

Living Water

Exodus 17:1-7 · John 4:1-15 · John 7:37-39

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers that the water promised in the desert becomes, in Jesus, the gift of the Spirit welling up from within, and learns St. Teresa's four waters as a map of how prayer moves from our labor to God's gift.

Catholic Touchstone. God thirsts for us (CCC 2560-2561): prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours; God thirsts that we may thirst for him, and our petition for living water is already his gift arriving.

What You Need to Know

After the driest session of the study, water. That sequencing is deliberate and biblical: in Scripture, the desert is precisely where the water breaks out (Exodus 17; Isaiah 35:6, waters shall break forth in the wilderness). Open by naming the turn: Thread B, planted in Session 5, surfaces tonight and will finish in Session 10 as fire.

The teaching centerpiece is St. Teresa's most famous image. In her *Life* (the garden analogy begins in chapter 11), she compares the soul to a garden and prayer to four ways of watering it: drawing water from a well by hand (beginners' laborious meditation); the water wheel and buckets (prayer becoming easier, more recollected); a stream running through the garden (the prayer of quiet, where God does most of the work); and soaking rain from heaven (union, all God's gift, no labor of ours at all). One garden, one water, four deliveries, and the direction of travel is constant: from our effort toward God's gift. Teresa is emphatic that the gardener's job never disappears; it changes: at first we haul, later we mostly receive and tend.

Two abuses to prevent tonight. First, the ladder-of-elites misreading: the waters are not merit badges, and the well-hauling beginner is not a lesser Christian; Teresa insists the Lord of the garden prizes the haulers' labor. Second, the technique misreading: the later waters cannot be produced by any method; they are given. The group's assignment remains what it has been since Session 4: keep the appointment, haul the water you can haul, and let God decide the weather.

Note for your own preparation: this session is wall-to-wall Johannine. The Samaritan woman's arc (John 4) is the whole study in one conversation: Jesus, thirsty, asks her for a drink, and by the end she has left her water jar. Begin with his thirst; CCC 2560 hangs everything on it.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Exodus 17:1-7: Israel, camped at Rephidim with no water, quarrels with Moses ("Is the LORD among us or not?", 17:7, the sealed-guess question in ancient dress). God's answer is not a lecture but a rock: "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it" (17:6). Note where God stands: on the rock that is struck. Paul reads it plainly: "the Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4).

The prophets promise the water will one day be interior and unfailing: "with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3); "I will pour water on the thirsty land... I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants" (Isaiah 44:3), where the parallel lines interpret each other: the water is the Spirit. Ezekiel sees it as a river flowing from the temple, deepening as it goes, healing everything it touches (Ezekiel 47:1-12).

John declares fulfillment twice: to the Samaritan woman, "the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14), and at the feast: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink" (7:37), with the evangelist's own gloss: "this he said about the Spirit" (7:39), given when Jesus was glorified: struck rock, opened side (19:34), Pentecost.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Teresa of Avila

Teresa compares the soul to a garden the Lord delights to walk in, and prayer to watering it four ways: hauling from a well by hand; turning a water wheel with its buckets; channeling a running stream; and receiving drenching rain from heaven. The first asks the most of our labor and the last is pure gift, though grace enables every water from the first bucket up; the movement between them is the story of a praying life: God gradually taking over the watering. Her counsel to the haulers is tender, in substance: your labor pleases the Lord of the garden, and the rain is his to send when he will.

The Life; the garden and four waters begin in ch. 11.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. John of the Cross

Imprisoned in Toledo, John composed a poem on the eternal spring: "For I know well the spring that flows and runs, although it is night." Stanza by stanza he confesses what he knows of that hidden fountain, its origin in the Father, its stream in the Son, its living water offered to every creature, and each stanza ends on the same refrain: although it is night. It is Session 6 and Session 7 in a single line: the water never stopped flowing; it was only dark.

From his poem "Song of the soul that rejoices in knowing God through faith," often called The Fountain: "For I know well the spring that flows and runs, although it is night."

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. John Paul II

Calling the whole Church to depth at the start of the new millennium, St. John Paul II wrote that our Christian communities must become genuine schools of prayer, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening, and ardent devotion, "until the heart truly falls in love": a Christianity distinguished, he said, in the art of prayer. It is the charter for everything this study has practiced since Session 4, written for every parish and every dry land.

Novo Millennio Ineunte 32-33.

Catechism Connection

CCC 2560 opens the Catechism's treatment of prayer at Jacob's well: "If you knew the gift of God!" (John 4:10). The wonder of prayer, it says, is revealed there, where Christ comes to meet every human being; he thirsts first, asks first, and (quoting St. Augustine) God thirsts that we may thirst for him. Our desire for God is already his gift working in us.

