



World Vision®



LIVING WATER

Reflections and activities for Lent

Living water

Ash Wednesday

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters . . .” —*Isaiah 55:1 (NIV)*

In preparation for your Lenten journey, spend a few moments reading the introductory reflection for Ash Wednesday.

Life began with water. Before the first day of creation, water covered the earth—and God's Spirit covered the water (Genesis 1:2).

Life depends on water—which is another way of saying that life depends on God, since it is God who gives water. When Hagar and her son Ishmael were exiled to the desert, God showed them a well (Genesis 21:8-21). When the Israelites wandered a barren wilderness, God led them from one source of water to the next (Exodus 15:22-27). When there was none to be found, He brought water from the sunbaked rock (Exodus 17:1-7).

God used water to rescue people from oppression and injustice. The baby Moses escaped genocide among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. Years later, as he led a nation of just-freed slaves through the Red Sea, the waters crashed down behind them on 400 years of oppression. In John's gospel, which we'll explore further in this series, Jesus described salvation as being “born of water and the Spirit” (3:5).

It's no surprise that water features prominently in the Bible, since all of the Bible's stories took place in part of the world where access to water could not be taken for granted—as in many parts of the world today, like southern Zambia.

Even a relatively short period without water exposes the extent of our fragility. Without water, flesh and blood turn to dust.

Ash Wednesday invites us to reflect on our frailty. In many churches, Christians receive ashes on their foreheads—a reminder that we are dust, and to dust we will return (Genesis 3:19).

But there is a hopeful answer to this sobering reality: God is the Giver and Sustainer of all things. He is our true source of refreshment. He brings life to dust. God sent Jesus to unleash streams of living water within us (John 7:37-38), just as He unleashed water from a rock in the desert. He wants people to experience fullness of life—in this world and the next.

Over the next few weeks, we'll explore what it means to see Jesus as "living water," looking at six stories from the Gospel of John. We'll see how God invites us to be part of His thirst-quenching endeavor, sharing the gift of water with those in need, both literally and figuratively.

We are dust, and to dust we will return. But we can be renewed when we drink—and share—God's living water.



Water is life

“In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD’s house and will water the valley of acacias.” —*Joel 3:18 (NIV)*

Read the following reflection on John 2 and the story from Zambia. When you gather with your group, spend a few moments reflecting together on the discussion questions.

JESUS TURNS WATER INTO WINE (*John 2:1-11*)

At first glance, it seems strange that Jesus’ first recorded miracle was so ... frivolous. Turning water into wine? At a party where the guests may have had enough to drink already (2:10)?

Initially, Jesus seemed to feel the same way. He appeared to dismiss His own mother’s request, saying, “My hour has not yet come” (2:4). The foreboding reference to His own death was lost on those within earshot.

Perhaps out of deference to His mother, Jesus intervened after all. He instructed the servants to fill six stone jars. These weren’t just any jars. They were ritual purification jars; the water they normally held was used to wash away impurity. In Jesus’ hands, they served an altogether different purpose: bringing new life to the party.

Jesus’ miracle made no more sense to the master of ceremonies than it does to us. It was extravagant. Gratuitous. Excessive. And that’s the point. The jars of choice wine became a picture of God’s abundant grace, illustrating that Jesus did not come just to meet our spiritual needs. He came that we might flourish in every way. He came to offer hope and joy, for this life and the next.

The God who took on flesh in order to save us from sin and death wants us to experience life right here, in the flesh.

At Cana, Jesus transformed a symbol of spiritual purification into an even more powerful symbol of new life—abundant, overflowing, and all-encompassing.

TURNING WATER INTO LIFE

During Lent, we’ll read five stories from southern Zambia that highlight the perils of life without clean water as well as the transformation water can bring to an entire community.

Half of those living in rural Zambia—4.2 million people—don’t have access to safe drinking water. Only one in three can access basic sanitation facilities. As we’ll see in these stories, the availability (or lack) of clean water can mean the difference between life and death.

Some of the people we'll meet in these stories include:

Isaac and Everness

Isaac, 30, is a water, sanitation, and hygiene coordinator for World Vision in Zambia. Everness, 50, is a volunteer hygiene promoter.

Timothy and Clara

Timothy, 14, and Clara, 12, live in the village of Haalumba in southern Zambia, where World Vision has partnered with community members to provide a safe, sustainable supply of water.

Andoni Phiri

Andoni is a pastor serving in Zambia for whom every new borehole is an opportunity to share God's love—and introduce people to the source of living water.

Francis and Wise

Francis and Wise are two young boys from Haangumba in southern Zambia whose lives are tragically impacted by the contaminated water in their village.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time with your small group reflecting on this week's passage using the following discussion questions.

1. Did anything surprise you about the story of Jesus turning water into wine?
2. What do you think is significant about this being Jesus' first miracle?
3. How does this story challenge some of the perceptions we might have of Jesus?
4. What do you think this miracle says about the kind of life Jesus wants people to experience?
5. Since we are called to imitate Jesus' example (1 Peter 2:21), what can we learn from His miracle at Cana about serving others?

WATER FACT

Nearly 1,600 children die every day from diarrhea caused by unsafe water, poor sanitation, and lack of hygiene. That's more than the number killed by AIDS and malaria put together.

