

# Waiting for Water

*The Easter Journey: Signs of Life*

*A Study in the Gospel of John*

nine weekly Bible studies

## **A note on scripture...**

Unless otherwise noted, the scripture is taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 2001, 2005 by Biblica®. Used by permission of Biblica®. All rights reserved worldwide.

Copyright 2014 Waiting for Water. Please feel free to share and copy these resources, providing attribution to Waiting for Water and the authors who created this content.

[www.waitingforwater.org](http://www.waitingforwater.org)

## Note from Dan...

Written by pastors and leaders from across the country, the book you hold in your hands, *The Easter Journey: Signs of Life*, has the potential to change lives across the globe. Based on the Gospel of John, the weekly studies are designed to help you to reflect on Christ during the season of Lent and beyond and to put action on your faith by choosing a water project to support.

As one of Jesus' Disciples, John knew we needed route markers along our journey with Christ, so he built his story around seven of Jesus' signs, or miracles -- each one a brilliant pinprick of kingdom light poking through the darkness. In John, we meet Jesus as the original source of life and light as His creative power ripples from creation outward to renew our bodies, souls, and relationships.

My prayer is that by the end of this Lenten season, we will have connected with Christ's life-giving power in a new way. I invite you to go on the journey with me, as we observe, remember, and celebrate what He has done for us. Together, we can encounter Him and help bring hope to a thirsty world.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dan Stevens', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dan Stevens

# Contents

Welcome to The Easter Journey	5
Week 1.      Changing Water Into Wine <i>written by Carol Nowlin</i>	8
Ash Wednesday “Beginning the Easter Journey” <i>written by Tom Stephen</i>	15
Week 2.      From Water to Hope <i>written by Ellie Stevens</i>	19
Week 3.      Jesus Seeks the Broken and the Hurting <i>written by Daniel Nathan</i>	26
Week 4.      Entertaining the Impossible <i>written by Tiffany Malloy</i>	33
Week 5.      Dangerous Water <i>written by Mark Kraakevik</i>	39
Week 6.      Healing of the Man Born Blind <i>written by Nancy Worth</i>	45
Week 7.      Watering the World <i>written by Phillip Gallagher</i>	53
Maundy Thursday “Moving Towards the Cross” <i>written by Tom Stephen</i>	62
Good Friday “The Cross” <i>written by Tom Stephen</i>	65
Week 8.      Encounter: Mary and the Empty Tomb <i>written by Paul Darilek</i>	69
Week 9.      Peter’s Commission <i>written by Carol Benson</i>	76
Meet the Authors	83
Meet the W4W Team	86
NGO Partners and Projects	89



## welcome

Welcome to the Easter Journey! We are excited that you have decided to join us on this trip, and we pray that in the next few weeks, you will grow both in your faith and in your knowledge of the global water crisis.

## Signs of Life

Have you ever driven across Midwest America in the middle of the summer? It can be miserable -- especially during a heat wave when the sun beats down on the roof of your car, and the road ripples like water in front of you. Eventually you will need what everyone requires in a hot, dry land -- real water -- and a sign pointing towards water brings hope and relief.

A sign pointing to Jesus, the Living Water, can also bring hope and relief, and in this year's The Easter Journey: Signs of Life, we'll explore the seven miracles that Jesus performed in the Gospel of John. Each week, we'll learn how these signs all point toward Jesus. Then, on Easter, we'll be invited to drink deeply from this well.

## about Lent

Lent is a period of seven weeks before Easter where followers of Jesus make extra room in their hearts and minds to meditate on Christ; reflect on the significance of the cross; and celebrate His resurrection.

During Lent, some people decide to give up one of their normal habits (like eating a favorite food, drinking a certain beverage, or watching TV) in order to set aside extra time and attention to worshipping the Lord, waiting on Him, and hearing His voice. Others specifically set aside what they would have normally spent on themselves and offer this money up to God as a gift of joy.

The Easter Journey is designed for us to set aside our time, money, and creativity as gifts to the Lord. We will also encounter all kinds of opportunities for Him to speak to us and to use us.

## grow in faith

During this season, you will have the opportunity to expand your faith by participating in the Bible studies offered here and by supporting a project to help alleviate the global water crisis. If you are doing this study with your church, check to see if they have already chosen a project to support as a community. If they haven't, you can still join in by selecting a project on your own. To help you learn more about available projects and organizations, there are several listed in the back of this book.

## give up something

During this journey, you will also have the opportunity to give up something and set aside spare change, such as the money you would have spent on coffee or soda, in order to produce real change around the world. One way to get started is by printing off the label from our website and placing it on an empty water bottle. Then as you proceed on this journey, put coins, bills, or checks into the bottle. Each time you add something into the bottle, pray for those who will receive the gift.

## grant safe water

It takes about \$35 to give one person clean, safe water, and by Easter Sunday, you will have probably collected enough money to provide safe drinking water for one, two, or even more people. What a wonderful way to celebrate Jesus, our Living Water! Next, send the money to the organization you have selected and consider continuing your Easter Journey beyond Lent by telling others what you have learned and, perhaps, by continuing to support your project.

## more resources

In addition to the studies, our website ([www.waitingforwater.org](http://www.waitingforwater.org)) has information about the water crisis, as well as materials such as sermons and videos. It also has a tabletop calendar that you can download, and where, as you read each day's brief entry, you can learn about the global water crisis and grow in your walk with Christ.

## about Waiting for Water

Waiting for Water is an ecumenical network of Christians who recognize that millions of people around the world are still waiting for access to safe water. Our primary point of action is *The Easter Journey* -- a time of reflection, learning, and action during Lent and Easter.

As we encounter Jesus, we will see that He consistently cares for people's physical and spiritual needs, often in the same breath. Like Him, we want to care for the whole person and grow in our understanding of His Kingdom. By praying for the world's thirsty and by using our money to provide safe water during Lent, we are living out the love of Jesus in both a spiritual and a practical way.

Are you ready to get started?

Come with us on *The Easter Journey: Signs of Life!*

# how to use this book

## **Weekly Studies**

Gather a group of people weekly to meet and complete the Bible studies contained in this book. Each study is based on the Gospel of John and is written by a seasoned pastor, leader, or development worker from across the country who has a heart for those who don't have clean, safe water. Each study also includes the following four sections:

### **Introduction**

This section's short story or personal experience will get you thinking about the topic for the week. A group question is also included to spark discussion before reading the scripture passage.

### **Encountering Jesus**

In this section, you will read about a miracle performed by Jesus. Eight to ten questions also follow the scripture text to enable you to dig deeper into the passage.

### **Responding to Jesus**

This section contains both a personal and a global response to assist you to think about how you can act differently as a result of your encounter with Jesus.

### **Group Prayer**

Each study ends with a prayer that can be said together or individually. The prayer is designed to help you live out what you've studied.

## **Family Splash Time**

Each week also includes an activity for families. Specifically designed with children in mind, each Family Splash Time combines learning about water and the scripture for the week. The Family Splash Times can also be used in a Sunday school setting.

## **Personal Reflection**

For Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, a personal devotional is included to help you prepare for these holy days. These devotionals are designed to ready your heart and mind for all that God has for you, and to keep a focus on Jesus during the day.

# 1

## Changing Water into Wine

*written by Carol Nowlin*

## introduction

I glanced across the sweep of lawn, dotted with tables covered in white linen, and listened to the buzz of guests chatting while strains of violin music floated in the air. Then I heard another sound -- my stomach rumbling. I realized the bride and groom had taken care of every detail of their wedding reception, from wine to table decorations, except for one -- the food. Where was the food? As the hours passed, we waited. And waited. The sun set, leaving behind a chilly breeze, and still we waited. Finally, at ten o'clock, I was collecting my purse, when a waiter appeared out of the darkness with plates of chicken and fish. The evening was saved.

Yes, our evening was saved, but there are many people who are still waiting -- waiting for clean, safe water. Waiting for someone like you and me to help provide that very basic need for them. Waiting for hope.

This first week's passage takes place at a wedding reception in the village of Cana. Like the wedding in my own story, this celebration lacks something -- wine -- without which the party couldn't keep on flowing. With some persuasion from His mother, Jesus saves the day by turning ceremonial jars full of water into fine wine.

This picture of God's abundance, His celebratory nature, is captured in the image of a cup dipping into an overflowing vat of wine and being served lavishly to all who have gathered to celebrate. In the book of John, the setting of Jesus' first recorded sign, or miracle, at a wedding banquet recalls a description of God's kingdom from elsewhere in the Scriptures. In Isaiah, God gave His people this invitation: "If you are thirsty, come here; come, there's water for all. Whoever is poor and penniless can still come and buy the food I sell. There's no cost—here, have some food, hearty and delicious, and beverages, pure and good" (Isaiah 55:1, The Voice translation). When the King comes, the festivity begins.

The Canaan miracle also foreshadows Jesus' self-revelation as the water of life, first to the Samaritan woman at the well and then to crowds of festival-goers (John chapters 4 and 7 respectively). John's introduction of Jesus as the creative Word of God, who spoke the world into being, calls to mind the Bible's opening images: "God's spirit-wind hovered over the surface of the empty waters" (Genesis 1:2, The Voice translation). From the beginning of creation to the incarnation of Jesus, water is significant -- first, as a vital source of life to our physical bodies, and then, in Jesus, as the essential source of life to our souls.

### **group question:**

In what ways did you find yourself hungry or thirsty this week?

# encountering Jesus

## **read:**

*John 2:1-11*

### **Jesus Changes Water Into Wine**

<sup>1</sup>On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup>and Jesus and his Disciples had also been invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup>When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

<sup>4</sup>"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

<sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

<sup>6</sup>Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

<sup>8</sup>Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, <sup>9</sup> and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside <sup>10</sup> and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

<sup>11</sup> What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his Disciples believed in him.

## **discuss:**

Discuss the following questions as a group.

1) Briefly summarize this passage.

2) Why do you think John chose to share this story as the first of Jesus' signs?

3) Which character do you most relate with? Why?

4) How does this story expand or change the way you view Jesus?

5) Unlike Jesus' brothers (see John 7:3-5), Mary believed there was something special about her son, and she acted accordingly (v. 3-5). How easy or difficult is it for you to see God at work in the lives of the people closest to you?

6) Do you hesitate before sharing trivial requests with God? How might today's passage change the way you view these moments?

7) Celebration and merriment, like that which is described in today's story, are vital, life-giving outlets. How easy is it for you to relax and celebrate? Think of one way you could make room in your schedule to do so.

8) How do you think this passage relates to those who are still waiting? (i.e. for salvation, for water, for hope, etc.)

# responding to Jesus

## **personal response:**

The Voice Bible translation says John 2:11 this way: "They did not know how this happened; but when the Disciples and the servants witnessed this miracle, their faith blossomed." Take a few minutes to be quiet as a group. Individually, present your questions and areas of doubt to God and ask Him to make faith blossom in your heart.

## **global response:**

Jesus showed Himself in the Gospel of John as the source of living water for our souls, but He also showed in the wedding at Cana that He cares about physical needs too. There are roughly 780 million people today who do not have a clean, safe water supply, and 1.2 billion without proper sanitation<sup>1</sup>. Yet, it costs only around \$35 to provide safe water for 1 person.

## group prayer

GOD of miracles, God of celebration, Meeter of needs great and small, we thank You. Thank You for providing us with life abundant, tipping out and overflowing. Thank You for the promise of an eternal banqueting table where we can eat and drink and never ache again. May we carry with us the fullness of Your presence and Your miracle-making power wherever we go in the weeks ahead. Amen.

<sup>1</sup>For this and more facts about the global water crisis, visit: [www.water.org](http://www.water.org)

# next steps...

During this Lenten season, your group can use the following easy steps to help bring safe water to thirsty people:

- 1.** Take a few minutes to **review the project** your church has selected from the list at the back of this book. If your church has not chosen a project, **select one now** to support as a group.
- 2.** Next, **brainstorm** a few ways you can make a difference. For example, if everyone in your group gives up one thing (like coffee, soda, movies, or eating out) and puts what he or she would have spent during this season toward the chosen project, lives can be significantly changed. What is one thing you are willing to sacrifice?
- 3.** **Pray about it**, and then **act on your commitment** to do this during the season and, perhaps, beyond.
- 4.** Finally, **share with people outside your group** about what you are doing. Spreading the word will increase awareness of the water crisis and, hopefully, fuel a passion in others to solve it as well.

