

Living Water: The Stranger at the Well

JOHN 4:1-26 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

The tired man asking for water is the Messiah who gives it.

Open with it, bring it back after every section, close with it. By the end they should be able to finish the sentence for you.

- Before this passage (day 4): John 3:1-21, Born Again.
- After this passage (day 6): John 4:46-54, He Just Believed. Its big idea: Jesus' word is enough, even before you can see it work.

Open

Recall: Last time, in John 3, Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. He was a respected Jewish teacher, and he heard that he must be born again. Today Jesus meets the opposite of Nicodemus: an outsider, at midday. Ask: When have you been truly thirsty? Or when have you kept going back to something that never quite satisfied? Read: John 4:6-7, "Jesus, weary from His journey, sat down by the well... 'Give Me a drink.'" Big idea: The tired man asking for water is the Messiah who gives it. Ask one person what stuck from last time.

Run Sheet

1. A Tired Jew Asks a Samaritan for Water (John 4:1-9, about 12 min)

The one thing: Jesus opens the door by being truly human and truly in need.

Ask: Why might Jesus start with asking for help instead of offering it?

2. Water That Ends Thirst (John 4:10-15, about 13 min)

The one thing: Jesus offers a gift that satisfies from the inside and never runs dry.

Ask: What do people keep going back to, hoping it will finally satisfy?

3. He Knows Her, and He Tells Her Who He Is (John 4:16-26, about 15 min)

The one thing: The Messiah knows everything about her, seeks her anyway, and reveals Himself to her.

Ask: Why do you think Jesus told this woman, of all people, who He was?

Close (never cut it)

Land on who Jesus is, not on a task. The man who sat weary at the well and asked for water is the Messiah who gives living water, and the Father came seeking her before she sought Him. Read v10 and v26 together, pause, and let "who is asking you" hang in the room.

PROTECT THE ENDING

If section 3 starts late, skip the mountain discussion (vv20-22) and go straight from v18 to v26 and the close.

KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 3, 2, 5, 4, 1 (top to bottom) · Feelings: The Pharisees worried, The Samaritan woman worried, Jesus happy, The disciples buying food happy · Code: LIVING WATER

Act it out: One child is tired Jesus sitting by a "well" (a bucket). Another carries a jug and asks, "How can You ask me?" The teacher narrates up to "I who speak to you am He."

1. A Tired Jew Asks a Samaritan for Water

JOHN 4:1-9 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Jesus "had to pass through Samaria."
- He is weary, and He sits at Jacob's well at about noon.
- He crosses an old wall with a simple request: "Give Me a drink."

Jesus, WEARY from His journey, sat down by the well.

For Jews do not associate with SAMARITANS.

Discuss: Why might Jesus start with asking for help instead of offering it?

Jesus opens the door by being truly human and truly in need.

MUST COVER

- Real tiredness (v6): the Son of God gets weary and thirsty, and He asks a stranger for help.
- Real walls (v9): Jews and Samaritans avoided each other, and a rabbi talking alone with a woman broke two rules at once.

IF THERE'S TIME

- Jacob gave this land to Joseph (Genesis 48:22, the first book of the Bible). Both peoples claimed Jacob as father.
- "Sixth hour" usually means noon, the heat of the day. Coming alone then may hint she avoided others, but that is a guess, not a statement in the text.

Illustration idea: A new neighbor asks to borrow a ladder. Suddenly you are talking, when you never would have otherwise.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: It honored her. It made her feel useful.
- Listen for: It lowered her guard, since He needed something too.

If it drifts: If talk turns into a general debate about prejudice, bring it back to v9. Ask: what did this woman expect from a Jew, and what did she get?

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

He's thirsty, He's tired, and He's asking. Keep watching who this man turns out to be.

Short on time? Skip the Jacob and Joseph background. Keep v6 and v9.

Bridge → He asked her for water. Now He tells her He is the one with water to give.

2. Water That Ends Thirst

JOHN 4:10-15 · ABOUT 13 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Jesus says, "If you knew the gift of God and who is asking you..."
- Well water runs out, so everyone comes back thirsty.
- The water Jesus gives becomes "a fount of water springing up to eternal life."

He would have given you LIVING WATER.

Everyone who drinks this water will be THIRSTY AGAIN.

Discuss: What do people keep going back to, hoping it will finally satisfy?

Jesus offers a gift that satisfies from the inside and never runs dry.

MUST COVER

- The two unknowns (v10): she doesn't know the gift, and she doesn't know who is asking.
- The contrast (vv13-14): this well leaves you thirsty again. His water never runs out.

IF THERE'S TIME

• Jeremiah 2:13. Jeremiah was a prophet about 600 years earlier. In this verse God calls Himself "the spring of living waters" and calls people's substitutes "broken cisterns."

• "Are You greater than our father Jacob?" (v12). She means it as a jab, but it is exactly the right question.

Illustration idea: Refilling a water bottle all day, compared with having a tap that runs in your own kitchen.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Money, success, or approval.
- Listen for: Relationships, or someone to finally make life feel full.