DAILY MEDITATIONS

Take a few moments each day to meditate on the following Scripture passages:

Monday: Psalm 33:6-9

In this song of praise, the author declares God's power over the waters of creation.

Tuesday: Psalm 107:33-38

The psalmist praises God's ability to turn deserts into springs. Jesus exhibits a similar power when He turns everyday water into choice wine.

Wednesday: Isaiah 35:1-7

Gushing springs of water feature prominently in Isaiah's vision of renewal.

Thursday: Isaiah 55:1-3

Isaiah invites the exiles of Judah to come to God for refreshment.

Friday: Jeremiah 31:7-12

God promises to bring His people safely home, leading them alongside streams of life-giving water.

WEEKLY ACTIVITY: AWARENESS

Water gauge

The average person in America uses between 80 and 100 gallons of water per day, compared to just 5 gallons per person in some parts of the developing world. How do you compare?

Track your daily water consumption this week using the simple chart on the next page. Here are some basic guidelines for estimating your usage, based on data from the U.S. Geological Survey and the Environmental Protection Agency:

Bathroom faucet (washing hands, brushing teeth, shaving, etc.):

New faucets: 1 gallon per minute

Old faucets: 2 gallons per minute

Toilet:

New toilets: 1.5 gallons per flush

Old toilets: 3 gallons per flush

Showers:

New showerheads: 2.5 gallons per minute

Old showerheads: 4 gallons per minute

Laundry:

High-efficiency washing machine: 25 gallons per load

Traditional washing machine: 40 gallons per load

Dishes:

Dishwasher: 20 gallons per load

Hand washing, running tap: 20 gallons

Hand washing, closed tap: 10 gallons

Outdoor watering: 2 gallons per minute

Drinking: 8 glasses = ½ gallon

Use this chart to log your water usage in the categories shown, estimating the number of gallons used per day for each. Note any additional uses not listed above, e.g., cooking, animal care, etc.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Bath faucet							
Toilet							
Showers							
Laundry							
Dishes							
Outdoor watering							
Drinking							
Cooking							
Animal care							

A new identity

“... To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.” —*Revelation 21:6 (NIV)*

Read the following reflection on John 4 and the stories of Clara, Isaac, and Everness. When you gather with your group, spend a few moments reflecting together on the discussion questions.

JESUS AND THE WOMAN AT THE WELL (*John 4:4-42*)

Typical man, she might have thought when Jesus asked her for some water. In the ancient world, fetching water was seen as women’s work—much as it is in many parts of the world today.

But something about Jesus’ request seemed odd to the woman at the well: He was Jewish, while she was Samaritan.

Everything about her would have sent most respectable Jewish rabbis running the other way. Her ethnicity. Her gender. Her reputation. Certainly, there was no love lost between Samaritans and Jews. Most Jews viewed their northern neighbors with contempt ... and Samaritans returned the favor. Not 20 years before the woman’s path crossed Jesus’, some of her countrymen had desecrated the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

But it’s a good bet she had more immediate concerns weighing on her mind that day. Her string of five marriages suggests she wasn’t used to men treating her with respect. In all likelihood, she was marginalized by her peers as well because of her relationship track record.

None of this deterred Jesus. One minute He was asking for a drink; the next, He was offering to give her “living water.” Imagine her shock. Since when do men offer to fetch water, living or otherwise?

In the exchange that followed, Jesus utterly transformed the woman’s identity. He treated her like an equal, engaging in a lengthy conversation—the longest recorded dialogue anyone has with Jesus in the Gospels. He restored the woman’s dignity, refusing to cast her aside when the unsavory bits of her past came to light.

From that day forward, she was no longer just a “woman at the well.” She became one of the very

LIVING WATER

In the ancient Jewish world, “living water” referred specifically to a source of fresh, flowing water—such as a stream or river—which offered cool refreshment. Such waters were contrasted with “dead” or stagnant waters. “Living water” became a powerful image of the life God offers.

first evangelists—one of the first people in John’s gospel to tell others about Jesus. Many of her fellow Samaritans put their faith in Jesus because of her influence (4:39).

The woman at the well received the living water Jesus came to offer. And she and her community were never the same.

“NO WATER LEADS TO A LACK OF SPIRITUALITY.”

The effects of dirty water are well known to the people of Haalumba in southern Zambia. Until a few years ago, they had no sustainable source of safe drinking water. Diarrhea and cholera were common. Children like Clara, now 12, had to walk long distances to fetch water that might kill them—that is, if the journey didn’t first.

“It was very dangerous,” Clara says, recalling the place where she used to draw water. “It was very slippery. You could fall and drown.”

The time spent fetching dirty water, and the illness it can cause, mean fewer opportunities for education and income-generating activities. This is especially true for women and girls. In Haalumba, as in other parts of the world, collecting water is widely seen as women’s work. Women today face the same prejudice that the woman in John 4 faced two thousand years ago.

As a result, education was nothing but a distant dream for Clara. “I had to carry heavy buckets,” she says. “I would be too tired to go to school.”

Dirty water has another insidious effect on rural communities: it keeps people from experiencing the fullness of God’s love for them.

Isaac Samunete—a water coordinator for World Vision in the Hamaundu area, which includes the village of Haalumba—has seen firsthand how a lack of clean water stunts not only physical and mental development but spiritual growth.

“No water leads to a lack of spirituality,” he explains. “The family is never together. The mother is always drawing water.”