CCC 2561 completes the reversal: our petition for living water is a response to the plea of the living God; prayer is the encounter of his thirst with ours.

CCC 694 gathers the water symbolism of the Spirit: the water of baptism signifies that our birth into the divine life is given us in the Holy Spirit; as by one Spirit we were all made to drink of one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). Teresa's rain has a name.

THREAD WATCH (LEADER ONLY)

Thread B ("Water to Flame") surfaces officially tonight: at session's end, point back to Session 5's desert and forward with one line: in Scripture, what water begins, fire completes; three sessions from now the water catches flame. (Pentecost stays unnamed.)

Thread A: available in one sentence if the schools-of-prayer Voice lands: the tailor ran a school of prayer out of an apartment before anyone used the phrase. Still no name in full context; Session 11 is close now. Sealed guesses are opened and done; if anyone missed Session 6, give them two minutes with their sheet

before Win, privately.

Session Goals

1. Trace the water trajectory as discovery: struck rock, promised Spirit, Jacob's well, the feast cry, the opened side.
2. Learn the four waters accurately: a map of God's increasing gift, not a merit ladder or a technique.
3. Internalize CCC 2560-2561: God thirsts first; our thirst is his gift.
4. Answer the objection that degrees of prayer create a two-tier Christianity.

Time note (75-90 min). Win 10 min; Build 50 min; Send and Live It 15 min. If pressed, cut Q5 and make Ezekiel 47 a leader mention inside the discovery debrief; keep the full John 4 work and the steelman.

Living Water

Exodus 17:1-7 · John 4:1-15 · John 7:37-39

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, weary at the well, you asked a woman for a drink because you thirsted for her heart. You are thirsting for ours tonight. Give us the living water you promised, the Spirit welling up within, and teach us to keep our gardens watered until you send the rain. Amen.

WIN

W1. Where in your life right now would you use the word "thirsty" (for rest, for meaning, for connection, for God)? How do you usually try to quench it?

W2. Teresa pictures prayer as watering a garden. If your prayer life this month were a watering method, what would it look like: hauling buckets, a wheel creaking along, a stream, rain?

BUILD

Q1. Read John 4:1-15. Who is thirsty in this scene, and who asks for a drink first? Why does that order matter (see CCC 2560 in the leader guide)?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Jesus is thirsty first, and asks first: "Give me a drink" (4:7), a Jewish rabbi asking a Samaritan woman, scandalizing every convention in sight. The order is the Gospel in miniature: before we seek God, God is seeking us; before we thirst for him, he thirsts for us (CCC 2560, with Augustine: God thirsts that we may thirst for him). Prayer never starts from our initiative; the woman came for water and found she had been waited for. So has everyone in this room.

DISCOVERY MOMENT · Q2

At the feast (read John 7:37-39), Jesus cries out: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink," and promises that rivers of living water will flow "as the scripture has said." Send the group into the Old Testament for the water: where did water come from a rock in the desert (Exodus, during the wilderness wandering)? Where do the prophets link poured-out water with the poured-out Spirit (try Isaiah 44), and where does a river flow from the temple, deepening as it goes (Ezekiel, late chapters)? Build the chain, then ask the question John himself answers in 7:39: what is the water?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The chain: Exodus 17:1-6, water from the struck rock at Horeb, with the LORD standing on the rock ("the Rock was Christ," 1 Corinthians 10:4); Isaiah 44:3, "I will pour water on the thirsty land... I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants," where water and Spirit are parallel; Ezekiel 47:1-12, the river from the temple, ankle to knee to waist to waters to swim in, healing the sea itself. John 7:39 names the water outright: "this he said about the Spirit." And John shows the rock struck: from the pierced side of the glorified Jesus flow blood and water (19:34). The desert's question, "Is the LORD among us or not?" (Ex 17:7), is answered from inside: he will be in you, a spring welling up (John 4:14).

Q3. The woman keeps hearing "water" literally (4:11, 4:15), and Jesus keeps deepening it. Track the conversation: how does Jesus lead her from a bucket to her own heart to worship (4:16-26)? What does verse 28 quietly report, and what does it mean?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Jesus never wins the argument; he deepens the thirst: from well water to living water (4:10), from her five husbands to the truth of her life (4:16-18), from the mountain-versus-Jerusalem dispute to worship in spirit and truth (4:21-24), and finally the unveiling: "I who speak to you am he" (4:26). Verse 28: "So the woman left her water jar" and went to call the city. The jar she came for is abandoned beside the well; she has found the spring. Teresa would say: she came hauling, and it rained.

BUILD, THEN PRESS: DO THE FOUR WATERS MAKE TWO CLASSES OF CHRISTIANS?

