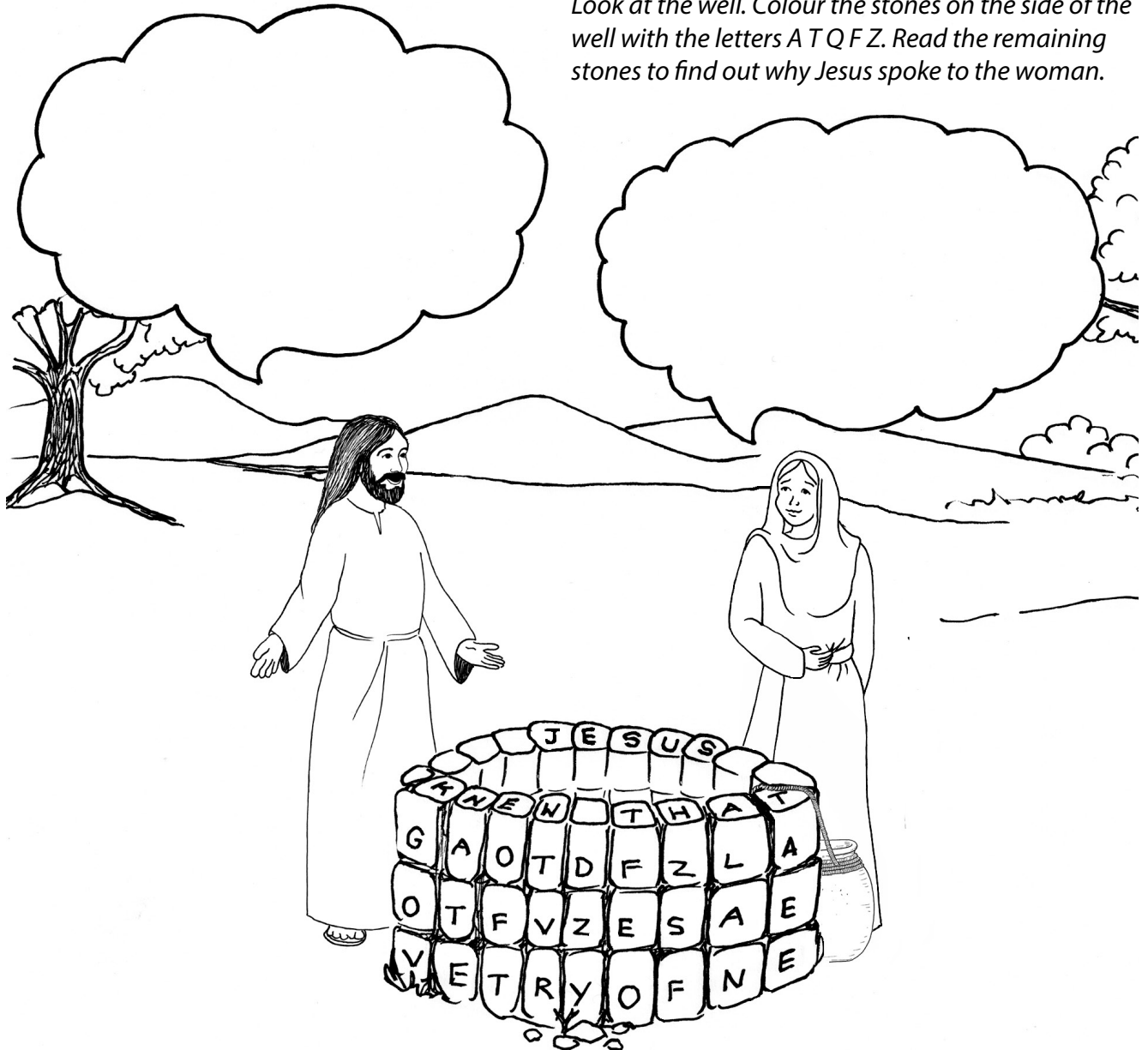
The people hurried to see this person for themselves. They found Jesus and the disciples at the well. They asked Jesus to stay with them and Jesus, a Jew, stayed in Sychar for two days. All these people learned more about God from Jesus. This all happened because the woman at the well had told them that Jesus was sent from God. What a powerful witness, what a faithful believer she was!