Families have little time for nurturing their children’s faith when they spend most of their time just surviving. And it’s difficult for a child to comprehend the “living water” of Jesus when they’re constantly sick from the contaminated water of the local pond.

That’s why providing access to safe drinking water is such a great opportunity to invite people to experience the living water of eternal life.

Everness, a 50-year-old woman from Haalumba, agrees. “We learned about sanitation and hygiene and Christian witness at the same time,” she says. “People need to understand the spiritual side of things.”

Everness can even relate to the Samaritan woman in John 4. Like her, Everness once lived on the margins of her community. When World Vision came with its unique blend of spiritual and physical development opportunities, Everness gained a new identity. “This changed my spiritual life,” she says.

Everness became a volunteer hygiene promoter. She visited one home after another, teaching good hygiene and helping families improve sanitation by using toilets and hand-washing stations. “I started loving people and talking to them,” Everness says as she reflects on the last four years. “People love me now. Before, not so much.”

Today, thanks to the partnership between World Vision and the people of Haalumba, the community has a 17-foot borehole where locals can fetch clean water. The well is surrounded by a protective cement wall in the shape of a cross.

The design is no accident. It’s a reminder that in Haalumba, clean water from the earth opened people’s eyes to the living water from heaven.

WATER FACT

Every year, children miss more than 440 million school days due to water-related sickness.

Source: UN Water, Water for Life

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time with your small group reflecting on this week’s content using the following discussion questions.

1. Think back on your own spiritual journey. In what ways has Jesus transformed your identity?
2. What does “living water” signify to you?
3. Imagine you had to spend an hour or more each day just collecting water for yourself and your family. What other activities would you have to sacrifice? How would those sacrifices impact your overall well-being?
4. In the village of Haalumba, the lack of clean water negatively impacted people’s spiritual development. What are some other ways that poverty and deprivation—whether it’s hunger, a lack of economic opportunity, or injustice against women—make it harder for people to experience God’s love for them?

DAILY MEDITATIONS

Take a few moments each day to meditate on the following Scripture passages:

Monday: Genesis 24:1-27

Read the story of another man's encounter with a woman at a well—and the extraordinary kindness she demonstrated.

Tuesday: Exodus 15:22-26

In this story, God miraculously transformed bitter, undrinkable water into something fresh and life-giving for His people wandering in the wilderness.

Wednesday: Numbers 19:17-21

Notice how important fresh water—that is, “living water”—was in ancient Jewish cleansing rituals.

Thursday: Zechariah 14:1-9

Living water plays a key role in Zechariah's vision of Jerusalem's renewal.

Friday: Revelation: 7:13-17

In John's vision of the end, God forever satisfies the thirst of those who endure tribulation for Him, safely guiding them to “springs of living water.”

WEEKLY ACTIVITY: EXPERIENCE

Five for 24

Choose one day this week to budget your water, using only 5 gallons in a 24-hour period. At the start of the day, fill a clean bucket with 5 gallons (about 20 liters) of tap water. (That's how much water the typical person uses each day in many parts of the developing world.) Use only this water for all your drinking, washing, cooking, and cleaning needs that day. If multiple members of your family choose to participate, allocate 5 gallons of water for each person.



Water for the whole person

“In their hunger you gave them bread from heaven and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock ...”
—Nehemiah 9:15 (NIV)

Read the following reflection on John 5 and the story about Pastor Andoni. When you gather with your group, spend a few moments reflecting together on the discussion questions.

THE HEALING AT THE POOL (John 5:1-15)

Like the jars of water that Jesus turned to wine in John 2, the waters of Bethesda were normally meant for purification. The pool was likely a *mikveh*, a Jewish ritual bath where people ceremonially washed away their impurity.

But this *mikveh* went beyond the norm. The waters of Bethesda were thought to have healing powers. People with all sorts of ailments would gather, like the disabled man in John 5—all hoping for the same thing, all desperate for a miracle when they entered the pool. Whether anyone was ever healed by the waters or whether it was a folk legend that kept people coming to the pool, we don't know. One thing is certain: the disabled man in this story had found no relief for his ailment from the waters at Bethesda.

When Jesus arrived, the disabled man barely looked up. He was fixated on the waters, which lay just beyond reach. The pool and its supposedly curative powers were all he could see—that and the crush of people who always managed to get there first. The man didn't realize that if he would simply turn around, he'd be face to face with Living Water incarnate. He didn't realize that the One standing next to him had the power to heal any infirmity.

Even after Jesus' miracle, the man had no idea who had healed him (5:13). It was only after another not-so-chance encounter in the temple that his eyes were truly opened. Now that he was healed, he could see Jesus for who He really was, and understand that it was Jesus who had made him well.

WATER FOR THE BODY, WATER FOR THE SOUL

Pastor Andoni Phiri's first name is an accident of sorts. If it weren't for a chance misspelling, he would have been christened Adonai instead. Andoni, a variant of Anthony, means “priceless.”

As it turns out, it's not a bad way to describe the 51-year-old's legacy.

Andoni is a district evangelist serving around 50 churches in southern Zambia. Like many pastors in the area, he doesn't earn a salary. He freely shares living water with the people he encounters.