Full strength: "Here is my problem with Teresa's ladder. John 4 and John 7 offer living water to anyone who thirsts, immediately, freely: let him come to me and drink. No stages, no years of hauling, no elite fourth water for the mystically gifted. But the Carmelite scheme grades prayer into degrees, and inevitably grades Christians with it: beginners at their buckets, adepts under the rain. That is a two-tier church, spiritual haves and have-nots, and it quietly replaces the free gift with a curriculum. Scripture knows one baptism, one Spirit given to all (1 Corinthians 12:13), not four waters for four castes."

This objection defends something precious (the equality of the baptized); honor that before answering.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Affirm its treasure: there is one Spirit, one baptism, and the living water is offered to "any one" who thirsts, with no entrance exam; water is the Church's own baptismal symbol of the Spirit (CCC 694), the Gift given in baptism to be welcomed, kept, and rekindled. Then clarify what Teresa is actually mapping: not two classes of Christians but one gift arriving with increasing fullness in one life, exactly as Scripture itself describes: Ezekiel's one river runs ankle-deep, then knee-deep, then deep enough to swim (47:3-5); Jesus distinguishes drinking (4:14) from rivers flowing out (7:38); Paul distinguishes milk from solid food (1 Corinthians 3:2) without creating castes. The four waters grade God's self-gift over time, not our rank, and the direction of the scheme is the opposite of elitism: the further one goes, the less is our doing and the more is sheer gift, which no method or merit can produce. Teresa insists God cherishes the haulers; and it is the study's own observation, not her claim, that the rain has often fallen first on the simple. The map exists for pastoral mercy: so that a beginner is not ashamed of buckets, and no one mistakes God's free rain for an achievement. One garden, one water, one Giver; deeper is not higher-caste, it is just further downstream of the same temple.

DIG DEEPER: ALTHOUGH IT IS NIGHT

St. John of the Cross wrote his fountain poem in a prison cell, in the middle of the very darkness he later called the night. Every stanza confesses the spring; every stanza ends "although it is night." Ask: what does it change to say "the spring flows, although it is night" instead of "the spring will flow again when the night ends"? Which sentence do you actually believe on your worst day?

Q4. Practical hour: Teresa says the gardener's labor never disappears, it changes. For the water you named in Win (bucket, wheel, stream, rain): what does faithful gardening look like for you this month, concretely? What is hauling, and what would receiving look like?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Push past vagueness to specifics: hauling = the kept fifteen minutes, the slow Scripture, honest speech, returning after distraction (Sessions 4-5 practices); tending = confession, Sunday Eucharist, cutting one

thread (Session 2); receiving = entering prayer expectant, leaving room for silence, and refusing to grade the session by feelings. Underline Teresa's pastoral rule: no one can make it rain, and no one needs to; our whole job description is presence and consent. The Lord of the garden likes walking in it even while the gardener is still sweating at the well.

SEND

S1. Jesus said, "If you knew the gift of God... you would have asked" (John 4:10). What have you never actually asked him for, plainly, out loud? Will you ask this week?

S2. The woman left her water jar and went to tell the city (4:28-29). What jar might you be asked to leave, and who is your city?

Live It This Week

- Each day this week, open your fifteen minutes with one line prayed slowly: "Lord, you thirst for me; I am here. Give me the living water." Then read John 4 across the week, a few verses a day.
- Once this week, drink a glass of water slowly and deliberately as a bodily prayer of thirst for the Holy Spirit. Let the body preach to the soul.
- Identify your current water (bucket, wheel, stream, rain) in one written sentence, without shame, and thank God for exactly that delivery.

Closing Prayer

Father, your Son stood up at the feast and cried out the invitation: let anyone who thirsts come and drink. We come. Pour into us the living water of the Holy Spirit, water our gardens as you see best, and make springs of us for a thirsty city. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE · JOHN 7:37

"If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink."

SESSION 7 • LEADER REFERENCE CARD

Living Water

Every passage used, in order

Passage	Where it is used
John 4:1-15	Q1 and Q3: the well, the thirst of Jesus, living water
John 4:16-30	Q3: from bucket to heart to worship; the abandoned jar
John 7:37-39	Discovery: the feast cry; the water is the Spirit
Ex 17:1-7	Discovery answer: the struck rock; is the LORD among us?
1 Cor 10:4	Discovery answer: the Rock was Christ
Isa 44:3; Isa 12:3; Ezek 47:1-12	Discovery answer: water and Spirit; the deepening river
John 19:34	Discovery answer: the opened side
1 Cor 12:13; 1 Cor 3:2	Steelman and answer: one Spirit for all; milk and solid food