# Family Splash Time

Week One: How Many Gallons

## gather

You will need:

- Your favorite Children's Bible (or you may use the scripture reading in this study)
- A one-gallon water, milk, or other jug
- A five-gallon bucket
- An empty water bottle

## begin

Place the one-gallon jug in the middle of the table, and ask the following question: How many items can you name that come in gallon jugs? (*Milk, juice, water, gas, etc.*)

## listen

In today's story, we will hear about a miracle where Jesus changes water into wine. Listen and see if you can figure out how many gallons of water were changed. Read John 2:1-11 aloud as a family, then answer the following:

- 1) There were \_\_\_\_\_ stone water jars at the wedding. Each jar held \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ gallons of water. (*6 stone water jars, 20 to 30 gallons in each*)
- 2) How many gallons of water were changed into wine by Jesus at the wedding? ( $6 \times 20 = 120$  to  $6 \times 30 = 180$  gallons)

That's a lot of water! Do you think Jesus used clean water or dirty water when He performed this miracle? Jesus probably used clean water, but did you know that there are 780 million people in the world today who only have dirty water to drink?

We can help change the world's dirty water into safe drinking water by placing our spare coins into an empty water bottle between now and Easter. The money you collect will be given to organizations that dig wells, provide water filters, and teach families how to keep water safe around the world.

If your church or small group has not chosen a project already, you can select one now as a family. At the back of the Bible study book, there are organizations and projects all ready for you to choose. Also, you can print off a label from the Waiting for Water (W4W) website and attach it to the bottle. Make sure to place the bottle in a prominent spot to remind your family what you are doing this season.

# act

During the next few weeks, as you put money into the water bottle, pray for those who will receive it. Right now, think of ways each family member can contribute to this project. (*Do extra jobs around the house, look for dropped coins, give part of allowance, give up soda.*)

# try

Every day, women and young girls in many countries carry water for one or two miles from a dirty water source to their homes. Fill the five-gallon bucket with water. Next, attempt to carry it across the backyard in your hands or, if you can, on your head. How did it feel? Was it easy or hard to carry the bucket? Do you think you could do this every day -- sometimes even more than once? Why or why not?

# pray

THANK You, Jesus, for giving us safe water. Help us to remember others around the world who only have dirty water to drink. Thank You for loving us, so we can love others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## personal reflection

# Ash Wednesday

Beginning the Easter Journey

written by Tom Stephen

## introduction

As you begin your journey towards Easter consider the following encounter between Jesus and a woman who came to a well looking for physical water, but who left with the joy of finding infinitely more.

### read:

*John 4:4-9*

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

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

<sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

### thoughts:

In this culture, men weren't supposed to talk to women in public and Jews weren't supposed to associate with Samaritans. In other words, this woman's encounter should have ended before it even began. But if it had, she would have missed out on what Jesus truly had to offer her.

Are there barriers in your life (cultural, emotional, or habitual) that might be keeping you from experiencing all God wants for you? If so, present them to God in prayer:

Lord, I want to experience all You have for me. Please help me to:

## **read:**

*John 14:10-15*

<sup>10</sup> 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."

<sup>11</sup> "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?"

<sup>12</sup> 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?"

<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> 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."

<sup>15</sup> 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."

## **thoughts:**

This woman knows all about physical thirst, but Jesus offers her a cure for a deeper thirst -- one that involves love, forgiveness, and a relationship with God.

As we begin this Easter Journey, we have the opportunity to help others meet their physical need for clean water. Like the woman at the well, we also have the opportunity to learn more about our own deep need for Jesus -- the source of living, eternal water.

## **read:**

*John 4:16-18*

<sup>16</sup> He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

<sup>17</sup> "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup> The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

## **thoughts:**

In order to heal this woman's life, Jesus first openly and lovingly reveals what is broken about it. We too can be open before God about our frailty and our sin, and, in turn, we can receive His living water that both heals and gives life to our souls.

Are there choices you've made, or patterns of living you've created that have put distance between you and God? Openly and honestly present them in prayer:

Lord, please receive and forgive these areas of brokenness in my life:

## **read:**

*John 4:19-26*

<sup>19</sup> "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

<sup>21</sup> "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

<sup>25</sup> The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

<sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

## **thoughts:**

Jesus gently exposes the final hindrance to this woman's faith -- her unanswered questions. In response, Jesus reveals Himself to her, demonstrating that He is not only the answer to her questions, but also that only He can quench her deepest thirst.

What questions have prevented you from experiencing the breadth of love that God has for you through Jesus. Present these questions to Him now in prayer.

Lord, I struggle to believe because I have questions about:

## **read:**

*John 4:27-30*

<sup>27</sup> Just then his Disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

<sup>28</sup> Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup> "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" <sup>30</sup> They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

## **thoughts:**

Jesus knew everything about the woman, but He also had the grace to love her despite it. Astounded, she runs and tells her fellow townspeople about the miracle of being truly known and truly loved, and, through the sharing of her story she becomes a signpost directing others towards Jesus.

Are you a signpost to Jesus? Are there people in your life who haven't heard about Jesus or perhaps desire to go deeper with Him? Make a list of two or three friends and then pray the following prayer:

DEAR Lord, You have put these friends upon my heart. Please give me the confidence to follow through and invite them to join me on this journey to Easter. In Your name I pray. Amen.

# 2

## From Water to Hope

written by Ellie Stevens

# introduction

My husband and I are embarking on our fifth year of living in a place where our drinking water gives us chronic stomachaches. So, what is our solution? We buy bottled water, which, thanks to God's provision, we can afford. We have also lived through a season this past year weighed down by episodes of grief and frustration. But, unlike our bottled water solution, can we buy bottled happiness? Improved circumstances in a bottle? Of course not. So, what do we do? We turn to our faith in Jesus.

In his autobiographical work, *Confessions*, St. Augustine recalls that just before accepting Christ fully, his soul was tossed between the 'horror' of dying to self and the dread of rolling around bound in the chains of that same self. In chapter eight, Augustine writes:

Thus soul-sick was I, and tormented, accusing myself much more severely than my wont, rolling and turning me in my chain [...] And Thou, O Lord, pressedst upon me in my inward parts by a severe mercy [...] For I said with myself, "Be it done now, be it done now." And as I spake, I all but enacted it: I all but did it, and did it not: yet sunk not back to my former state [...] hesitating to die to death and to live to life [...] and the very moment wherein I was to become other than I was, the nearer it approached me, the greater horror did it strike into me; yet did it not strike me back, nor turned me away, but held me in suspense. <sup>1</sup>

In this week's passage, a royal official from Capernaum follows Jesus to Cana and begs Him to travel to his dying son. Knowing the man's heart and the hearts of everyone around him, Jesus exclaims, "unless you people see signs and wonders you will never believe" (v.48). The royal official went straight to Jesus with his fear, but he also brought Jesus his plan about how to resolve it. Although Jesus clearly wanted the royal official to express his concern, He didn't need the royal official to devise an action strategy, and Jesus, grace-filled and merciful, tells the man just a few verses later, "Go, your son will live" (v.50). In choosing to trust Jesus, the royal official is free to let go of his fear, as well as his plans, and to embrace hope in Jesus. To his great joy, when he returns home, he finds his son healed.

Like the royal official, St. Augustine, even while ship-wrecking himself with fear and control-issues, desperately wants God to take control but is terrified. A few paragraphs later, Augustine writes about hearing a child's voice sing, "Pick it up and read it," and led by the Holy Spirit, he reads an Epistle of Paul.<sup>2</sup> It is through this that Augustine becomes converted, "for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away."<sup>3</sup> By the power of the word of God, the chains of Augustine's doubt fall away, his mental storm subsides, he releases control, and he finds rest in the trustworthy, hope-giving Jesus.

In both this Gospel passage, as well as, in *Confessions*, it is only by the power of Jesus' words that life is rehabilitated and that transformation happens -- from doubt to belief, from fear to hope, from control to trust, from death to life. Furthermore, when the royal official trades his strategy in for Jesus' plan, God's words give him hope; build his trust;

<sup>1</sup>Augustine, *Confessions*. (Intratext Digital Library, [www.intratext.com](http://www.intratext.com)), 8.11.25.

<sup>2</sup>Romans 13:13-14.

<sup>3</sup>Augustine, 8.12.29.

and save his son, him, and eventually his whole family. Likewise when Augustine trades in his obsessive intellectual bearings for God's compass, he also is rewarded with the truth and with eternal life.

What about my husband and me? What about you? What does God's Word tell us when it comes to trading in our fears for the hope of restoration, resurrection, and the joys of His mysterious will? What does God's Word say when it comes to helping people around the world whose only source of water is so unsafe it causes chronic stomachaches, or worse, death? How will we help the ones who are dying for a drop of love but don't know it streams freely from Jesus?<sup>4</sup>

### **group question:**

When was a time that you felt an overwhelming need to control something in your life, but trusted God instead?

## encountering Jesus

### **read:**

*John 4:46-54*

<sup>46</sup>Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. <sup>47</sup>When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

<sup>48</sup>“Unless you people see signs and wonders,” Jesus told him, “you will never believe.”

<sup>49</sup>The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.”

<sup>50</sup>“Go,” Jesus replied, “your son will live.”

The man took Jesus at his word and departed. <sup>51</sup>While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. <sup>52</sup>When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, “Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him.”

<sup>53</sup>Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and his whole household believed.

<sup>54</sup>This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.

<sup>4</sup>According to Dale Bruner's commentary on Matthew, Dr. Henrietta Mears's social rule was that, “Every person we meet is dying for a drop of love.” Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Churchbook: Matthew 13-28*. (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 571.

## **discuss:**

Discuss the following questions as a group.

1) Think again about that time when you wanted to control a situation. What strategies did you use to control the outcome?

2) What text in God's Word has changed your life in the past? Where do you need God's Word to transform your life right now?

3) Do you ever find yourself in a mind storm like Augustine? When has thinking less and trusting God more served you well?

4) "Go, your son will live" (v.50). In the context of this verse, give an example of how letting go of your master plan and going with God's plan would look in your life.

5) When in your life did you bring your fears to God and trade them in for a trusting heart and hope in Jesus?

6) When have you been hungry, thirsty, cold, sick, lonely, or bound by chains (literally or figuratively) and not been able to get what you needed to resolve the problem? How did you survive?

7) In the John 4:46-54 passage the royal official inquires as to the precise, "time his son got better" (v.53). Can you pinpoint instances of healing in your life when things stopped getting worse and started getting better? What activated the shift?

8) There are people who are waiting for water, and who cannot control their circumstances. How can you bring hope to them?

# responding to Jesus

## **personal response:**

From Matthew 25: 42: "For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' <sup>44</sup> "They also will answer; 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' <sup>45</sup> "He will reply; 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' <sup>46</sup> "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Like the royal official, the people in this passage thought that they were in control, and that they knew how to best respond in the situation, but Jesus showed them where they totally missed the point. Think about and share a situation where you have shown compassion this past week. How you will show compassion this next week?

## **global response:**

The passage in Matthew talks about caring for "the least of these." Ask God in prayer to put a specific group of "the least of these" on your heart. Take time to pray for these people and pray also that God would show you how to extend your care to them.

## group prayer

LORD Jesus, we bring You our good circumstances, our bad circumstances, our joys, our fears, our freedoms, our control-issues, our victories, our melt-downs, our mental storms, our thirsty hearts and all the empty bottles in the world. Please show us by Your Word, through Your Spirit, new ways to put all of our hope in You. Please transform our lives so that we may be filled with You, spilling over onto others Your love, and Your living water. Amen.

# Family Splash Time

Week Two: Who Believes?

## gather

You will need:

- Your favorite Children's Bible (or you may use the scripture reading in this study)
- A body temperature thermometer
- Your W4W bottle to keep filling with coins

## begin

Hold up the body temperature thermometer, and ask the following questions: Do you remember the last time you were sick? What happened? Who took care of you?