Since 2010, Pastor Andoni has worked alongside World Vision in Zambia—a partnership devoted to meeting more than just physical needs. Helping community members access life's basic necessities, including water, has opened a door to share God's love. "I have evangelism partners with World Vision," Andoni says.

As part of their comprehensive approach to solving the complex puzzle of poverty, World Vision has brought clean water to the community, drilling boreholes close to people's homes and training community members how to maintain them. These activities have given Andoni new opportunities to share the living water of Jesus. Simply put, when people don't have to spend hours each day fetching water, they have time to devote to things beyond basic physical survival. Things like attending church.

"There are certain things [people] wouldn't do because they were drawing their water from far away," Andoni explains. Drilling boreholes, it turns out, does more than protect families from waterborne illness. "It has helped them in their church attendance," he says. "They can quickly come to church.... They are no longer worried about distance."

Pastor Andoni believes we need to address people's physical needs in order for their spiritual needs to be met, remembering that the man beside the pool of Bethesda had to be healed before he could see Jesus properly. When we serve the physical needs of others—without precondition—we can more effectively invite them to experience spiritual transformation.

"I have seen it with my own eyes," Andoni attests. "When you combine spiritual and physical development, change comes more quickly.... Physically they are satisfied. Now [they] can participate in spiritual things."

As James wrote, "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?" (2:15-16, NIV).

"You can imagine a hungry person being invited [to church]," Andoni says, using a similar analogy. "They will first look for food. But if they have food, they will come."

WATER FACT

Women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa are responsible for water collection in 71% of households. They spend 20 million hours collecting water each day, with many of them making multiple trips. That's time that could otherwise be used to generate income, go to school, lead in their communities, care for family members, and participate in their local church.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time with your small group reflecting on this week's content using the following discussion questions.

1. In John 5, it seems as if Jesus' presence barely registers with the disabled man. Why do you think that is?
2. The story in John 5 ends on an abrupt note. Jesus gives the man a terse warning, and the man tells the religious leaders it was Jesus who made him well. Do you think his heart was transformed as a result of his encounter with Jesus?
3. Imagine you were chronically hungry or lacked access to safe water. How might this deprivation affect your spiritual development?
4. Which do you think is better—to freely offer aid in Christ's name to those in need, or to require them to listen to an evangelistic presentation before they can receive aid? Why?

DAILY MEDITATIONS

Take a few moments each day to meditate on the following Scripture passages:

Monday: *2 Kings 5:1-14*

Read the story of how God used another body of water, the Jordan River, to heal someone.

Tuesday: *Ezekiel 47:1-12*

In this vision, Ezekiel sees a river that freshens the toxic waters of the Dead Sea—a powerful image of the transformation God offers.

Wednesday: *Luke 4:14-21*

Addressing people's immediate needs—proclaiming good news for the poor and offering freedom for prisoners, sight for the blind, and liberation from oppression—is central to Jesus' ministry.

Thursday: *Matthew 14:13-21*

Notice how Jesus spends all day healing people and then, instead of sending them away, satisfies their physical hunger.

Friday: *James 2:14-26*

According to James, faith is meaningless when not accompanied by a commitment to actively meeting the needs of others.

WEEKLY ACTIVITY: EDUCATION

Water filter

Supplies needed:

- Dirty water
- Sand (1 cup)
- Hammer
- 2-liter plastic bottle
- Charcoal (2-3 cups)
- Coffee filter
- Glass jar
- Scissors or knife

Thanks to the near-ubiquitous presence of water treatment plants in the developed world, most of us never have to worry about contaminants in our water. But millions of people in Zambia and other parts of the world live with a different reality. The water they use for drinking, cooking, and cleaning is polluted with contaminants, both visible and invisible.

This activity will demonstrate on a small scale what goes into filtering dirty water. To begin, collect some dirty water from outside. (If there is none nearby, you can add dirt to some tap water.)

Then make your homemade filter. Using the scissors or knife, carefully cut the bottom off of your 2-liter plastic bottle and poke a small hole in the middle of the cap. Turn the bottle upside-down so the cap is on the bottom. (You may need to set the bottle in a larger container to keep it upright.) Position the coffee filter in the bottom of the bottle. Crush the charcoal into small pieces using the hammer and pour it into the coffee filter. Then carefully pour the sand on top of the charcoal.

Hold your homemade water filter over the glass jar and slowly pour the dirty water into the filter. When you've poured half of the water, stop. Take a moment to compare the water before and after filtration. Which would you rather drink?



IMPORTANT NOTE

This activity is for illustrative purposes only. Do NOT drink the filtered water, as it may still contain contaminants.

Dirty water must go through several more steps of purification before it is safe to drink.

Troubled waters

Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me. —*Psalm 69:1-2 (NIV)*

Read the following reflection on John 6 and the story about Francis and Wise. When you gather with your group, spend a few moments reflecting together on the discussion questions.

JESUS WALKS ON WATER (*John 6:16-24*)

When water is clean and calm, it can bring life and refreshment. But water in other contexts can just as easily kill.

People in the ancient world looked with particular wariness upon the waters of the sea. In their stories, the sea represented chaos and judgment. It was sometimes called “the abyss” or simply “the depths.”

It took a good deal of courage to venture out onto the waters—and for good reason. The sea was unpredictable. Even a relatively small lake, like the Sea of Galilee, could be transformed without warning from still waters into a churning tempest.

