

# Series Title: Living Water

## Subtitle: Experiencing God through the waters

**Primary Aim:** This series is about experiencing God through some of the natural attributes around us. Further to series in 2014 (Mountains) and 2019 (Valleys) we will now tackle the subject of Experiencing God through the Waters. The Bible is full of references to water. For instance, the natural features of our planet which include streams, rivers, waterfalls, lakes & seas. Then there are weather related phenomena such as clouds, rain or drought. Finally, the Bible also speaks of what it calls Living Water which gives rise to our series title. While water often plays a big part of some of the key encounters between God and His people, the Bible also uses water in a whole range of symbolic ways. This includes for example cleansing, idolatry, judgement, eternal life, difficult times, spiritual things and the Holy Spirit. Our aim throughout the series is to use water as a framework to think about what it is going to look like for us to come to the spring of Living water and have this water flowing from within us.

### 1. Invitation to the Thirsty

**Passages:** Isaiah 55, John 7:37-39

**Blurb:** To kickstart our series, we turn to God's invitation to the thirsty to come to the waters (Isaiah 55). God himself is the source of the spiritual water that truly refreshes and revives. We see this soul thirst in how the sons of Korah liken us to the deer panting for streams of water in Psalm 42:1-2. This introductory session will serve as a further invitation for each of us to come to the waters and drink freely and deeply this week. It is possible that Jesus had these verses in mind when He said: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink" (John 7:37, Rev 21:6). He went on to explain that whoever believes in Him will have rivers of living water, namely the Holy Spirit flowing from within them (7:38-39, Isaiah 44:3).

### 2. Idolatry: Broken Wells

**Passages:** Jeremiah 2:12-13, 17:13, John 4

**Blurb:** Through the prophet Jeremiah, God challenged the people of God in Judah that they had committed two sins. Not only had they forsaken Him, the spring of living water, but they had also dug their own broken wells in an attempt to quench their deepest thirsts. There is however a remarkable turnaround in John 4 when we find God sending the fountain Himself, to bring us living water. The woman here was an experienced builder of broken wells – she had given herself to five husbands and was now living with a sixth. Jesus offered her living water, indeed water that would become in her a "spring of water welling up to eternal life." She drank deeply and was soon telling all her friends all about it. They too went on to drink deeply.

### 3. Sustenance: Drinking deeply

**Passages:** 1 Kings 17:1-24, Psalm 63:1-5, Jeremiah 17:7-8, Psalm 1

**Blurb:** In this session we will think about water as used as a picture of sustenance. Negatively we have examples of drought like in 1 Kings 17 where God provides for Elijah through the brook and the ravens, before the brook dries out and so God provides through the widow. Then we read of David's thirst while he is in the desert, but he sees it as a picture of his thirst for God (Psalm 63:1). More positively, Psalm 1 and Jeremiah 17:7-8 speak poignantly of the blessing of those who put their trust and confidence in the LORD as illustrated by a tree that is planted by the water and fed by roots reaching out into the stream. We also have God's provision of water for the poor/needily (Isaiah 41:17-18) or references to being like a well-watered garden (Isaiah 58:11).

### 4. Suffering: Through the Waters

**Passages:** Isaiah 43:2, Psalm 42-43, Mark 4:35-41, Genesis 6-9

**Blurb:** Water is often used in the Bible as symbolic of difficulties and troubles (e.g., Psalm 32:6 & Lam 3:54). This should come as no surprise because water itself is not without its dangers particularly during times of poor weather. In this session we will turn our attentions to this topic and in particular to the promise of Isaiah 43:2 which says that when we pass through the waters God will be with us and when we pass through the rivers they will not sweep over us. This is vividly illustrated in the stories of Jesus calming the storm (Mark 4:35-41) or the flood (Genesis 6-9). What an encouragement to hear that whatever life brings our way, God will be right there alongside us as we pass through.

### 5. Faith: Getting your feet wet

**Passages:** Matthew 14:22-36, Exodus 13:17-15:21, Hebrews 11:29

**Blurb:** In contrast with the troubles from (4), water also positively represents opportunities to step out in faith. We see this in how Jesus walks out to His disciples who were crossing the Sea of Galilee. They were terrified but Jesus tells them to take courage and not be afraid. Peter steps out of the boat and walks towards Jesus. His journey on the water was quite incredible

until his faith was overcome by fear and he started to sink. Alternatively, there is the truly incredible story of the Exodus and how bleak things must have looked when they found themselves cornered by the Red Sea and the Egyptians who were pursuing them. By faith God enabled His people to cross as on dry land but the Egyptians who tried to do the same were drowned.

## 6. The River of Life

**Passages:** Ezekiel 47:1-12, Isaiah 12:3, Psalm 46:4-5 & Rev 22:1-5, 17

**Blurb:** To conclude the series we turn to Ezekiel's vision of the river flowing from the temple (the focusing of chapters 40-44). No river had ever flowed from the temple, but now in this vision it is used to illustrate that the new temple would be a font of blessing for God's people. At first it was just a trickle, but it was living water. The water grows and deepens as it flows and soon it is too deep to cross. The water then begins to impact life in the desert where nothing grows and finally it transforms the Dead Sea. Wherever the river goes there is restoration and/or new life. John 4:14, 7:37 & 20:34 all point us back to this vision. Water also takes prominence in the New Eden (Rev 22:1-5) where the *river of the water of life* flows from the throne of God and Jesus says: "Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life" (Rev 22:17).

### Alternative Ideas about the Symbolism of Water in the Bible

1. Water as the **Spirit of God** (John 7:37-39)
2. Water as symbol of **spiritual things** (Isaiah 8:6-7)
3. Water as **difficult times** (Jeremiah 2:18, Psalm 32:6, Isaiah 43:2, Lam 3:54)
4. Water as **eternal life** (John 4:10-15, Revelation 22:1, 17, Isaiah 12:3, Isaiah 55:1)
5. Water as **cleansing** (1 John 5:7-9, Ephesians 5:26, Ezekiel 36:25, Hebrews 10:22)
6. Water as the **Word of God** (Ephesians 5:26-27, 1 John 5:7-9, Colossians 2:13-14)
7. Water as **freedom and being set apart** (Exodus 14:21, Numbers 20:11)
8. **Living Water** (Jeremiah 2:13, 17:13, John 7:37-39, 4:10)
9. Water in the Bible as a Symbolism for **Salvation** (Isaiah 12:3, Rev 21:6, John 4:14)
10. **God's judgment** (Isaiah 28:17)
11. **Man's words** (Proverbs 18:4)
12. **Man's purposes** (Proverbs 20:5)
13. **An adulterous woman** (Proverbs 9:17)
14. **A person's posterity** (Isaiah 48:1)

### Additional Sources

Session 1: <https://www.scriptureway.com/home/gods-great-invitation-come-satisfy-your-thirst>

Session 2: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-sin-will-never-quench>

Session 6: <https://blogs.oxford.anglican.org/the-river-of-life-ezekiel-47-1-12/>