## listen

In today's story, we will read about a boy who was really sick, and a miracle that Jesus performed. As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out who cared for the boy. Read John 4:46- 54 aloud as a family, then answer the following:

- 1) Who were the people who cared for the sick boy? *(Jesus, the boy's father, servants, perhaps his mother, brothers, and sisters at home were caring also.)*
- 2) How did the son's father know that Jesus had healed the boy? *(The fever left the son at the exact time that Jesus said, "Your son will live.")*
- 3) As a result of this miracle, who believed in Jesus? *(The whole family.)*

Jesus desires all people to have well bodies -- like the young boy. Jesus also wants hearts that believe in Him -- like the officer's whole family. In our world, a child dies every 20 seconds from drinking unsafe water. How can we help these children? *(By collecting money to send to the project we chose, by praying for them and asking Jesus to heal them)*

## act

The father in this story had hope for his sick child when he went to Jesus. When Jesus healed the boy, the whole family believed. We, as a family, are already finding ways to help others by doing this Bible study and supporting a water project. How can we demonstrate that same hope and belief in Jesus for healing the people who must drink unsafe water? *(By sharing with others about the need for safe water)*

## try

Tonight, check behind a chair or between the sofa pillows for extra coins to fill your W4W bottle. *(Parents may want to put coins there beforehand.)*

## pray

THANK You, Jesus, for wanting us to be well in our hearts and bodies. Give us hearts that believe in You, so we can love and serve others better. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# 3

## Jesus Seeks the Broken and the Hurting

*written by Daniel Nathan*

## introduction

There is an amazing woman from our church named Debra Peterman who serves as the Director of Bridge Builders, a ministry to the disabled. Growing up as an older sister to a severely handicapped brother was the preface to her life's story with God.

Through her ministry, Debra teaches that the heart of Jesus is to actively demonstrate that no one is too far, too difficult, or too broken that they should be excluded from the invitation to the Kingdom of God. With knowledge based on her own experiences of the challenges of attending church with a disabled family member, Debra chose to launch her ministry to train and equip churches so that they would be better prepared to welcome ALL of God's children-- the able-bodied and the not so able-bodied -- to God's banquet table. Her message is that if we want to be like Christ and to have a heart like His, we need to be in touch with the kinds of compassion He showed toward the least of these-- the lost and hurting, the sick and disabled, the hungry and the thirsty.

In Jesus' day, certain people were untouchable -- the sick, the lame, those with leprosy, and sinners. Many others were considered unclean, and therefore weren't welcome to fully participate with God's people in worship. But, as evidenced in the pages of the Gospels, Jesus was particularly interested in showing His special favor to these outsiders.

The same is true today, and to live like Christ, we need to see the world through His love-soaked lenses. We can only see like Him when we're in deep fellowship with Him, our Abba, Father. In order to see as He does, we need to let the Spirit change us, and our lenses, from the inside out.

In this week's study, we look at the miracle of Jesus healing an invalid. Through this sign, we will discover how and whom Jesus loved, and, in doing so, welcome the Spirit to open our eyes to a Kingdom calling we may have overlooked.

### **group question:**

Jesus' mission statement for ministry can be found in Luke 4:17-18 (quoted in part from Isaiah 58). Reflect together how well your church is living out this mission. How well are you living it out?

# encountering Jesus

## **read:**

*John 5:1-19*

### **The Healing at the Pool**

<sup>1</sup> Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. <sup>2</sup> Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda[a] and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. <sup>3</sup> Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. [4] [b] <sup>5</sup> One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. <sup>6</sup> When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

<sup>7</sup> “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

<sup>8</sup> Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” <sup>9</sup> At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, <sup>10</sup> and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”

<sup>11</sup> But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

<sup>12</sup> So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”

<sup>13</sup> The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

<sup>14</sup> Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” <sup>15</sup> The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

### **The Authority of the Son**

<sup>16</sup> So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. <sup>17</sup> In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” <sup>18</sup> For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

<sup>19</sup> Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.

## **discuss:**

Discuss the following questions as a group.

1) In Jesus' time there was a superstitious belief that the Sheep Gate's waters (likely a pool near the Temple where sacrificial animals were ceremonially cleaned) had healing properties. Even today, hurting people will seek out almost anything in search for hope and healing. Are there Sheep Gates in the church today? What is (or was) a Sheep Gate for you?

2) What do we learn about the man in vv. 5 and 7?

3) Immerse yourself in the scene depicted in v.6. What does this scene reveal about Jesus' heart for broken and hurting people? How have you encountered Jesus in this way?

4) Sometimes we can become too comfortable in our hurting identity; too familiar with our brokenness; and too complacent with our sin that it replaces a desire to actually receive and "walk out" into healing and restoration. Personalize this statement: With Jesus' help, I, [fill in your name], want to be healed from \_\_\_\_\_, free from \_\_\_\_\_, and restored to \_\_\_\_\_.

5) How do the three commands that Jesus gives the man become a progression that invites him into an active faith? What does active faith look like in your life?

6) Reread v. 8-10. Where in your life can you more readily follow Jesus?

7) Jesus conceived the Sabbath much differently than the Jewish leaders (namely as a blessing for people). How does this story reinforce His view?

8) If we want to participate in God's Kingdom as Jesus did in vs. 17 and 19, what qualities must be present in our relationship with God? What can you begin doing today to intentionally grow in your relationship with God?

9) Jesus wasn't comfortable simply with "first fruits"; He wanted healing for the whole person. How can we actively confront the problems and needs around us, while still maintaining God's greater focus and more eternal purposes?

# responding to Jesus

## **personal response:**

Jesus expresses directly that in order to live a God- initiated life, we need to know the Father deeply; what He is doing and where He is at work around us. Take time to pray and journal about these things -- particularly note where God is at work around you.

## **global response:**

Jesus was not afraid to put Himself in close proximity to those with deep hurts and complex problems. Consider how you and your church can respond to the desperate needs that face people around the world, especially in the global water crisis.

## group prayer

GOD, only You can empower our hearts to do the kind of healing work this broken world desperately needs. Only by Your generous Spirit can we hope to come alongside You, who are always at work around us. Help us to see what You see. Help us to love like You love. Let us be transformed into a people whose aim is to be like You, our Father. Amen.

# Family Splash Time

Week Three: Something Better!

## gather

You will need:

- *Your favorite Children's Bible (or you may use the scripture reading in this study)*
- *A pan of dirty dishwater*
- *Your W4W bottle to keep filling with coins*

## begin

Place the pan of dirty dishwater on the table, and ask the following question: How would you feel if you had to drink or swim in dirty water like this?

## listen

In today's story, we will read about one of Jesus' miracles that involved a man who could not walk. As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out where the man was and why he was there. Read John 5:1-9 aloud as a family, then answer the following:

- 1) Where was the man? (*Lying by the pool of Bethesda*)
- 2) Why was he there? (*He thought the pool would heal him.*)

The pool at Bethesda was fed by an underground spring, and sick people thought if they could get into the pool when it bubbled up, that the water could heal them. With all the sick people around the pool daily -- coughing, spitting, plus throwing in human waste -- it was likely very dirty. It was probably much dirtier than the unclean water now sitting on our table.

But, Jesus did not use the dirty water in the pool to heal the man. Jesus had something much better for him. What did Jesus say to the man? (*"Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."*) Because of the power of Jesus and His words, the man was able to get up and walk. What a great miracle!

# act

Can you imagine the man's joy after 38 years of not being able to walk? Do you think he jumped and danced after he walked? (*Have a family member demonstrate how joyful the man must have been.*) Have you ever asked God to take care of a problem one way, and He surprised you with taking care of it in a totally different and better way? Share about this with your family.

In developing countries, a lot of people get their drinking water from a dirty source, much like the pool at Bethesda. Sometimes the only water that is available to them is a pond where animals also drink and bathe or a river where people do their laundry. They don't have a kitchen faucet or filtered refrigerator water to fill glasses with clean water. That's why we need to support organizations that drill wells or provide other sources of clean water. By filling your W4W bottle with change, you are helping people get something better -- clean, safe water.

# try

Count the number of water sources (*showers, toilets, sinks, bathtubs, refrigerators*) inside your house. Decide on an amount of money for each water source, and then multiply the money amount by the total number of sources. Add that amount to the W4W bottle.

# pray

THANK You, Jesus, for Your surprises. Help us trust You with our problems and be thankful for Your better ways. Be with those who don't have clean water and help us bring water to them. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# 4

## Entertaining the Impossible

written by Tiffany Malloy

# introduction

"But Mom, I can't do it! It's....impossible!"

For many moms and dads around the world, this is something we've heard again and again....and again. Whether it's when our kindergartener is learning to tie her shoes or our teenager is trying to find the integral of a complex function, kids are quick to pull the impossible card.

Of course, there are things that we adults feel are impossible too. It's impossible to lose weight. It's impossible to get out of debt. It's impossible to be reconciled to that person who hurt us. It's impossible to alleviate the plight of the poor. It's impossible for everyone in the world to have access to safe water.

There are many different estimates, but one can conservatively say that there are still 780 million people who do not have access to clean water.<sup>1</sup> Does that number seem staggering to you? It sure does to me.

Meet Ariaah.

In spite of this huge, sometimes overwhelming number, Ariaah knew that he had to do something to help others gain access to clean water. It only seemed natural that he would use the gifts God had given him -- a writing talent, a large social network, and a love for kids -- in order to write a children's book about building wells in order to raise money to build wells. Not only did Ariaah want to raise funds to build wells, but he also wanted to create a resource that would help his children (and others) better understand the situation many kids are in around the world. Ariaah has sold and given away thousands of his books to classrooms, church groups, and families -- impacting boys and girls all over the country. Not only has Ariaah raised money to build wells, but he has also helped to encourage the next generation of safe water activists.

In a place that may seem impossible to many, God is using men, women, and children all over the world to do the impossible in order to meet the needs of His children.

### **group question:**

What is your *impossible* that sometimes seems overwhelming to you?

# encountering Jesus

## **read:**

*John 6:5-14*

<sup>5</sup> When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” <sup>6</sup> He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

<sup>7</sup> Philip answered him, “It would take more than half a year’s wages[a] to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”

<sup>8</sup> Another of his Disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, <sup>9</sup> “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). <sup>11</sup> Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

<sup>12</sup> When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his Disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” <sup>13</sup> So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

<sup>14</sup> After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

## **footnotes:**

a. John 6:7 Greek take two hundred denarii

## **discuss:**

Discuss the following questions as a group.

1) This great miracle began with a “pop quiz” for Philip. What was Jesus testing in Philip? Have you ever had a test like this?

2) Philip and Andrew had slightly different reactions to Jesus’ question about how to feed the great crowd that was coming. How were their reactions similar? How were they different?

- 3) How much bread and fish did Jesus allot for each person to have? What do you think this says about Jesus?
- 4) If Jesus fed 5,000 with just 5 loaves, why would He be so concerned about gathering the leftovers and that none be wasted?
- 5) What were people's reactions to Jesus after this miracle was performed? Are you surprised at their responses?
- 6) Why do you think Jesus chose to do this particular miracle?
- 7) Imagine yourself as the boy who was the owner of the loaves and fish. What could he have been thinking during this time? What do you think he might have learned through this experience?
- 8) In light of the three previous signs already discussed, what does this sign add to what Jesus is revealing about Himself?

# responding to Jesus

## **personal response:**

When was a time that you felt like God was calling you to give something (or everything) that you had in order to help others? What did God do with that word or dollar or act of service? How did your (and/or others') faith grow as a result? Where is God calling you to offer yourself in this way again? Imagine something impossible that God could do through you.

## **global response:**

Consider reading the book, *Clean Water for Elirose* by Ariah Fine.<sup>2</sup> This children's fictional story is about how four kids raised money to provide clean water for others around the world. Next, consider getting together with your small group or with family and friends (kids included!), and using the book as a model to inspire you in a similarly creative way.

## group prayer

FATHER, we thank You, Lord, for being a generous God. You are concerned about the world's everyday needs, and we see it's often through others' generosity that You meet the needs of Your children. Give us vision and understanding in how You want us to respond to the needs of both our neighbors and of those around the world. Help us to have faith to give of ourselves, whether in big or small ways, and to know that You are faithful to use those gifts in impossible ways. We've seen evidence of that in our own lives as receivers of good and sometimes extravagant gifts. Excite us to be givers as well. In Your name we pray. Amen.