That’s what happened when the disciples set out for Capernaum by boat after feeding the five thousand. Not only did the rough waters threaten to swamp their vessel; a strong headwind kept them from advancing, effectively trapping them in the storm (see Matthew 14:24).

Even a seasoned fisherman like Peter must have found it difficult to maintain courage. So when a shadowy figure appeared, walking toward the boat among the waves, the disciples were understandably terrified. Their shock only increased when they realized who it was.

The storm died down the minute Jesus climbed aboard (see Mark 6:51). The boat immediately reached its destination. The disciples were amazed, and rightfully so. They were in the presence of One with power to calm the troubled waters. Standing in front of them was God in the flesh, who had come to rescue people from the storm.

Jesus invites us to share in this calling, to come to the aid of those trapped in life’s storms. In the preceding story, when the crowds around Jesus grew faint with hunger, He turned to the disciples, saying, “You give them something to eat” (Mark 6:37).

When we see others caught in the storms of life, we must not look the other way. We must not act as though it’s someone else’s problem. Jesus calls us to embody His presence to those in need—to walk through the storm with them and help them safely reach the shore.

WATER THAT KILLS

“We lost the joy that we had in our family,” says 41-year-old Munang’andu.

In 2005, Munang’andu’s 5-year-old son, Wise, went with his cousin Francis to fetch water. Munang’andu was in the garden with her sister. She didn’t realize Wise had gone.

The only source of water in Haangumba—Munang’andu’s village in southern Zambia—is a fetid hole in the ground. “It has all sorts of dirt,” she explains. “Animals go in and drink from it.” The water is not dirt-brown; it’s milky white, polluted with animal waste. What’s more, explains Munang’andu, you have to walk into the hole to fetch water.

Wise was doing just that when he fell in. “Francis tried to save him,” Munang’andu recalls. But he couldn’t pull Wise out. Then Francis fell in too. Both boys were drowning.

Munang’andu’s sister heard the shouts first. The two women raced to the scene and dragged both boys from the water. “Francis was gasping,” she says. “We forced him to vomit. We tried everything with Wise. He was not breathing.”

Francis somehow survived. Tragically, Wise did not.

Time has not eased Munang’andu’s pain. “He was full of joy and happiness,” she says. “I had so many hopes for him.”

The central fact in this tragedy cannot be ignored: Wise didn’t have to die. No one should have to drink water that could kill them—or risk their life to collect it. “If we had a borehole,” Munang’andu says, “he wouldn’t have died.”

Munang’andu fears other children in her community will meet the same fate as Wise. “We can’t send our children for water,” she says. Yet people in Haangumba have few options. There’s no other source of water nearby. “We can only survive if we get a borehole,” Munang’andu concludes.

Remembering Jesus’ call to walk alongside others through life’s storms, World Vision is forging a long-term partnership with the people of Haangumba. One of the fruits of this partnership will be a borehole not far from Munang’andu’s home. To prepare for the

WATER FACT

World Vision currently has more than 500 water experts working in over 50 countries, using a variety of means to provide clean water: drilling boreholes, installing rainwater harvesting systems, and more. When combined with hygiene education and improved sanitation, these efforts dramatically reduce waterborne illness and death, particularly among children. Working through local staff for an average of 15 years in each community, World Vision is able to build trust and effective working relationships that bring lasting change.

borehole, community members are implementing new sanitation and hygiene standards—installing toilets, showers, hand-washing stations, and more. It's all part of a larger effort by World Vision to bring clean water to half a million people in Zambia, so that heartbreaking stories like Wise's aren't repeated.

We cannot look the other way when water—which should be a source of life and refreshment—becomes a source of death and pain. We must answer a mother's prayer for hope.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time with your small group reflecting on this week's content using the following discussion questions.

1. Think back to a stormy period in your life—whether an illness, job loss, or other trial. In what ways did Jesus make His presence known to you in the storm? How did others embody Jesus' presence to you?
2. Has your experience with life's storms made you more attuned to those going through storms of their own? How do you respond differently as a result?
3. What do you think it means to walk alongside someone through the storms of life?
4. Think back to Wise's story. Imagine your neighborhood had only one source of water—and it was polluted with animal waste. How would you feel? How would this affect your community?

DAILY MEDITATIONS

Take a few moments each day to meditate on the following Scripture passages:

Monday: *Mark 4:35-41*

The disciples face yet another storm at sea. This time Jesus is in the boat with them ... asleep.

Tuesday: *Psalm 107:28-31*

The psalmist praises God for His power to calm the storm and still the waves, using language that calls to mind Jesus' miracle in Mark 4.

Wednesday: *Jonah 1:1-15*

Jonah runs from God's call to help save Nineveh from a storm of judgment—and runs right into a storm himself.

Thursday: *Psalm 69:13-15*

The psalmist begs God to rescue him from the miry pit and the deep waters of the abyss.

Friday: Isaiah 25:4, 6-8

Anticipating God's plan to renew the world, Isaiah praises Him for providing shelter from life's storms.