If it drifts: If it becomes a list of vices, return to v13. The point isn't that well water is bad. The point is that it runs out.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

The one who asked her for a drink is the one who never runs dry.

Short on time? Drop Jeremiah. Keep v10 and vv13-14.

Bridge → She asks for the water, and Jesus answers by talking about her life.

3. He Knows Her, and He Tells Her Who He Is

JOHN 4:16-26 · ABOUT 15 MIN · SECTION 3 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Jesus knows her whole story and keeps talking with her.
- True worship is "in spirit and in truth," not tied to a mountain.
- To her, Jesus says plainly: "I who speak to you am He."

The Father is SEEKING such as these to worship Him.

I who speak to you am HE.

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus told this woman, of all people, who He was?

The Messiah knows everything about her, seeks her anyway, and reveals Himself to her.

MUST COVER

- Known, not rejected (vv16-18): He names her history, calls her truthful, and keeps the conversation going.
- Revealed (vv25-26): she speaks of a coming Messiah, and He says, "I who speak to you am He."

IF THERE'S TIME

- The mountain (v20). Samaritans worshiped on Mount Gerizim, and Jews worshiped in Jerusalem. Jesus says the Father is after worshipers, not a location.
- "Salvation is from the Jews" (v22). The promised Savior comes through Israel's story, and He is standing in front of her.

Illustration idea: A doctor who has read your whole chart, and still sits down, looks you in the eye, and stays.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Because she was an outsider, and He wanted to show grace reaches anyone.
- Listen for: Because she was honest and actually asked.

If it drifts: If the talk lands on judging her marriages, point to v18. Jesus says "You have spoken truthfully" and moves on. Then go to v26.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

The thirsty stranger was the Messiah all along, and He came looking for her.

Short on time? Cut the mountain debate (vv20-22). Go from v18 straight to v26.

Bridge → Stop on His words, "I who speak to you am He," and let them sit.

With One Friend, Over Coffee

ABOUT 30 MINUTES · FOR A FRIEND WHO IS CURIOUS, OR NOT SURE

1. Start with thirst. Ask what they keep going back to that never quite satisfies. Listen more than you talk.
2. Read the scene. Read John 4:6-15 together. Point out that Jesus is tired, He asks her for help, and He crosses a wall between Jews and Samaritans to do it.
3. Two kinds of water. Look at vv13-14. Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but His water "will become in him a fount of water springing up to eternal life."
4. Known and not dismissed. Read vv16-18. He knows her story, calls her truthful, and keeps talking. Ask how that lands for them.
5. Leave His question. Read vv10 and 26. Leave them with what Jesus said: "If you knew... who is asking you." Don't push. Simply ask, "Who do you think He is?" and let it rest.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

"Guessing someone's past and then claiming to be the Messiah: isn't that how a fraud works?"

It's a fair worry. But a fraud flatters people and takes something from them. Jesus names hard truth, asks for nothing but water, and offers a gift. And if someone were inventing a story, a Samaritan woman alone at a well is an odd choice of witness in that culture.

"No one else was there, so how would anyone know what was said?"

Honestly, we're relying on John's account. Weigh the details: the time of day, Jacob's well, the old mountain dispute. They read like remembered specifics, not polish. You can judge the whole Gospel as you read it.

"Was she a bad person with five husbands?"

The text doesn't say why. Women then could be widowed or divorced with little say. Jesus doesn't lecture her. He calls her truthful and keeps talking.

"What is 'living water,' really?"

Jesus means life from God that satisfies from the inside and doesn't run out. Later in John (7:37-39) it's tied to God's Spirit given to those who come to Him.

Evergreen Principles

Four standards every week. The rest rotate: each lesson brings the few that fit its passage best.

EVERY LESSON

1. Pray before you prepare

Teaching the Bible is spiritual work first (John 15:5).

If you're new: Pray for your class by name during the week.

If you've taught for years: Pray for the one person you find hardest to reach.

2. Study the text first

Understand the passage yourself before any help.

If you're new: Read it in two translations; write your own questions first.

If you've taught for years: Don't lean on old notes. What did you miss last time?

3. Teach one big idea

People remember one sentence, not four points.

If you're new: Write it in 12 words or fewer before anything else.

If you've taught for years: Test every story against it. If it doesn't serve it, cut it.

4. Point to Christ

All of Scripture points to him (Luke 24:27).

If you're new: Ask: what does this show about Jesus?

If you've taught for years: Show grace as the reason for obedience, not just the rule.

FOR THIS LESSON

1. Plan for the skeptic and the grieving

This passage invites both a fraud objection and quiet shame.

If you're new: Have one honest sentence ready for "a clever guess" and one for anyone carrying a painful history.

If you've taught for years: Invite the skeptic's question out loud and work through it from vv17-18 together.

2. Admit what is hard

"Salvation is from the Jews" and the five husbands can both sting.

If you're new: Say plainly what the text doesn't tell us about her marriages.