<sup>2</sup> <http://cleanwaterforelirose.com/> for an online copy

# Family Splash Time

Week Four: A Great Picnic!

## gather

You will need:

- Your favorite Children's Bible (or you may use the scripture reading in this study)
- A recent grocery store receipt
- Your W4W bottle to keep filling with coins

## begin

Place the grocery store receipt in the middle of the table, and ask the following: What do you think it costs to feed our family one meal? Next, choose one item from the receipt, and ask: How much of this item do you think it would take to feed 5,000 people? What would it cost to feed them that amount?

## listen

In today's story, we will read about a boy who brought food to a picnic, and how Jesus performed a miracle. As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out what food the boy brought; how much he brought; and who assisted Jesus at the picnic. Read John 6:5-14 aloud as a family, then answer the following:

- 1) What kind of food and how much of each did the boy bring? *(5 loaves of bread and 2 fish)*
- 2) Who were the helpers in this story? *(Philip, Andrew, the other Disciples, the boy.)*
- 3) What were the Disciples thinking when they saw the crowd that Jesus wanted to feed? *(We don't have enough food. It will cost too much. There are too many people. Impossible!)*
- 4) What do you think the boy was thinking when Andrew asked him for his food? *(Happy to share? Honored to be asked? My mom made this for me? This isn't enough? Why should I give it up?)*

The bread was probably the small loaves usually eaten only by the poor during the time, and the fish were similar to dried minnows.

Reread verses 11 & 12. The boy was willing to give his small basket, and when Jesus gave thanks, there was “enough for all.” In fact, how much was leftover when everyone had eaten enough? (*Twelve baskets!*) Sometimes God chooses a child to show His miracles. Wouldn't it have been fun to be the boy in the story? Imagine telling your friends what Jesus did to the loaves of bread and fish at this giant picnic! Not only was there enough, but there was more than enough!

## act

We may think that our few coins will not be enough to provide safe water for 780 million people. But, if we are willing to share, God can multiply our pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters so that many people in the world can have fresh, safe water. No gift is too small for God to multiply. Can you think of other gifts God wants you to share so He can multiply them? (*Our love, service, music, prayer, food, etc.*)

## try

Tonight, check all the pockets in the dirty laundry pile for coins to add to the W4W bottles. (*Parents may wish to put money in some of the pockets.*)

## pray

THANK You, Jesus, for wanting to multiply and use our coins for others. We have enough. Sometimes we have more than enough. Make us willing to give, so others have enough too. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# 5

## Dangerous Water

written by Mark Kraakevik

# introduction

Recently I heard about George Thornton, a 73-year-old who aimed to be the oldest man ever to swim across the English Channel. A dedicated athlete and an avid swimmer, this man had competed in dozens of triathlons over the years, and it seemed that if anyone could do this, he could. However, nearly nine hours into the English Channel swim, severe hypothermia set in, and he had to be pulled to safety. The frigid water had become dangerous water, and he wasn't able to complete his quest.

When you hear the words *dangerous water*, what comes to mind? Maybe you too have had an encounter with water that was less than favorable -- perhaps a moment during swimming in which you just weren't sure you were going to make it to solid ground.

For some, dangerous water brings thoughts of unclean water and the sickness it causes. The statistics are unfathomable -- every 20 seconds, a child dies from a water-related illness, and more than 3.4 million people die each year from water, sanitation, and hygiene-related causes. For millions, the only source of drinking water is dangerous water.

In this week's passage, Jesus' Disciples put their boat out onto dangerous water to cross the Sea of Galilee. Even though this particular lake was known for sudden storms of unusual ferocity, they still chose to go at night. Once they had made their way out onto the lake, a storm came, and they fought against its wind for almost three and a half miles. Then Jesus showed up. He came to them in their time of need, walking on what was to the Disciples, dangerous water. Did you catch that? Jesus was walking on the water.

In the course of that night, I'm sure the Disciples had many emotions. Like Thornton, they started out confident that whatever came, they could handle it. After all, they weren't new to the water. Before Jesus called them to be Fishers of Men, Peter, James, and John made a living fishing by boat, so I'm sure they knew their way around a lake. When the storm came, however, they were overcome with fear, followed by the surprise and sheer terror of seeing someone walking on the water.

But, like in Thornton's story, relief comes in the form of a rescuer, and in the Disciples case, that rescuer was Jesus. In v. 20, He commands, "It is I; don't be afraid." Jesus then climbs into the boat, and immediately transfers them to shore -- the very place they had been struggling desperately to reach. At that moment, the Disciples no longer needed to fear the dangerous water, for they were on solid ground and surrounded by the safety of Jesus.

## **group question:**

What can you do to help rescue people around the world from water that is unclean and dangerous?

# encountering Jesus

## **read:**

*John 6:16-24*

### **Jesus Walks on the Water**

<sup>16</sup>When evening came, his Disciples went down to the lake, <sup>17</sup> where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. <sup>18</sup> A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. <sup>19</sup> When they had rowed about three or four miles,[a] they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. <sup>20</sup> But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." <sup>21</sup> Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

<sup>22</sup>The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his Disciples, but that they had gone away alone. <sup>23</sup> Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. <sup>24</sup> Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his Disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

## **discuss:**

Discuss the following questions as a group.

1) Have you ever been in a place where you were afraid of the water? What happened during those moments?

2) At the beginning of the story, the Disciples do not fear the water. Have you ever been overconfident of your ability to face a dangerous situation without help?

3) When the storm comes up, the Disciples are afraid, but Jesus rescues them and immediately brings the boat to shore. Have you had a time in your life where Jesus immediately brought peace and safety to a dangerous or frightening situation?

4) When the people realize Jesus and His Disciples are no longer on the shore the next day, why do you think the crowds search for them?

5) In this story, the Disciples fight with the water until Jesus rescues them. Many places around the world have been fighting with water for a very long time. Are there parallels between this story, and what must happen in villages around the world that don't have access to safe, clean water?

6) When people are given access to safe water, it often means the end of generations of sickness and sorrow. How important is it to you to play a role in rescuing people from dangerous water?

# responding to Jesus

## **personal response:**

Imagine the joy on the faces of the Disciples when they reached the far shore. Now imagine the joyful face of a child who drinks a full cup of clean water without any fear. Your personal Easter journey can make this happen. Pray specifically for those people who are a part of the project you have chosen during this study.

## **global response:**

In the frenzied world we live in, it is possible to miss the voices of those calling out for help. So many children of the world are desperately fighting against sickness that has been caused by their water supply. How can you create reminders for yourself and others about the global water crisis?

## group prayer

GOD, today we pray on behalf of those around the world who are scared and suffering because dangerous water has brought them to the brink of death. We pray for comfort. We pray for relief. Send more people into the corners of the world with the knowledge and the skill to make the water safe. We need more teachers; we need more engineers; and we need the resources and material to save Your children. God open our ears to their cries, and show us what we can do. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

# Family Splash Time

Week Five: No Fear!

## gather

You will need:

- Your favorite Children's Bible (or you may use the scripture reading in this study)
- One blank sheet of paper for each family member and several markers/crayons
- Your W4W bottle to keep filling with coins

## begin

Place the blank sheets of paper and markers/crayons in the middle of the table and ask the following: When was a time you were very afraid? On the paper, draw about that time.

## listen

In today's story, we will read about a miracle that happened during a scary time for the Disciples. As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out what they were doing; what time of day it was; and why they were afraid.

Read John 6:16-24 aloud as a family, then answer the following:

- 1) What were the Disciples doing? (*fishing out on a lake*)
- 2) Pick the best description of the weather and time: a) sunny, warm evening, b) a cold, rainy, and cloudy afternoon, c) very windy, stormy evening  
(*C is correct.*)
- 3) What were the Disciples feeling? (*Extremely fearful, teeth chattering from fear and cold.*)

After the big picnic for 5,000 people, Jesus went up into the mountains by Himself while His Disciples went fishing on the Sea of Galilee. A strong storm roared through, and the Disciples were very afraid.

Suddenly they saw a figure coming toward them -- without water wings or a life preserver. He was walking on the water! Who was the man? (*Jesus*) What words of comfort did Jesus have for the Disciples? (*It is I; don't be afraid.*) Let's say those words together. (*Repeat "It is I; don't be afraid" several times.*) Just as Jesus was with the Disciples, He is also with us when we are afraid.

# act

Children who drink dirty water can become very sick with high fevers, worms, diarrhea, and even blindness. Such sickness can make the children and their families fearful. When a village receives safe water, the people don't get as sick or afraid. They are also told about the love of Jesus and His words, "It is I; don't be afraid." As you put your coins into your water bottle this week, pray for the children who are sick and afraid, that they would get clean, safe water soon and become healthy.

# try

Did you know that Jesus is with you all the time? Write the words, *It is I; don't be afraid*, over the picture you drew. Repeat and remember these words when you are afraid.

# pray

THANK You, Jesus, that You are with us when we are afraid. Help us to remember there is no fear in You. Let all the children in the world who are sick and afraid know that You are with them. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# 6

## Healing of the Man Born Blind

*written by Nancy Worth*

### introduction

At our home, it takes three gallons of water flowing through our kitchen faucet before the water gets warm. So I take two pitchers, fill them up with that extra water, and make three trips outside to water our plants and fill the fountain. As I do, I pray for the many people in the world who don't have three gallons of clean water at all. I also pray for the many who are working to make clean water available around the world. Yes, it is a small gesture, but for me, it's a meaningful reminder of what is often taken for granted -- access to fresh, clean water.

For most of us, our eyesight is one of our most valued senses, but like our response to clean water, too often we take seeing for granted. The blind man we meet in this week's lesson had never seen a sunset, a flower, a tree, the horizon, or the face of a loved one until the day Jesus came into his life. Through Jesus' restoration of his eyesight, this man experiences a radical and powerful change.

In the gospel stories, we often see Jesus' healing in response to a person's faith; however, in John 9 where we find the sixth miracle, or sign, there is no indication that the man born blind showed faith prior to that day, or that he even asked for healing, but Jesus heals him nonetheless.

Often Jesus heals with just a word, but in this case, He mixes saliva and dirt, anoints the man's eyes, and sends him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. Furthermore, He does all this on the Sabbath. By working on the Sabbath, Jesus instigates rage among the Pharisees, who, until then, had been looking for any and every reason to kill Him. Jesus heals the blind man, even though it causes the Pharisees to despise Him. Jesus' healing comes despite the consequences and despite the circumstances.

With the emphasis on safe water in this Lenten Study, it's interesting to look at Jesus' instructions to the man to go wash in the Pool of Siloam. This pool was the site where fresh water was brought into the city from the spring of Gihon -- this was also the same tunnel that Hezekiah had previously dug in order to provide water to Jerusalem during the attack by Sennacherib (2 Chronicles 32:30 and 2 Kings 20:20).

On my last trip to Israel, I was able to go through this 583 yard- long tunnel that still flows with fresh cold water today. Excavations in 2004 even uncovered major parts of the pool of Siloam, where John's blind man was healed. Therefore, Hezekiah's engineering and foresight is a reminder of the vital significance -- then and now -- of fresh, pure water for the healing of our bodies. John's gospel, likewise, is a reminder of the vital significance -- then and now -- of Jesus' healing of our souls.

### **group question:**

What do you do on a regular basis to SEE -- really see -- and appreciate in the world, the people, and the privileges all around you?

# encountering Jesus

## **read:**

*John 9:1-41*

### **Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind**

<sup>9</sup> As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> His Disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

<sup>3</sup> “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

<sup>6</sup> After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. <sup>7</sup> “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means “Sent”). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

<sup>8</sup> His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, “Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?” <sup>9</sup> Some claimed that he was.

Others said, “No, he only looks like him.”

But he himself insisted, “I am the man.”

<sup>10</sup> “How then were your eyes opened?” they asked.

<sup>11</sup> He replied, “The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.”

<sup>12</sup> “Where is this man?” they asked him.

“I don’t know,” he said.

### **The Pharisees Investigate the Healing**

<sup>13</sup> They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath. <sup>15</sup> Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” the man replied, “and I washed, and now I see.”

<sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.”

But others asked, “How can a sinner perform such signs?” So they were divided.

<sup>17</sup> Then they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened."

The man replied, "He is a prophet."

<sup>18</sup> They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. <sup>19</sup> "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"

<sup>20</sup> "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. <sup>21</sup> But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." <sup>22</sup> His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. <sup>23</sup> That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

<sup>24</sup> A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

<sup>25</sup> He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

<sup>26</sup> Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

<sup>27</sup> He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his Disciples too?"

<sup>28</sup> Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are Disciples of Moses! <sup>29</sup> We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

<sup>30</sup> The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. <sup>32</sup> Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

<sup>34</sup> To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

## **Spiritual Blindness**

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

<sup>36</sup> "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."

<sup>37</sup> Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."

<sup>38</sup> Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

<sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

<sup>40</sup> Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"

<sup>41</sup> Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."

## **discuss:**

Discuss the following questions as a group.

1) When has God worked in your life in a way that was surprising or unexpected?

2) Why do you think Jesus uses saliva and mud and tells the man to wash in the Pool rather than just healing him with a word (vv. 6-7)?

3) At the beginning, the man has little knowledge of who Jesus is, but he is very clear on what happened (vv. 12, 15, 25). Notice how he stands up to the Pharisees (vv. 30-33), and especially his response when he learns who Jesus is (vv. 35-38). What can we learn from this man about courage to be able tell our personal story of how Jesus has touched our lives?

4) Rather than rejoicing in the miracle alongside their son, the blind man's parents let their fear of the authorities and of being ostracized keep them from standing with their son in faith (vv. 18-23). Is there one person or cause for which you would risk being disowned by your family, your friends, or your community?

5) The conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders has been escalating in the previous chapters, and continues in chapter 9. Why do you think they are so threatened by Jesus? How would you have reacted to their intimidation?

6) At the end of the chapter, Jesus uses the image of blindness to show that while the leaders pride themselves on following all the religious rules, they are blind to the truth of who Jesus is (vv. 39- 41). Why do you think so many people were blind to the truth of who Jesus was? What can you learn from this chapter about how to deal with doubters and those who deride faith?

7) What do you learn about Jesus from John 9? Comment on Jesus' character as evidenced in this story: compassion, power, courage, strength, and insight into the human condition?

# responding to Jesus

## **personal response:**

What is one way this week you can cultivate a grateful heart for simple things like clean, fresh water or eyesight?

## **global response:**

Think about practical and perhaps unconventional ways you can be part of providing resources for others to have fresh, clean water. Make a list of these and share them with your group.

## group prayer

GOD, we give You thanks for Your many provisions that too often we take for granted -- for sight and hearing, for taste and smell, for safe water, for jobs and homes and clothing, and for so many other gifts. Help us to be grateful and also generous in helping to provide for the many who don't have these basic necessities. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

# Family Splash Time

Week Six: What Do You See?

## gather

You will need:

- Your favorite Children's Bible (or you may use the scripture reading in this study)
- A bandana, cloth, or towel for each family member to use as a blindfold
- A computer printout or open screen about Trachoma (for the Try section)
- Your W4W bottle to keep filling with coins

## begin

Use the blindfolds to cover the eyes of each of the children. Let them experience the lack of sight for a few minutes, and then ask the following questions: Do you know anyone who is blind? If you were blind, what do you think you would miss seeing the most?

## listen

In today's story, we will read about a miracle that happened to a man who was totally blind from the minute he was born. As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out what Jesus used to give him sight. Read John 9:1, 6-11 aloud as a family, then answer the following:

- 1) What did the man do for a living? (*He was a blind beggar.*)
- 2) What supplies did Jesus use for helping the blind man see? (*Jesus used spit, dirt, and water.*)
- 3) What were Jesus' instructions? (*Go, Wash in the Pool of Siloam.*)
- 4) Did the man follow the instructions? (*Yes. "I did what he said. When I washed, I saw."*)
- 5) Why is it important to follow the instructions of Jesus? (*Answers will vary.*)

The blind man followed Jesus' instructions, and his eyes were opened to see trees, people, and colors. When we follow God's instructions, He opens our eyes to the many wonderful plans and joys He has for us too. Think about a time when you followed your parents or teachers instructions even though it didn't make sense at the time. Did it make sense later and were you able to see better? Share your thoughts.

# act

Some children in countries with unsafe water can go blind because of disease in their drinking water. This week, as you are putting your coins into your W4W bottle, pray for these children, and for others that need safe water, so they won't go blind.

# try

Trachoma is a disease that causes blindness in children from countries where unsafe water exists. Learn more about it online at: [www.mayoclinic.com/health/trachoma](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/trachoma)

# pray

THANK You, Jesus, for eyes to see what You want us to see. Help us to obey Your instructions, even when it is hard, so we can see more of Your love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# 7

## Watering the World

written by Phillip Gallagher

# introduction

Have you ever wanted a glimpse of Jesus beyond what is represented in the Scriptures? Like maybe how He would act as a friend? I have. For instance, I've often wondered what He and His Disciples talked about when they had some down time or when they were on their way to their next destination.

When I was young, my father told me that to have one true and close friend throughout life would be pretty rare and special. At the time I had several best friends and couldn't imagine life differently, but now that I'm older (and wiser, I think), true relationships seem harder to come by -- especially with the hectic pace of life. I definitely have friends, but true, close friends -- people who know me fully -- are honestly not in abundance. During the times in my life when I've had close friends, my life has felt whole, as if I were operating at full capacity. On the other hand, when I've experienced times without those privileged relationships, I've felt a void. I wonder if Jesus dealt with this during His walk here on Earth.

The Bible doesn't explicitly detail all of the particulars of Jesus' life, but within the fabric of the Scriptures, we can discover powerful examples that are relevant to the many nuanced stages of our lives. One of the rare instances where we get to see into Jesus' personal life is in today's lesson about Lazarus.

To me, this story is not only about the miracle of Lazarus being raised from the dead, but also about the miracle of true friendship -- in particular about the friendship between Jesus and Lazarus, and how their compassion for one another contained the power to heal and restore life.

In the Gospels, Jesus and Lazarus are depicted as friends. Lazarus is even referred to as, "the one who Jesus loves" (John 11:3). Apparently the two of them are close and share a history. I like to imagine that they even had a secret handshake. The story further highlights that Jesus is willing to risk the danger of being stoned to death in order to visit his friend. Jesus and Lazarus' relationship was rare and special, the kind I think my dad wanted me to learn about.

Then Lazarus dies.

When Jesus arrives upon the commotion surrounding Lazarus' death, He's deeply troubled -- bearing the weight of intense loss from the absence of his friend. The Gospel writer, John, goes on to say, "Jesus wept." The story could have ended there, but, of course, it doesn't. Following His tears, something unexpected happens -- Jesus calls His friend Lazarus by name, and Lazarus wakes up as if he had merely been asleep.

Why did Jesus call Lazarus by name? Because the relationship was important. I love how this story not only reveals Jesus' incredible healing power-- the power to bring life back from the dead, but how it suggests the healing power we each possess when we have intimate friendships in the Lord.

I also believe that that our Christ-centered compassion can give birth to hope in the lives of others. So many in our world are desperately in need of relief -- relief from loneliness and relief from unsafe water -- and maybe the first step to that relief is our tears of compassion. We may not know each individual by name, but Jesus does. Much like water in the desert produces an abundance of life, our tears, spilled over this broken world, can bring unexpected and miraculous life.

### **group question:**

Do your relationships possess the power to heal and bring extraordinary life to others? Consider this as you read about Jesus' relationship with Lazarus.

## encountering Jesus

### **read:**

*John 11:1-45*

#### **The Death of Lazarus**

<sup>1</sup>Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>(This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) <sup>3</sup>So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

<sup>4</sup>When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup>Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup>So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, <sup>7</sup>and then he said to his Disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

<sup>8</sup>"But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?"

<sup>9</sup>Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. <sup>10</sup>It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light."

<sup>11</sup> After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.”

<sup>12</sup> His Disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.” <sup>13</sup> Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his Disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

<sup>14</sup> So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, <sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

<sup>16</sup> Then Thomas (also known as Didymus[a]) said to the rest of the Disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

### **Jesus Comforts the Sisters of Lazarus**

<sup>17</sup> On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. <sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was less than two miles[b] from Jerusalem, <sup>19</sup> and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

<sup>21</sup> “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

<sup>24</sup> Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

<sup>27</sup> “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

<sup>28</sup> After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” <sup>29</sup> When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

<sup>32</sup> When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. <sup>34</sup> “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus wept.

<sup>36</sup> Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

<sup>37</sup> But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

### **Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead**

<sup>38</sup> Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. <sup>39</sup> "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

<sup>40</sup> Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

<sup>43</sup> When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

### **The Plot to Kill Jesus**

<sup>45</sup> Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

#### **read:**

*John 12:12-19*

### **Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King**

<sup>12</sup> The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,

"Hosanna! [a]"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" [b]

"Blessed is the king of Israel!"

<sup>14</sup> Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:

<sup>15</sup> "Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion;  
see, your king is coming,  
seated on a donkey's colt." [c]

<sup>16</sup> At first his Disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

<sup>17</sup> Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. <sup>18</sup> Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him.

<sup>19</sup> So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"

## **discuss:**

Discuss the following questions as a group.

1) Who are the main people mentioned in the first five verses of John 11? What are their relationships to each other?

2) How did the various people respond to Jesus throughout the story?

Mary

Martha

The Disciples

Onlookers

3) Reread the first passage and pay special attention to all that Jesus says and does. Based on this passage, list five qualities of a good friend.

4) What do you think Jesus means when He says in John 11:15, "for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe"?

5) Jesus demonstrates a compelling compassion for His friend Lazarus. Give two examples in your own life in which you have received similar compassion.

6) Jesus prays an interesting prayer (vv. 41-42). How did the resurrection of Lazarus impact those who watched? Those who heard the story?

7) In John 12:9, the Pharisees say, "Look how the whole world has gone after him." Why did people chase after Jesus and follow Him?

8) On Palm Sunday, although they did not understand the significance of the triumphal entry, many people who saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead, went out to meet Him. What events have you seen that successfully drew people to learn more about Jesus?

# responding to Jesus

## **personal response:**

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowds shouted, "Hosanna!" This word of praise means save, and the people needed Jesus back then as much as we need Jesus today. As you reflect on the week ahead, think about what it means for Jesus to be the Savior of the world.

## **global response:**

In the story of Lazarus, Jesus shows us how much we need relationships with others. Brainstorm with a friend three ways that a person might develop a friendship with those on the other side of the world who need safe water. Then pick one and do it.

## group prayer

DEAR Jesus, may we allow our hearts to break for those around us. May we also be troubled and deeply moved to take action for those in need beyond our physical reach. As we water the world with our tears, may the resulting unexpected and miraculous life help others experience God's great love. Amen.

# Family Splash Time

Week Seven: A Big Parade!

## gather

You will need:

- Your favorite Children's Bible
- A palm branch or other available tree branch
- Your W4W bottle to keep filling with coins

## begin

Place the branch in the middle of the table, and ask the following questions: What is your favorite part of a parade? Have you ever been in a parade? If so, what was the difference between being in a parade and watching a parade?

## listen

In today's story, we will read about a grand parade that Jesus was in. As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out what Jesus rode in the parade, and what the people did as He passed by them.

Read both Zachariah 9:9 and Luke 19:28-38 aloud as a family. (Note: The Luke scripture is another version of the John 12:12-19 story from the adult Bible study.) After reading, answer the following:

- 1) What did Jesus ride in the parade? (*A colt or small donkey*)
- 2) What did the people do as Jesus passed? (*Laid their coats in front of Him. Shouted praises to Him in loud voices for all the miracles He performed.*)

During this parade, Jesus was fulfilling what was foretold many, many years earlier. In the Old Testament book of Zachariah, it was stated that Jesus would ride a donkey or colt into Jerusalem. Jesus told His Disciples to go find a very specific colt -- one that was tied and had not been ridden before. How hard do you think it would be to ride a brand new colt? (*A colt is very small for an adult to ride. He would not be broken in.*) As King, Jesus could have asked to ride on a warhorse, but instead He chose this particular colt. What does it tell you about Jesus? (*He was willing to*

## act

Read John 12:12-13. In this version of the story, when Jesus went by the people, what did they shout? (*Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!*) The people were awed by Jesus and wanted Him treated as a king. They also wanted Jesus to save them. In fact, the word Hosanna means *save*, and the people shouted the word as a praise to God!