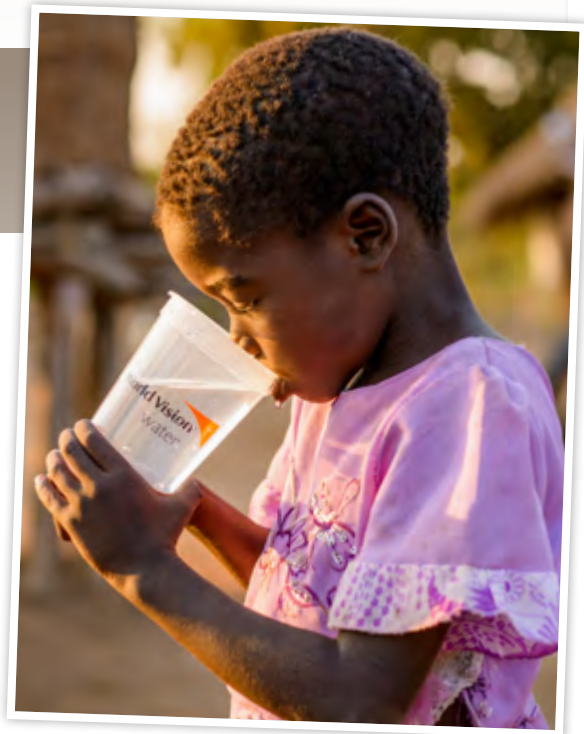
WEEKLY ACTIVITY: ADVOCACY**Bottled water**

Fill a clear reusable water bottle with water and add dirt until the water is noticeably brown. Carry this bottle with you everywhere for an entire day—to work, school, while running errands, at church, etc.

When people ask about the dirty water, tell them you're carrying it to raise awareness for those who don't have access to clean water, as well as World Vision's efforts to provide sustainable access to water, sanitation, and hygiene. Share the following points:

- About 750 million people struggle to survive without access to clean water.
- Nearly 1,600 children under age 5 die every day from diarrhea caused by unsafe water, inadequate sanitation, and poor hygiene—more than those who die from AIDS and malaria combined.
- World Vision is the largest nongovernmental provider of clean water in the developing world, reaching a new person with clean water every 30 seconds.

To learn more about World Vision's water, sanitation, and hygiene efforts, visit worldvision.org/water.



All who thirst

Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things. —*Psalm 107:8-9 (NIV)*

Read the following reflection on John 7 and the story about Pastor Andoni. When you gather with your group, spend a few moments reflecting together on the discussion questions.

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER (*John 7*)

To the ancient Jews, “living water”—fresh, clean, flowing water—was an important symbol of the life God offers.

Since the Israelites’ story began in the desert, they knew the importance of water—and the perils of having none. During their 40-year sojourn in the wilderness of Sinai, God miraculously provided water for the entire community.

On one occasion, He purified a bitter spring, effectively turning “dead water” into “living water” (Exodus 15:22-26). Two other times, He caused water to spring from a rock (Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:1-13). Without these interventions, the Israelites would likely have perished in the desert.

Later generations commemorated their ancestors’ journey by observing Sukkot, also known as the Feast of Tabernacles. Sukkot was one of three pilgrimage festivals during which Israelites would travel to Jerusalem. Families would live in temporary shelters for a week, in remembrance of the tents in which their ancestors dwelled for 40 years.

Each day of Sukkot, priests would draw water from the Pool of Siloam and carry it back to the temple, passing through the Water Gate. They would walk around the altar as the choir chanted psalms, then pour out the water as an offering to God. An even more elaborate version of this ceremony took place on the last day of the festival, when the priests would process around the altar seven times.

It was at this moment—the high point of the festival—that Jesus shouted His invitation to come and drink living water from Him. This scene is the capstone to all the other scenes involving water in John’s gospel—the water turned to wine, the water from the well, the waters of Bethesda, and the stormy waters of Galilee. Each story is another step toward the big revelation at Sukkot: namely, that Jesus is the Giver of new life. The river that brought life to the garden in Genesis 2:10-14, the river that flows through the eternal city of God in Revelation 22:1-2—that river is Jesus, bringing life and hope to all.

WATER THAT REVIVES

Pastor Andoni Phiri (from our story in week 3) travels between communities in southern Zambia, repeating Jesus' invitation to come and drink the water of eternal life. For Andoni, preaching about living water and providing access to safe drinking water go hand in hand.

In addition to reducing waterborne illness, each borehole drilled by World Vision means people no longer have to spend hours each day fetching dirty water from distant sources. Instead, they are free to nurture their families, pursue economic opportunities, go to school, and more. Some choose to spend part of this redeemed time in one of the many churches under Andoni's care.

Pastor Andoni does not hesitate to share his motivation for helping people gain access to clean water and other necessities. "We say, 'In this gift, there is Jesus Christ,'" he explains. "We remind them how God has given us the gift of Jesus."

Serving the poor in Christ's name is having an eternal impact in southern Zambia. "More people are coming to church," Andoni says. In many cases, children—who are the focus of Andoni's evangelistic outreach and World Vision's community development efforts—are leading their parents to faith.

"Parents say, 'You have changed my child so much. I want to see what they have learned here!' Then they come to our church," Andoni says with a smile.

Pastor Andoni recalls three women who recently put their faith in Christ. "It came about because of a child who began to talk to his parents at home." Curious, the father visited one of Andoni's churches, along with his two wives. (Polygamy is still practiced in some parts of southern Zambia.)

"[One of the wives] stood up and started sobbing," Andoni recounts. "She said, 'I have wasted so much time....' Through a child's influence, the mother embraced Jesus and was baptized.