WELL WORDS

In Jesus' time the Jewish people and the Samaritan people did not get along. One day Jesus, who was Jewish, stopped by a well. While he was resting, a Samaritan woman came to fetch water. Jesus asked the woman for a drink. The woman was very surprised that Jesus would talk to her.

Look at the well. Colour the stones on the side of the well with the letters A T Q F Z. Read the remaining stones to find out why Jesus spoke to the woman.



What do you think Jesus and the woman are saying to each other? Fill in the speech bubbles.



A Water Fountain

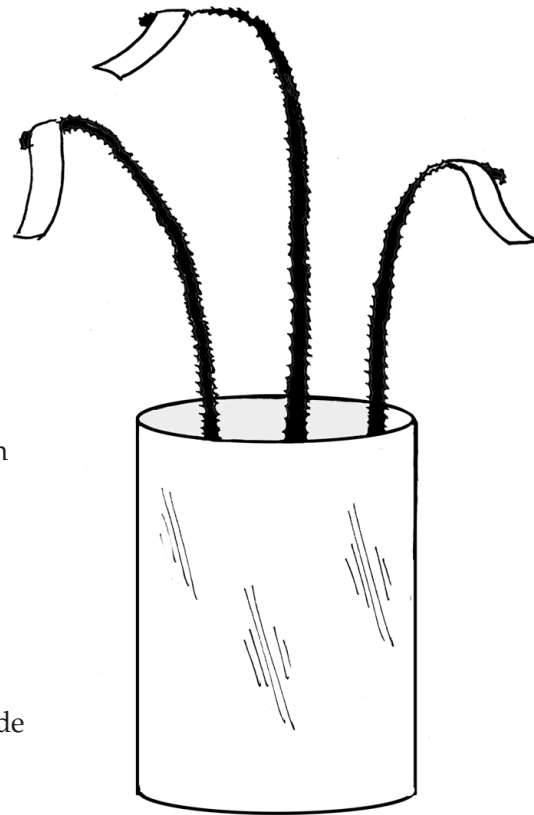
This fountain reminds us that Jesus met the woman at the well in Sychar and spoke to her about God's life-giving water.

Materials:

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ small jar or tin can
- ☐ kitchen foil
- ☐ florist foam or modelling clay
- ☐ white or light blue paper cut into strips of about 7 cm x 1 cm or 3 inch x ½ inch
- ☐ pipe cleaners

Directions:

1. Select small jar or tin can.
2. Cover it with kitchen foil.
3. Set a block of florist foam or a chunk of modelling clay inside the jar or can.
4. Select words or phrases from Jesus' words in John 4:5-42 and Psalm 95:1-7.
5. Write those words on strips of white or light blue paper.
6. Tape the phrases to pipe cleaners.
7. Poke the pipe cleaners into the florist foam or modelling clay.
8. Bend the pipe cleaners so they look like water spewing up from a fountain.



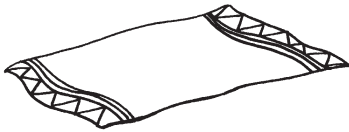
Bible-times Costumes

Any time you want to add a touch of drama to telling or listening to a story, provide costumes for the storyteller, the actors, or the audience. Here are some ideas to have on hand for any story or session.

Simple tunic

Fold a length of fabric in half. Cut a half circle in the fold, large enough to fit over the head. Hold the tunic together with a sash. Make several sizes of these tunics so you can outfit children and adults.

Complete the costume with a headdress and a length of fabric for a cape.



Headdress

Cut white cloth into rectangles long enough to drape over the head of a child or adult. Hold the headdress in place with an elastic headband or a ribbon. Other colours can be used as well.

To create a headdress for a woman, use a longer length of fabric so the headdress can be draped over the shoulders, covering more of the woman's head.

To create a costume for nobility, simply use fancier fabric. Old drapes, often found in secondhand shops or garage sales, are great. Take any cords used as tiebacks, too.

Props

A simple prop can add just the touch needed to distinguish the actor. A bag of gold coins for a tax collector, a shepherd's crook, or a wooden bowl or spoon can set the tone quickly.