## try

During this season, we have had the opportunity to help others in Jesus' name to receive safe water. Today, as you are filling your W4W bottle, shout "Hosanna!" every time a coin or bill drops into the bottle. Also, remember this is the last week to fill your W4W bottle, as you will bring it with you to church Easter Sunday.

## pray

THANK You, Jesus, for riding a little donkey and letting the people praise You. Help us to remember to praise and thank You every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## personal reflection

# Maundy Thursday

Moving Towards the Cross

*written by Tom Stephen*

## introduction

*These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31*

On Easter, Jesus conquered death and offered His greatest sign of life, and of love, to the world. Easter Sunday, however, came at the cost of Good Friday, and in preparation for His death, Jesus took a moment the evening before His journey to the cross to show the Disciples how to live.

As you prepare for Easter, join Jesus in the upper room and consider your response to His actions.

### **read:**

*John 13:1-5*

#### **Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet**

<sup>1</sup> It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

<sup>2</sup> The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his Disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

### **thoughts:**

At last, Jesus and His Disciples had time alone and space to celebrate the remembrance of God's mighty hand in saving the people of Israel during Passover. During their meal together, the Disciples also may have been thinking about that first party in Cana, at which Jesus turned water into wine, giving way to a night of great festivity.

This evening, however, the tone was likely different in the upper room. The Disciples may have noticed that Jesus looked particularly pensive; His voice may have grown heavy; His body language more somber. For Jesus knew it was His time to return to God.

What did John mean when he wrote, "Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God?" (v.3). What emotions do you think Jesus had as He shared the evening meal?

## **read:**

*John 13:4-11*

<sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his Disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

<sup>8</sup> "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

<sup>9</sup> "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

## **thoughts:**

Now this probably was a bit awkward for the Disciples as Jesus suddenly begins to wash their feet. Rabbis don't wash feet. Jewish men don't wash feet. In that culture, the host of the celebration would have had a slave or one of the women wash the guest's feet. All the Disciples knew this, but it was Peter who chose to say something about it.

What do you think ran through Peter's mind when Jesus told him he could have no part with Him unless He washed Peter's feet?

Have you allowed Jesus to wash your feet? Have you allowed Him to wash away all the dirt and residue that inhibits you from fully becoming the person He has designed you to be?

## **read:**

*John 13:12-17*

<sup>12</sup> When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. <sup>13</sup> “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup> Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

## **thoughts:**

In the parables, Jesus often used the mundane to teach the extraordinary: a farmer sowing seeds becomes God sowing His Word into the world; a father’s love for a rebellious teenage son becomes the hope for all rebels to know God’s love. Here, a towel, a basin of water, and dirty feet become emblems of the kind of servant’s love that Jesus has for us, and that we are to have for each other.

Jesus says that we are to wash each other’s feet. Think about practical ways that you’ve washed someone else’s feet. How have you seen others wash feet?

## **thoughts:**

As we move towards Easter Sunday consider how you would like to experience life more fully, because of what Jesus offers you. How has He called you to bring new life to others? If you have time, read the rest of John 13 in order to prepare for Good Friday. Then take a moment to pray for the ministry and people who will receive safe water as a result of what you’ve been doing during Lent.

Jesus proclaims a great promise, “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them” (v. 17). Thinking about that statement and pray the following prayer:

LORD, I want to follow You and to be obedient to what You have called me to do. Unlike the Disciples, I know the burden You had that evening in the upper room. Help me in the next few days to reflect, pray, and share Your amazing story and how it affects all life. In Your name I pray. Amen.

## personal reflection

# Good Friday

The Cross

written by Tom Stephen

## introduction

*We may say that on the first Good Friday afternoon was completed that great act by which light conquered darkness and goodness conquered sin. That is the wonder of our Saviour's crucifixion. There have been victories all over the world, but wherever we look for the victor we expect to find him with his heel upon the neck of the vanquished. The wonder of Good Friday is that the victor lies vanquished by the vanquished one.*

-Phillips Brooks

Two thousand years ago, in the midst of lying, shouting mobs, Jesus walked truthfully, quietly and, in the end, unaccompanied by His friends. He knew that His death would offer life to everyone who chose to receive it, and for that reason He took the hardest, darkest road. But what looked like an embarrassing defeat was really an enormous victory.

Christians around the world will gather this Friday to remember the day that Jesus conquered sin. As you begin this holy day of remembrance, walk through the story as John tells it and reflect on the good work God has done in your own life through the sacrifice Jesus made.

### read:

*John 19:1-11*

### Jesus Sentenced to Be Crucified

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.<sup>2</sup> The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe<sup>3</sup> and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face.

<sup>4</sup> Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him."<sup>5</sup> When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

<sup>6</sup> As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."

<sup>7</sup> The Jewish leaders insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

<sup>8</sup>When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid,<sup>9</sup> and he went back inside the palace. “Where do you come from?” he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup>“Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?”

<sup>11</sup> Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”

### **thoughts:**

Although Jewish leaders brought Jesus to be crucified, and Pilate and the Romans put Him to death, ultimately it was the Lord who orchestrated these events. How do we wrap our brains around such sacrifice and love?

Take a moment to consider that, “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son” (John 3:16). Did you know that God loved you this much?

### **read:**

*John 19:12-18*

<sup>12</sup> From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.”

<sup>13</sup> When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge’s seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). <sup>14</sup> It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon.

“Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews.

<sup>15</sup> But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”

“Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked.

“We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered.

<sup>16</sup> Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

### **The Crucifixion of Jesus**

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). <sup>18</sup> There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

## **thoughts:**

The scene is chaotic as Pilate tries to reason with the crowds and the chief priests, but their hearts are hardened. Finally, the people shout, "Take him away! Crucify him!"

As you consider the crowds shouting "Crucify him" what emotions do you have?

## **read:**

*John 19:19-27*

<sup>19</sup> Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

<sup>20</sup> Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. <sup>21</sup> The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews."

<sup>22</sup> Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

<sup>23</sup> When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

<sup>24</sup> "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said,

"They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment."

So this is what the soldiers did.

<sup>25</sup> Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother; his mother's sister; Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," <sup>27</sup> and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

## **thoughts:**

Different groups of people played into this part of the story: Pilate feebly took a stand; the chief priests insulted and mocked; the soldiers looked out for their own interests; and Mary and John received direction and love.

As you reflect on those who took a part, describe what the scene at the foot of the cross tells you about people in general? What does it tell you about yourself?

**read:**

*John 19:28-30*

**The Death of Jesus**

<sup>28</sup> Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." <sup>29</sup> A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. <sup>30</sup> When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

**thoughts:**

Even in His death Jesus walked closely with God and surrendered to His plan. It was only after everything had been fulfilled that Jesus gave up His spirit. With three words, "It is finished" (v.30), Jesus prophetically declared the ushering in of a whole new era, for which the power of sin would be broken and God's gift of forgiveness would become available to everyone.

As you reflect on the events of this day, consider what is good about Good Friday and complete the following prayer:

LORD Jesus, when I consider the day you died on the cross, I want to thank you for the following:

In Your name I pray. Amen.

# 8

## Encounter: Mary and the Empty Tomb

*written by Paul Darilek*

# introduction

Kevin Baker was the fastest boy in my kindergarten class, and one day, I raced him from the second-grade building to the first-grade building. And I think I won. At least, I'm pretty sure I recall a sense of impending glory before waking up in the school nurse's office. In my mind, the ten-foot cinderblock wall that was our finish line was invisible. All I could see was myself -- beating Kevin in a footrace.

The Apostle John did the same thing when he wrote his account of the resurrection. Except his footrace was against Peter, and the brick wall he couldn't see was Jesus.

In John's account of the resurrection of Jesus, he doesn't mention that while at the tomb he never actually sees Jesus. But he does record that he beats Peter in a footrace—twice! “Both were running,” John writes, “but the other disciple outran Peter” (John 20:4). Then a few verses later, just in case anyone missed it, he reiterates that, “Finally the other disciple who had reached the tomb first...” (v.8).

Mary Magdalene, in fact, is the only one in John's account of the empty tomb who actually stops and sees Jesus. She is the only one who takes the time to stand outside the tomb that broke her heart. It was there that she wept and opened herself up to an encounter with the resurrected Christ. She was the first of all human beings to do so. God later chose John to tell the story to the world, but at the time that the event was unfolding all John could see was himself, beating Peter in a footrace.

I can relate to John. After all, I failed to see a brick wall right in front of me -- just imagine how often I've failed to see Jesus. I look for Him in the Bible, ostensibly because that's what a good Christian does, but maybe because I really just enjoy literary study. I look for Him at church -- perhaps because it's a pretty easy way to show myself, others, and hopefully even Jesus, that I'm showing up.

Where I most often fail to see Jesus is in the hungry, thirsty, estranged, naked, sick, or imprisoned. Yet those are all the places where He asks us to see Him. Matthew emphasizes that in the 25th chapter of his Gospel, where he essentially says that since the creation of the world God has been preparing a kingdom for those among us who choose to see the Lord in the forgotten margins of society.

To drive the point home, Jesus at the cross becomes all those things. He'd been stripped naked; he was estranged; he wasn't well; and he was imprisoned. According to John, some of his last words were, “I am thirsty” (John 19:28).

So now the question becomes: Are we going to focus on our footraces, and whatever it is we're trying to win? Or are we going to do what Mary Magdalene did and stand before the realities that break our hearts, and open ourselves to an encounter with a thirsty Jesus?

## **group question:**

What are the footraces that keep you from seeing Jesus?

# encountering Jesus

## **read:**

*John 20:1-18*

### **The Empty Tomb**

<sup>1</sup> Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. <sup>2</sup> So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

<sup>3</sup> So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. <sup>4</sup> Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, <sup>7</sup> as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. <sup>8</sup> Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. <sup>9</sup> (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) <sup>10</sup> Then the Disciples went back to where they were staying.

### **Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene**

<sup>11</sup> Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb <sup>12</sup> and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

<sup>13</sup> They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." <sup>14</sup> At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

<sup>17</sup> Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

<sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went to the Disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

### **discuss:**

Discuss the following questions as a group.

1) Why do you think that John points out twice that he got to the tomb first, before Peter?

2) What could be the significance of Mary seeing Jesus, rather than John seeing Him?

3) Mary Magdalene knew Jesus well. Why do you think she saw Him, but did not recognize Him?

4) Why do you think Jesus said He was ascending, "to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (v.17) instead of just saying to God?

5) Can you think of a time when you encountered Jesus where you might not have expected it?

6) John went inside the tomb and, "he saw and believed" (v.8) What do you think he believed?

# responding to Jesus

## **personal response:**

In light of where Jesus suggested we find Him, where might you encounter Christ in your community?

## **global response:**

What does it/could it mean to discover a thirsty Jesus in this age of international travel, the Internet, and churches and ministries with global outreach?

## group prayer

JESUS, open our eyes to the unexpected places where You would like us to encounter You. Lift our eyes away from the footraces and rat races that compete for our attention. Break our hearts as Mary Magdalene's heart was broken at Your empty tomb. Remind us that the tomb is still empty. Remind us also that You are to be found among those who say -- just as You said from the cross -- "I am thirsty." Amen.

# Family Splash Time

Week Eight: Happy or Sad?

## gather

You will need:

- *Your favorite Children's Bible (or you may use the scripture reading in this study)*
- *Two paper plates and a crayon or marker*
- *A glass and a water source to fill it*
- *Your W4W bottle to keep filling with coins, unless you have already brought it to church*

## begin

Place the paper plates in the middle of the table. With the markers, draw a sad face on one plate and a happy face on the other. Ask the following questions: What makes you sad? What makes you happy?