"Three days later," Andoni continues, "she brought her two friends!" They too wanted to taste the living water.

When a community is free to flourish—no longer hindered by the ill effects of having no clean water—then it can truly experience the life Jesus offers: life in all its fullness. The gift of clean water is opening hearts to the eternal gift of living water.

WATER FACT

Water is foundational to life, which is why it's often one of the greatest needs—and first to be addressed—in communities where World Vision works. These efforts are always part of World Vision's comprehensive model that addresses the many factors that perpetuate poverty, bringing sustainable improvements in nutrition, health, education, livelihoods, and spiritual well-being.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time with your small group reflecting on this week's content using the following discussion questions.

1. Jesus not only knew *how* to make an invitation; He knew *when* to make it, choosing the most opportune moment of the festival to announce His offer of living water. How are sensitivity and timing important in our efforts to communicate the gospel?
2. How might people have responded to Pastor Andoni's evangelistic efforts if their immediate needs had not been met first?
3. Do you openly share your motivation for serving others? Do you find it difficult to talk about your faith? What can we learn from Pastor Andoni's example?
4. Do you know anyone (perhaps even yourself) who came to faith because someone served them without condition? Take a moment to share the story with your group.

DAILY MEDITATIONS

Take a few moments each day to meditate on the following Scripture passages:

Monday: *Isaiah 44:1-5*

This passage, which may have been the inspiration for Jesus' statement in John 7:37-38, predicts that God will pour out His Spirit like water.

Tuesday: *Isaiah 58:6-11*

God offers to make His people like springs "whose waters never fail" when they serve those in need.

Wednesday: *Joel 2:28-29*

God promises to send the Holy Spirit, the event to which Jesus refers in John 7 when He invites people to receive living water.

Thursday: *Acts 2:1-12*

The event promised by Jesus in John 7 finally takes place, as God pours out His Spirit at Pentecost.

Friday: *Revelation 22:16-17*

At the end of the story, Jesus repeats His invitation to come and drink "the free gift of the water of life."

WEEKLY ACTIVITY: PRAYER

Water vigil

World Water Day is March 22. Organize a water vigil with either your whole church or your small group. Feel free to use some or all of the brief liturgy below.

As part of your vigil, you can also hold a Walk for Water, raising awareness on behalf of those without clean water. To learn more, visit worldvision.org/wells.

Opening prayer

Almighty God, who provided living water for Your people in the desert, sustain and strengthen us that we may serve all who thirst, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture readings

Isaiah 41:17-20

Psalm 63:1-3

Revelation 7:14-17

Luke 4:14-21

Prayers of the people

Note: Allow a moment of silent reflection after each statement below. Or invite participants to respond to each with the simple phrase "Lord, have mercy."

Let us pray to the Lord.

For the nearly 750 million people who have no access to safe drinking water, let us pray to the Lord.

For the 2.5 billion people without access to adequate sanitation, let us pray to the Lord.

For women and children who walk up to 6 hours every day to fetch water, braving dangers known and unknown—including the very water they drink—let us pray to the Lord.

For children who are robbed of an education by water-related illness, with 443 million lost school days every year, let us pray to the Lord.

For the nearly 1,600 children under age 5 who died today because of water-related disease—and for those who will die tomorrow—let us pray to the Lord.

For the will to act, helping others gain access to both clean drinking water and the living water of Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

WEEKLY ACTIVITY: PRAYER (cont.)

Prayer of confession

Note: Invite participants to speak this prayer in unison.

Almighty God, whose Spirit hovered over the waters at creation, we confess that we have not always been faithful stewards of the gifts you have entrusted to us. We have misused the gift of water—consuming more than we need, polluting it, and taking it for granted. We have forgotten the blessing that water represents. We have not always acknowledged our neighbors' need or quenched their thirst. We humbly repent. Forgive us our sin and renew us, that we may serve those in need by sharing the gift of clean water as well as pointing them to what it represents: Your living water, which quenches spiritual thirst. To the glory of your name, Amen.

Benediction

May the Lord give us clean hands and clean hearts to serve all who thirst. May justice roll on like a never-failing stream, watering this world and renewing God's creation. Amen.



Waters of transformation

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many ...” —*Mark 14:24 (NIV)*

Read the following reflection on John 13 and the story about members of the Haalumba community. When you gather with your group, spend a few moments reflecting together on the discussion questions.

JESUS WASHES THE DISCIPLES' FEET (*John 13:1-17*)

Foot washing was a hygienic necessity in Jesus' day. Imagine traveling everywhere on foot—either barefoot or sandaled. Imagine walking all day along dusty roads and dirt paths shared with animals. By the time you reached your destination, your feet would have accumulated layers upon layers of grime.

In a world where honor was paramount, foot washing was also an important act of hospitality. Failure to wash a visitor's feet—or to offer water so they could wash their own feet—signaled grave disrespect. Jesus had firsthand experience of this, having been slighted in this way by a Pharisee who had invited Him to dinner (Luke 7:36-50).

Typically, foot washing was a job for the lowliest servant or slave. This arrangement reinforced the established social order: servants wash their master's feet, not the other way around.

When Jesus gathered with the disciples for one last meal, He did the unthinkable. He took the role of a servant upon Himself—pouring water into a basin, kneeling before each dumbstruck disciple in turn, and cleaning the grime from their feet.

