



Bible Study

1 THESSALONIANS
JOHN 4:1-15



Canadian Lutheran
World Relief

CLWR BIBLE STUDIES

CLWR's Bible Studies have been designed to help congregations delve deeper into the challenges leading to injustices around the world, to explore related Bible stories, to discuss how these connect and how God calls us to act together.

These studies are meant to be adapted for your congregation's needs and are free to use. Each study includes discussion questions for children to adults, as well as suggestions to connect this discussion to action.

As CLWR continues to grow our resource collection, we would love to hear suggestions and insight from you. Please feel free to contact Heidi Van Schaik, our Church Relations Manager at heidi@clwr.org with ideas and feedback.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- The gospel of John was typically shared orally until it was written down likely about 90 CE.
- This would have been written in the later stages of the development of the early Christian beliefs.
- The author would have been familiar with the texts of the Synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) but offers different content and details.
- It is suspected that there is more than one author contained in this book and it was likely written by a number of Johannine school followers (to read more on this check out this link:
 - <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Johannine-Theology>
- The author was writing primarily to the Greeks.
- In John, Jesus regularly reveals himself as divine, this offers us an understanding of a high Christology in this gospel.
- The intention of John's gospel is to legitimize the position on how to live in this time by offering a biography of Jesus that offers examples.
- The primary goal of these writings was to persuade the community into a particular pattern of behaviour rather than to recount the story of Christ.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

- This was likely written in Ephesus in a time that persecution by Rome was frequent.
- Conflicts were increasing on all fronts, including between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians as well as between the different sects of Judaism.

SITUATIONAL CONTEXT

- This passage is only found in the gospel of John.
- The Samaritans were considered Jewish, they worshipped God, and followed the Torah, but other Jews did not consider them to be authentic in their observances.
- Following the Babylonian Exile in 593 BCE, some Jews returned to Israel, while others did not. This caused a rift between the different sects each believing that their belief and practices were correct while the other was wrong.
- For more information on this you can check out these sites:
 - <https://www.gotquestions.org/Babylonian-captivity-exile.html>
 - <https://bible-history.com/old-testament/return-from-babylon>
- Remember that the rules about men and women mixing are the same in both communities.

John 4: 1-15

Jesus Talks With a Samaritan Woman

Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— 2 although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. 3 So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

4 Now he had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)

10 Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

11 “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

13 Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

15 The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

STUDY

Read John 4: 1-15

Why was Jesus on the move?

- The Pharisees were upset.

Why were the Pharisees upset?

- Jesus was gaining followers.

Why doesn't Jesus go around Samaria?

- Going through was the quickest route.
- He was in a hurry to get out of the reach of the Pharisees.

Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well at noon. What is interesting, concerning about this?

- Male/female encounter
- Israelite Jew/Samaritan Jew encounter
- It's the hottest part of the day.
- Female challenges male (v12) asking if he, a peasant Jew, sees himself greater than the patriarch Jacob.
- She is bold, strong in character – defensive maybe?

STUDY (CONTINUED)

Why might this woman be coming to the well in the hottest part of the day?

- Need, shame, fear

Has there ever been a time in your life when you needed something and had to obtain it in a challenging way?

What is Jesus' response?

- Engages with a woman – a Samaritan woman.
- Offers her the same gift as he would an Israelite Jew (and everyone else)

Read John 4:12-15 again.

Have you ever been thirsty literally? What was that like? How was your thirst quenched?

Have you ever been thirsty spiritually? What was that like? How was your thirst quenched?

Did You Know:

- In 2010 the UN declared water to be a human right?
 - www.unwater.org/water-facts/human-rights-water-and-sanitation
- Many people and communities in Canada lack clean, safe drinking water?
 - www.theindigenousfoundation.org/articles/indigenous-safe-drinking-water-crisis-in-canada-overview
 - www.hrw.org/report/2016/06/07/make-it-safe/canadas-obligation-end-first-nations-water-crisis
 - 82,400 people in Canada are without regular access to clean, safe drinking water.
- About 2 BILLION people around the world are without clean, safe drinking water.
 - Refugees are particularly vulnerable.

WONDERINGS

Consider your local community, who might be literally or spiritually thirsty?

Consider Canada, who might be literally or spiritually thirsty?

Consider the world who might be literally or spiritually thirsty?

ACTION BRAINSTORM

What can you/your parish offer thirst quenchers locally?

What can you/your parish offer thirst quenchers nationally?

What can you/your parish offer thirst quenchers globally?

ACTION SUGGESTIONS

Read and learn more. One suggestion is the book, “Denying the Source: The Crisis of First Nations Water Rights” by Merrell-Ann S. Phare. It is available on Amazon in hardcover or Kindle.

Have a movie night (make sure you have any required licences) or watch a water movie on your own and have some conversation about the world water crisis with others.

- A few options to kick off conversation is the film *Erin Brockovich* with Julia Roberts, but there are some great documentaries available on streaming services as well: *Brave Blue World*, *Blue Gold – World Water Wars*, *In Our Water*, *Water on the Table*, *The Devil We Know*, and *Flow: For Love of Water*.
- Offer a snack booth to raise money for water initiatives.

Host an event to raise awareness and funds to resolve water insecurities.

Use an empty water jug from a water cooler and challenge your parishioners to fill it with Toonies and Loonies, or spare change, or simply by donation, with the proceeds going to a CLWR water support initiative.

ACTION SUGGESTIONS (CONTINUED)

Host a fundraiser to support CLWR initiatives to address water concerns, such as giving a refugee settlement community water (\$2,000) or providing a family emergency water during a crisis (\$30) or supporting women in Myanmar with a Lifestraw unit in a local women's shelter to provide clean water for 60+ women and girls (\$400).

March 22 is World Water Day – consider an event around this day and take advantage of the resources offered by the UN.

In quenching literal thirst, we can also support those who are spiritually thirsty as well.

Take up a special offering on Palm Sunday (or any Sunday) to help address the world water crisis.

FOR CHILDREN

Introduce children to the idea that we use water every day and that we need it to live. The water bottle is a great tool to start conversations on the life-giving nature of water.

Ask children for ideas about when we use water (to drink, to wash ourselves, to brush our teeth etc.). Ask children how we use water in church and to look around the sanctuary for signs of water.

Discuss ways in which we might waste water in our daily lives. Children could be given the task of designing signs to put around the home or church encouraging people not to waste water.

Here are some resources to have this conversation with children:

- Children's Sermon: The Woman at the Well (John 4) Living Water Object Lesson
 - <https://ministry-to-children.com/woman-at-the-well-sermon/>
- “Water for Peace” Activation Kit for Schoolchildren: This kit is designed to engage students in learning about the importance of water conservation and peace-building through fun and educational activities, with a special focus on using art and football.
 - https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2023/12/wwd2024_school_activationkit.pdf

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

You give us life giving water
to sustain us for all time
in the gift of your Son
and provide us with life sustaining water
in abundance on this earth.

We give you thanks: for the gift of salvation,
for every thirst-quenching glass of water,
for every drop in our daily showers,
and for time to sit quietly
next to rushing streams, rivers, and oceans.

Help us to be mindful in our use
and pollution of these precious resources.

Help us to be good stewards of your creation,
ensuring this life giving and sustaining resource
is enjoyed by all.

Help us also to share the gift of life-giving water,
sharing the good news with all who will hear.

Amen.