## listen

In today's story, we will read about a woman named Mary who was outside of the tomb where Jesus was buried. As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out how Mary felt at the beginning of the story, and how she felt at the end. Read John 20:11-18 aloud as a family, then answer the following:

- 1) Which paper plate shows how Mary felt at the beginning of the story? (*Hold up the sad face.*)
- 2) Why was she sad? (*Jesus' body had been taken away and she didn't know where it was.*)
- 3) Which paper plate shows how Mary felt at the end of the story? (*Happy face.*)
- 4) Why did her feelings change? (*Jesus was alive and actually spoke to her.*)

Can you imagine being at that very first Easter? At the beginning, Mary was sad, because she didn't know where they had put Jesus' body, but then, Jesus talked to her and let her know that He was alive! How very exciting it must have been for her! Then, Jesus told her to go and tell the Good News about the miracle of Easter -- that Jesus had risen from the dead and was alive. And, because she did as He asked, Mary became the very first missionary.

# act

We've talked a lot in the last weeks about how children around the world need clean, safe water. These children, like you, also need to know the Good News that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the tomb for all of us. When the organizations drill wells, they tell the village people about Jesus, just like a missionary. Did you know that you too can be a missionary? What would you like to tell your friends about Jesus? If Jesus sent you to children in a country without safe water, what would you tell them about Jesus?

# try

Did you know that your body is made up of about 75% water? *(Fill a glass  $\frac{3}{4}$  full of water.)* What do you know happens when children drink dirty water? *(They can get sick or even die.)* Jesus wants us all to be 100% full of His clean, living water, just like He wants children to drink 100% clean, safe water. *(Fill the glass to the top.)*

# pray

THANK You, Jesus, that You are alive! Thank You for providing safe water for our bodies and living water for our hearts. Help us tell everyone that You are alive. Please use the money we have collected during the last few weeks to bring safe, clean water to children in other countries. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# 9

## Peter's Commission

*written by Carol Benson*

# introduction

Are you familiar with the saying, "Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink?" That's what I experienced this year as I traveled as part of a mission team to the Dominican Republic.

This tiny island nation has great natural beauty, especially compared to its devastated neighbor, Haiti, and our team served in the mountain community of Jarabacoa, which is covered with dense, dark green jungles and thick strands of trees, which give way to brightly colored flowers and other tropical flora and fauna. Frequent afternoon rains and occasional thunderstorms feed the many streams and nearby rivers giving the impression of, "Water, water everywhere."

Few of us living in developed countries know the struggle of finding clean water, but for the many people living below the poverty level in the DR, and around the world, this is a real crisis. Due to poor sanitation, farming, and waste management practices in the DR, the only safe water comes out of plastic bottles, which are sold by a multitude of vendors scattered alongside the roads. Sadly these roads are littered with just as many empty plastic bottles. Furthermore, soda is often cheaper to purchase than water. This less expensive option typically outweighs the more healthy choice of water as families strive to meet their basic needs. As a result when it comes to safe, clean, and healthy water, there is often, "not a drop to drink."

This study's final lesson has more to do with a lack of fish and faith than with a lack of water. When Simon Peter and the other disciples go out in their boats to fish, they cast their nets where there should have been an abundance of fish, but they soon find, "Fish, fish everywhere, but not one to catch." That is until Jesus stands on the shore and tells them to cast their nets to the other side of the boat. Suddenly, their nets are so full, that they can barely bring them in. Later, after they have enjoyed a fine breakfast of fresh fish, Jesus commands Peter to feed His sheep and follow Him. At first, Peter questions Him, but, as we know, he soon drops his nets and follows Jesus.

During my time in the DR, a friend and fellow missionary, Katy, and I played joyfully in the local river with some of the children. However, even as the children laughed and the water splashed, Katy and I were keenly aware of the water's unhealthy dynamic, especially since we could see that horses and cattle were grazing upstream, while people were doing laundry and bathing downstream. We also knew that although we couldn't solve the physical water crisis that day, Jesus had called us to tend His flock and to love others towards Him, the only truly good source of water-- living water. Like Peter, we want to follow Jesus and take care of His sheep; therefore, we share our stories of the hard realities faced by our Dominican friends with our friends back home, where, as the body of Christ, we believe that we can work unified to effectively bring safe water back to communities like theirs.

### **group question:**

When did you first hear God's call on your life to follow Him? When have you heard the call of Jesus to feed His sheep? How did you respond?

# encountering Jesus

## **read:**

*John 21*

### **Jesus and the Miraculous Catch of Fish**

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his Disciples, by the Sea of Galilee.[a] It happened this way:<sup>2</sup> Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus[b]), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other Disciples were together.<sup>3</sup> “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the Disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

<sup>6</sup> He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

<sup>7</sup> Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.<sup>8</sup> The other Disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.[c]

<sup>9</sup> When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.”<sup>11</sup> So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.<sup>12</sup> Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the Disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord.<sup>13</sup> Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.<sup>14</sup> This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his Disciples after he was raised from the dead.

### **Jesus Reinstates Peter**

<sup>15</sup> When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

<sup>16</sup> Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

<sup>17</sup> The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. <sup>18</sup> Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." <sup>19</sup> Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

<sup>20</sup> Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") <sup>21</sup> When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?"

<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." <sup>23</sup> Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"

<sup>24</sup> This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

<sup>25</sup> Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

## **discuss:**

Discuss the following questions as a group.

1) At the beginning of the story, the Disciples go out to fish and catch nothing. Have you ever gone to work, or even to recreate, and left feeling like you accomplished nothing? How did you handle it?

2) Have you ever been in a situation where you were surrounded by some resource or commodity, but had no access to it? Is there a "water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink" scenario in your life?

3) How is it that the disciple whom Jesus loved recognizes Jesus standing on the shore? Describe a time when you've seen the power of Jesus arrive on the scene. Did you recognize it at first? Or was it someone else that pointed your attention to it?

4) How did Peter respond when he heard John say, "It is the Lord" (v.7)? Why might Peter have been in such a hurry to get to Jesus?

5) Read John 13:36-38 and John 18:15-18, and 25-27. It was at night by a fire similar to this one that Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. Why is it significant that Jesus questions Peter three times here?

6) Jesus uses the imagery of shepherding as He forgives and reinstates Peter, renewing his call to ministry. Have you ever been shepherded by someone else? Who are you shepherding right now?

7) What does Jesus' command to, "Follow Me" mean to you personally? In your life, what other competing voices say, "no, follow me instead?"

# responding to Jesus

## **personal response:**

John 21:25 tells us that Jesus did many other things as well, which were not written down. Consider making (and maintaining) a list of all the ways that you have seen God's hand at work in your life and in the lives of those around you. Once you've made this list consider sharing it with others. Off the top of your mind, what would be some of the highlights?

## **global response:**

One of the most important necessities for sheep is access to clean, fresh water. People all over that world have that same basic need. How can God use you to work in the lives of His thirsty sheep? How can you help to bring them clean water and access to His living water?

## group prayer

LORD Jesus, we thank You for being our great shepherd, for giving us Your living water, and for laying down Your life for us. We recognize our sinfulness and our need for You as our Lord and Savior. Lord, we ask that You open our eyes to recognize You in all situations, and we pray that You empower us to follow You with faithfulness and obedience, knowing that our nets can also be full to overflowing and yet not break. We pray this in the name of the One who had victory over death, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

# Family Splash Time

Week Nine: *The Fish Fry!*

## gather

You will need:

- *Your favorite Children's Bible (or you may use the scripture reading in this study)*
- *A large frying pan or pancake griddle*

## begin

Place the frying pan or griddle in the middle of the table, and ask the following questions: What is your favorite breakfast? If you could invite anyone, who would you like to join you for breakfast?

## listen

In today's story, we will read about the Disciples after Jesus rose from the tomb. As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out what the Disciples were doing and why they were discouraged. Read John 21:1-14 aloud as a family, then answer the following:

- 1) Why were the Disciples discouraged? *(They had been fishing all night without catching one fish.)*
- 2) What did Jesus tell them to do? *(Fish on the right side of the boat.)*
- 3) What happened when they followed Jesus' instructions? *(Their nets were loaded with fish.)*

Have you ever had a friend or loved one go away for a long time without you? How did you feel when he or she returned? Probably like the Disciples did on this day. They were stoked about seeing Jesus. In fact, Peter couldn't even wait for the boat to get to shore, so he jumped into the water and swam to Jesus. How do you think the Disciples felt when Jesus invited them to breakfast? *(They were excited to spend time with Jesus.)*

## act

That morning, Jesus showed up; gave the Disciples guidance about fishing; fixed them breakfast; and spent time with them. And their dark night turned into a fantastic morning! What do you think it would be like to have breakfast with Jesus? Would you tell Him about what you've learned about water these last few weeks? You can tell Him right now by praying to Him. You can also tell your friends and family about what you have learned during this study.

## try

This is the last week of this study, but it doesn't have to be the last week that you learn about water and helping others. As you think about ways you can continue supporting children who need clean, safe water, memorize the following verse: "As a deer longs for streams of water, so I long for You, God." (Psalm 42:1).

## pray

THANK You, Jesus, for brightening our gray days! Help us to always listen to You and follow Your ways. Help us to remember what we've learned about the children who don't have clean, safe water, and to pray for them. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# Meet the Authors

A diverse group of leaders, pastors, and Christian water development practitioners contributed to *The Easter Journey: Signs of Life*. In this section, you will find more information about our talented group of authors.

## **Week One**

Carol Nowlin is a founding member of the Waiting for Water team. She has worked in Christian international development for the past decade, and is currently serving with Samaritan's Purse in Phnom Penh, Cambodia as a Program Development Officer. Carol also holds a BA from Taylor University and an MA from Eastern University. She is married to Mike and has two young children. In her spare time she enjoys reading great fiction, running, and baking too many cookies.

## **Week Two**

Ellie Stevens is a Christian, wife of Dustin Stevens, mother of toddler Ruth Stevens, author, translator and editor of fiction and non-fiction in English and Italian with a PhD from UCLA. Academically her focus is on the Bible as a source in medieval Italian literature with a specialization in Dante and his theology. Ellie enjoys cross-country running, mountain-biking and ocean swimming.

## **Week Three**

Daniel Nathan is Pastor of Coed Small Group Life at Vineyard Columbus in Ohio. Prior to this role, he served as a missionary and ran water projects in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Daniel received an MPA from The Ohio State University in non-profit management in 2013, which is very useful in a large church. He is married to Melissa and they have three boys -- Jude, Asher, and Marcus.

## **Week Four**

Tiffany Malloy is a stay-at-home mom of four kids under age six. When she's not changing diapers, getting snacks, or (re)organizing the craft closet, she volunteers in her local community and explores her new city of Madison, WI. Tiffany also blogs at *Play, Eat, Grow*, a blog designed to inspire parents with fun things to do, delicious recipes, and spiritual formation activities and ideas.

## **Week Five**

Mark Kraakevik is the Lead Pastor at The EDGE Colorado, a Converge Worldwide church plant. He has a heart for The Story and shares God's Word both passionately and actively. Mark also loves community, and he is a social media aficionado. When not out training for a marathon, Mark can often be found meeting people at a local coffee shop. Mark and his wife, Heidi, have two teenage daughters.

## **Week Six**

Nancy Worth loves being a wife, mother and grandmother. Her passions in ministry include missions and Bible study. She has also shared actively in ministry for over forty-seven years with her husband, Dave, who recently retired after serving Presbyterian congregations in Malibu, CA, River Forest, IL, and most recently Beverly Hills, CA.

## **Week Seven**

Phil Gallagher is a storyteller, public speaker and visionary in his local community. In addition to his wife and three sons, Phil hangs out with hundreds of students, inspiring them to live BIGGER and love BETTER. Music, technology, theology, culture and movies are a few of Phil's many passions.

## **Week Eight**

Paul Darilek is a former bean farmer, missionary, and water well driller. Today he works as Senior Director of Communications at LivingWater International and has a passion for writing, communicating and changing the lives of the thirsty. He lives in San Antonio, TX with his wife, Umber, and children, Ashi and Hugh.

## **Week Nine**

Carol Benson serves as a Commissioned Ruling Elder at MonteVista Presbyterian Church in Newbury Park, CA. She and her husband, Danny, are enjoying a new season of life as empty nesters, as both of their children are now away at college. Carol is passionate about outreach, serving others, and sharing Christ's love with people in many parts of the world.