If the shock of seeing their teacher debase Himself wasn't enough, Jesus drove the point home by telling the disciples they were to follow His example by washing one another's feet. This was the same group who liked to argue about who was the greatest (Luke 9:46-48; Mark 10:35-45). Jesus demonstrated another way.

A few decades later, the apostle Paul echoed this call, urging Christians to emulate Jesus' servant attitude. “In humility value others above yourselves,” he wrote to the Philippians (2:3).

With nothing more than a basin of water and a towel, Jesus taught an unforgettable lesson about living water. When He invites us to come and drink, it's not just so we can live forever. It's so we can live transformed—right here and now. Water changes the way we live; it transforms us into servants who reflect Jesus' unconditional love.

“THE VILLAGE WILL BECOME A WONDERFUL PLACE.”

To see how water can transform an entire community, look no further than the Zambian village of Haalumba. Because of World Vision’s work to provide clean water, improved sanitation, and hygiene education, disease is down and kids are in school—kids like Clara, 12, the girl we met in week 2.

Another unmistakable sign of transformation is the way community members are uniting to serve one another:

When a new borehole is drilled, it belongs to the community. World Vision trains pumpminders who are chosen by their communities. The pumpminder maintains each well, ensuring it provides a steady supply of clean water for decades. In Haalumba, the pumpminder is 58-year-old Enock. In addition to maintaining existing wells, Enock has built twelve new boreholes with World Vision—boreholes that are designed to last. “These boreholes never break down,” he says with pride.

Enock does all of this as a volunteer. “I am a person of the people,” he says. “I am doing this work to save the community.”

This Christ-like attitude is also evident elsewhere in Haalumba. It can be seen in the way young men like Timmy, 14, are changing their attitudes about gender. “I used to think it was a girl’s job to fetch water and wash dishes,” Timmy says.

A new borehole brought a whole new mindset for the teenager. “I help my mother in the garden,” he says. “I don’t think fetching water is a girl’s job. I will help my wife fetch water.”

Timmy’s example hasn’t gone unnoticed. “It amazes me that he fetches water,” says Clara—who used to miss school because of her dangerous daily trek to collect dirty water, but is now near the top of her class.

“Because of the borehole nearby, more boys are willing to fetch water,” observes Winnie, a member of Haalumba’s borehole management committee. She hopes it doesn’t stop there. “In the future, [boys and girls] may be equal,” she says hopefully.

Clean water, offered in Jesus’ name, has brought a sense of servanthood and common purpose to Haalumba. “The village will become a wonderful place,” Clara says confidently. “No one will suffer from lack of water anymore.”

WATER FACT

World Vision’s work results in water that continues to flow. A independent 2014 study conducted by one of the premier academic groups in water research, the University of North Carolina Water Institute, found that nearly eight in 10 wells installed by World Vision were still operational after two decades—significantly higher than industry standard. A big part of this is World Vision’s unique model that engages people like Enock in maintaining their community’s wells.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spend time with your small group reflecting on this week's content using the following discussion questions.

1. Put yourself in the disciples' shoes (or sandals). How would you react if Jesus knelt in front of you and began washing your dirty feet? Would you feel humbled? Grateful? Uncomfortable?
2. A single act of service can often be the catalyst for a greater sense of harmony or unity. What are some practical ways you can serve others in order to strengthen your community?
3. Boys in Haalumba used to think fetching water was girls' work. In what ways do we perpetuate harmful stereotypes about women in our own society?
4. Have you ever been inspired to serve by a selfless act from someone else? What was it?

DAILY MEDITATIONS

Take a few moments each day to meditate on the following Scripture passages:

Monday: *Genesis 18:1-12*

Abraham welcomes three mysterious visitors, providing water for them to wash their feet. The encounter forever changes his life.

Tuesday: *Ezekiel 36:24-27*

God promises to restore His wayward people, cleansing them with water.

Wednesday: *Romans 12:1-8*

Paul reminds Christians that we are part of a larger body, and we are called to serve the whole community.

Thursday: *1 Corinthians 3:5-9*

Using the analogy of planting and watering a seed, Paul describes how people should work together in common service for the benefit of all.

Friday: *Philippians 2:1-11*

Paul echoes Jesus' call to serve, urging readers to think first about the needs of others.

WEEKLY ACTIVITY: ACTION**Give water**

Translate the awareness, experience, education, advocacy, and prayer of the previous five weeks into action by helping to fund a hand-drilled well for a community in need of clean water.

With breakthrough hand-drilling technology, wells can be dug less expensively and without heavy equipment, making it possible for families in remote areas to gain access to clean water for the first time. The pumps last longer and are easy enough for a child to operate.

Your group may choose to either donate the cost of an entire well or offer each member the opportunity to donate a share of a well.

Hand-drilled well: \$3,000

Share of a hand-drilled well: \$75

To learn more—and to share the gift of clean water—visit worldvision.org/wells.





34834 Weyerhaeuser Way South
P.O. Box 9716
Federal Way, WA 98063-9716
worldvision.org/wells



Statistics taken from: UNICEF, State of the World's Children 2014; un.org/waterforlifedecade/human_right_to_water.shtml; unwater.org/fileadmin/user_upload/unwater_new/docs/water_and_gender.pdf; UNICEF and WHO, Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation 2014.

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, we serve alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