If you've taught for years: Unpack v22 as the promise coming through Israel, without softening it or overselling it.

3. Let the passage land the way it lands

The passage builds to a revelation, not a to-do list.

If you're new: End on v26 and resist adding homework.

If you've taught for years: Hold silence after v26. Let "who is asking you" do the work.

BEFORE CLASS

- ☐ Read the passage three times
- ☐ Big idea in one sentence
- ☐ Opening and close chosen
- ☐ Know what you'll cut
- ☐ Handouts, pens, extra Bibles
- ☐ Prayed for the class by name

Openings, Closings & Hard Moments

Pick one opening and one close; rotate so class doesn't get predictable.

OPENINGS

- ask a real-life question: What's something you keep going back to that never quite satisfies?

- use an object: Set out an empty water bottle and a full one. Ask which lasts, and why we keep refilling.
- start in the text: Read v7: a Jewish rabbi asking a Samaritan woman, "Give Me a drink." Ask what's shocking about it.

CLOSINGS

- restate the big idea: The tired man asking for water is the Messiah who gives it.
- allow quiet reflection: Read v10, then sit in silence for thirty seconds with "who is asking you."
- call back to the opening: Hold up the empty bottle again: "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again." Then read v26.

WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- Someone with a painful relationship history goes quiet or tense at vv16-18.: Point out that Jesus doesn't shame her. He calls her truthful and stays. Don't ask anyone to share their own story.
- Someone objects that "salvation is from the Jews" (v22) sounds exclusive.: Explain that the Savior promised in Israel's Scriptures comes through Israel, and He is offering Himself to a Samaritan right then. Admit it is still a strong claim.
- Silence after a question: Wait. Then rephrase simpler, or ask them to talk to a neighbor first.
- One person dominates: "Thanks. Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet." Talk privately if it continues.
- A question you can't answer: Say so, write it down, bring an answer next week.
- A tangent takes over: "Great question. Let's catch it after class so we can finish the passage."

READ THIS WEEK

- Jeremiah 2:13
- Isaiah 55:1-3
- John 7:37-39

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/john/4-1-26/lesson

Living Water: The Stranger at the Well

JOHN 4:1-26 (BSB) · WHO DO YOU SAY I AM? · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: "But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst." John 4:14

THE BIG IDEA

The tired man asking for water is the Messiah who gives it.

1. A TIRED JEW ASKS A SAMARITAN FOR WATER · JOHN 4:1-9

- Jesus "had to pass through Samaria."
- He is weary, and He sits at Jacob's well at about noon.
- He crosses an old wall with a simple request: "Give Me a drink."

Jesus, _____ from His journey, sat down by the well.

For Jews do not associate with _____.

Discuss: Why might Jesus start with asking for help instead of offering it?

2. WATER THAT ENDS THIRST · JOHN 4:10-15

- Jesus says, "If you knew the gift of God and who is asking you..."
- Well water runs out, so everyone comes back thirsty.
- The water Jesus gives becomes "a fount of water springing up to eternal life."

He would have given you _____.

Everyone who drinks this water will be _____.

Discuss: What do people keep going back to, hoping it will finally satisfy?

3. HE KNOWS HER, AND HE TELLS HER WHO HE IS · JOHN 4:16-26

- Jesus knows her whole story and keeps talking with her.
- True worship is "in spirit and in truth," not tied to a mountain.
- To her, Jesus says plainly: "I who speak to you am He."

The Father is _____ such as these to worship Him.

I who speak to you am _____.

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus told this woman, of all people, who He was?

Read this week: Jeremiah 2:13 · Isaiah 55:1-3 · John 7:37-39

For Kids: Living Water: The Stranger at the Well

JOHN 4:1-26 · NAME: _____

Big idea: Jesus gives water that never runs out.

1. PUT THE STORY IN ORDER! NUMBER THE BOXES.

- ☐ Jesus asks a woman for water.
- ☐ Jesus sits by Jacob's well.
- ☐ Jesus says he is the Messiah.
- ☐ Jesus offers her living water.
- ☐ Jesus walks to Samaria, feeling tired.

2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

The Pharisees: happy · sad · worried

The Samaritan woman: happy · sad · worried

Jesus: happy · sad · worried

The disciples buying food: happy · sad · worried

3. WORD SEARCH

M T J E S U S D D
E H R S W A T E R
S I S R E N U V S
S R A H L U C N D
I S M F L P G F R
A T A G K P S B I
H Y R N B Y S U N
R F I J A C O B K
V G A K C Y U K U

WELL · WATER · JESUS · JACOB · SAMARIA · THIRSTY · MESSIAH · DRINK

4. SECRET CODE

1=A 2=E 3=G 4=I 5=L 6=N 7=R 8=T 9=V 10=W

5 4 9 4 6 3 10 1 8 2 7

5. DRAW IT!

Draw Jesus sitting by the well, talking with the woman who came for water.

6. MEMORY VERSE

"I who speak to you am He." John 4:26 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

Jesus gives water that... _____