## **Devotionals**

Tom Stephen is a writer, pastor, husband and father who has a heart to see others grow in their relationship with God and with others. As pastor of Monte Vista Presbyterian in Newbury Park, CA, he places an emphasis on prayer, compassion, humility and enthusiasm for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Tom and his wife, Ginny, have four children.

## **Family Spash Studies**

Jonelle Stevens is a Christian who has taught in the California public schools for twenty-five years with a specialization in reading education. She has also written curriculum for non-profit water organizations and trained WASH volunteers in the US, Kenya, Uganda, and Central America. She and her husband, Dan, have two adult children and four grandchildren. Hiking, reading and loving her grandchildren are her passions.

# Meet the W4WTeam

A diverse team of pastors, lay leaders, and development professionals from across the country came together in 2011 to launch Waiting for Water. Below is more information about our team members.

## **Dan Stevens**

Dan Stevens served as the Senior Pastor at Eastminster Presbyterian Church in Ventura, CA for twenty-six years. During that time, he founded IMPACT, a short-term missions training program affiliated with the Santa Barbara Presbytery. Through his involvement with IMPACT, as well as other cross-cultural ventures, he has gained a wealth of knowledge and personal experience in forming transnational partnerships and working in the developing world, including being the Executive Director of Lifewater International from 2002-10. Dan holds a Master of Divinity from Princeton Seminary and a Bachelor of Science degree from Pepperdine University. Dan is married to Jonelle and they have two adult children and four grandchildren. In his spare time, Dan likes to ride his bicycle and hike with his wife.

## **Tom Stephen**

Tom Stephen is a writer, pastor, husband and father who has a heart to see others grow in their relationship with God and with others. As pastor of Monte Vista Presbyterian in Newbury Park, CA, he places an emphasis on prayer, compassion, humility and enthusiasm for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Tom and his wife, Ginny, have four children.

## **Carol Nowlin**

Carol Nowlin is a founding member of the Waiting for Water team. She has worked in Christian international development for the past decade, and is currently serving with Samaritan's Purse in Phnom Penh, Cambodia as a Program Development Officer. Carol also holds a BA from Taylor University and an MA from Eastern University. She is married to Mike and has two young children. In her spare time, she enjoys reading great fiction, running, and baking too many cookies.

## **Danielle Baird**

Dani is a founding member of the Waiting for Water team. She and her husband, James, own J Macrae Baird -- a creative design and consulting company. Dani has a Masters in Instructional Leadership and a teaching credential. She also has a BS in Psychology. Dani loves photography, and enjoys incorporating her photographs into her company projects. In her spare time, she serves as a volunteer at San Marino Community Church. James and Dani have two daughters, Ella Macrae and Olivia Gwynn, and a dog, Piper.

## **Heidi Kraakevik**

Heidi Kraakevik has been writing grant proposals and editing for nonprofit organizations for the past ten years. She also teaches junior high English at a local Christian school. Heidi has a BA in English Literature and a 7-12 Language Arts certification from Bethel University. She is married to Mark, and they have two teenage daughters. In her spare time, Heidi writes Young Adult fiction, plays classical piano, and leads worship at their church as often as possible. She is rarely without her laptop, iPad, or a really good book.

**Ellie Stevens**

Ellie Stevens is a Christian, author, translator, and editor of fiction and non-fiction in English and Italian. She holds a PhD from UCLA, and, academically, her focus is on the Bible as a source in medieval Italian literature with a specialization in Dante and his theology. She is married to Dustin, and they have a toddler, Ruth. Ellie also enjoys cross-country running, mountain biking and ocean swimming.

**Elli Busch**

Elli Busch, as a young mother, met Jesus while attending her first Bible Study. Since then she has been committed to helping people connect with God. As a writer and editor in community-wide Bible Studies, speaker at church retreats, and trainer of small group leaders in various denominations, Elli has gained a great appreciation for the diversity and creativity in the Body of Christ. Her hobbies include tap dancing, gardening, reading too many books at one time, offering hospitality, and traveling with her family whenever possible. Elli and her husband, Ron, run a small construction company and have thoroughly enjoyed raising and launching two sons.

## NGO Partners & Projects

The Waiting for Water team has carefully selected the nonprofit partners profiled in this section. The six partners chosen for 2014 exemplify a commitment to Christ and to the world as they provide safe water, sanitation, and hygiene education. In addition to a summary about each partner, specific projects are listed, so that you can choose one to support through your participation in *The Easter Journey*.

To learn more about the nonprofit partners, you can also visit our website at: [www.waitingforwater.org](http://www.waitingforwater.org)

# NGO Partners & Projects

## **Blood:Water Mission**

Blood:Water Mission is an equipping agency that partners with African grassroots organizations to address the HIV/AIDS and water crises. Founded by multi-platinum GRAMMY® Award winning band, Jars of Clay, Blood:Water Mission began in 2005 as a call to personalize the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa. To date, Blood:Water has partnered with more than 1,300 communities in sub-Saharan Africa, providing life-saving water for over 800,000 people in 11 countries and access to HIV/AIDS education, treatment and support for over 40,000 people. For more information and to get involved, visit [www.bloodwatermission.com](http://www.bloodwatermission.com) or follow on twitter, @bloodwater

### **project: Northern Uganda, Africa**

After more than two decades of Civil War, Northern Ugandans are working to rebuild their homeland. Attacks led by a rebel group, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), forced many people into internally displaced persons camps for many years. Returning home to abandoned and destroyed villages, they face poor infrastructure and little to no access to basic resources like medical care and safe water. Now, communities are gathering together to address these issues and rebuild their homes. With 33 % of the population living without access to water and 77% without access to sanitation, Blood:Water Mission is equipping their local partner, Divine Waters, to address these needs in creative and innovative ways.

### **project: financial contribution**

\$50 -- trains one village health worker to mobilize their community

\$100 -- tests the water quality in a community to develop a strategy for health education

\$300 -- educates a school about hygiene and sanitation training, and operation and maintenance of a latrine

\$2000 -- repairs a well in a community and equips them on further repairs

\$5000 -- equips a new well for a community of 500 people

\$9000 -- builds a community latrine

## **India Partners**

India Partners (IP) works alongside a broad group of indigenous Christian grassroots agencies in India focused on alleviating poverty and injustice. IP believes in helping the people of India help themselves, with God's grace, and their partner organizations in India serve all -- regardless of caste, religion, gender or creed. India Partners began as a child sponsorship program from Central Lutheran Church in Eugene, OR, and was incorporated as a non-profit in May 1994. Today, IP supports seven indigenous Indian Christian Ministries based in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu states in India. Their vision is for an India rich in hope, justice, and the compassion of Christ. For more information, please visit: [www.indiapartners.org](http://www.indiapartners.org).

### **project: India**

You can help IP provide access to safe water and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) training in India. Community-wide WASH training occurs prior to installation of the well, so villagers learn how to keep their new water source safe for years to come.

### **project: financial contribution**

\$200 -- provides for the installation of a safe water well and training in WASH concepts

## **Living Water International**

For the past twenty-two years, Living Water International (LWI) has provided water, sanitation, and education in twenty-two countries. To understand the best way to provide for the physical and spiritual needs of the people, LWI brings communities into the projects from the beginning, as well as, works alongside the local churches. Their vision is to demonstrate the love of God by helping communities acquire desperately needed clean water, and to experience “living water”—the gospel of Jesus Christ—which alone satisfies the deepest thirst. For more information, please visit: [www.water.cc](http://www.water.cc)

### **project: India**

The Church is growing in India, and water is opening doors for the gospel and giving real opportunities for Christian brothers and sisters to love their neighbors. When LWI's Indian church partners first demonstrate God's love by offering safe, clean drinking water in Jesus' name, persecution often “melts away;” people are invited into homes, and doors are opened for the Gospel.

### **project: financial contribution**

\$25 -- provides water for one person

\$100 -- provides water for a family

\$500 -- provides a new pump for a water project

\$1,000 -- supports the drilling costs associated with a new water project

\$2,500 -- supports the drilling of a well and installation of a hand-pump, and will be used alongside other funding to support Living Water's full community program model

\$5,000 -- funds a new water project, hygiene education, and supports a local pastor

## **Living Waters for the World**

Living Waters for the World (LWW) is a ministry of the Synod of Living Waters of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Founded in 1993, LWW teaches people to empower local leaders to build and operate systems that provide clean water and health education to their communities. LWW believes God intends for all people to have clean water, and LWW's trained all-volunteer teams from churches and civic organizations have partnered with communities in 25 nations, with 540 LWW water systems installed to date that are providing life-saving and life-changing water to thousands of children and their families. For more information, please visit: [www.livingwatersfortheworld.org](http://www.livingwatersfortheworld.org)

### **project: Clean Water U**

You can play a significant part in sharing clean water by giving donations to cover the equivalent cost of water system components or to provide training scholarship assistance to international students who wish to attend our Clean Water U program.

### **project: financial contribution**

\$6 -- provides a water filter wrench

\$25 -- provides a water testing kit

\$50 -- provides an activated carbon filter

\$90 -- provides a sediment filter

\$175 -- provides a water pump

\$300 -- provides an international training scholarship

## **Seeds of Hope International**

Founded in 2003, Seeds of Hope International Partnerships (SoHIP) is a 501(c)3 organization in the U.S., and a registered NGO in Zambia. Over the last decade, SoHIP has brought access to safe water to more than 600,000 Zambians, by constructing and installing 6,300+ biosand filters (household water purifiers); forming and promoting the African Biosand Filter Network (ABINET); drilling or overseeing the drilling of 260+ new well boreholes; and repairing 500+ broken water well hand pumps. All of SoHIP's development and training programs focus on participatory community education, including courses in integrated water, sanitation, and hygiene (iWASH), and in-depth classes in vocational skills like needlework and computer skills, as well as sustainable, innovative farming and construction techniques. For more information, please visit: [www.sohip.org](http://www.sohip.org)

### **project: Zambia, Africa**

SoHIP believes that empowering communities and individuals to lift themselves out of poverty and disease requires an approach from all angles, taking into account all the needs of the people in three parts—health, education, and belief in hope for the future. You can help them bring safe water to Zambia by contributing to the following:

#### **project: financial contribution**

- \$85 -- provides a biosand filter
- \$100 -- provides pump repair and sanitation training
- \$200 -- provides resource center infrastructure
- \$6,500 -- provides a community development borehole

## **The Water Project**

The Water Project, Inc. is unlocking people's God-given potential by providing sustainable water projects to communities in sub-Saharan Africa who suffer needlessly from a lack of access to clean water and proper sanitation. For over seven years, The Water Project has been providing training, expertise and financial support for water project construction through its staff and local implementing partners. The Water Project works closely with local in-country teams and partners to develop clean water programs alongside these heroes. They carefully select implementing partners who have long-term relationships and commitments to the people they serve, and they are passionate about unlocking potential. For more information, please visit [www.thewaterproject.org](http://www.thewaterproject.org)

### **project: Burkina Faso, Africa**

Through their implementing partner and a local missionary, The Water Project is coming alongside newly planted churches in Burkina Faso by funding the rehabilitation of nearby broken water wells. These restored water points allow the rapidly growing churches to become a source life-sustaining safe drinking water, while they share the life-changing Living Water of Jesus Christ with their neighbors.

#### **project: financial contribution**

- \$23 -- provides clean, safe water for one person
- \$46 -- provides clean, safe water for two people
- \$115 -- provides clean, safe water for an average family
- \$230 -- provides clean, safe water for a large family
- \$460 -- provides clean, safe water for two families
- \$5,000 -- underwrites a Water Project

## **Lifewater International**

Lifewater International is a non-profit, Christian water development organization dedicated to effectively and sustainably serving the world's rural poor through integrated water, sanitation, and hygiene programs. For over 35 years, Lifewater has focused on contextually appropriate, low-tech water development. Lifewater trains, equips, and empowers local partners to provide their own communities with safe water. The goal is to empower the local population with self-sustaining solutions versus temporary relief. Lifewater International is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, Christian water development organization that intentionally serves all people regardless of race, religion, ethnicity or gender.

project:

project: financial contribution

## **El Porvenir**

project:

project: financial contribution