

4

Living Water

JOHN 4:1-32



GOAL

By exploring the use and symbolism of water in baptism, children gain a deeper appreciation of the gift of water.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Jesus, Messiah, Special One of God, fill me with your living water so that it overflows into the hearts of our children. Amen.

THIS SESSION

In this session, we focus on one of the most obvious features of the practice of baptism: the water itself. Why do we use water in baptism? What's so special about it? And why do we seem to see it everywhere in the Bible, a book in which most of the action takes place in desert lands? Does water really bring life?

THE BIBLE STORY

Today's story introduces us to a Samaritan woman who is identified only by her nationality and number of husbands. She is likely an outcast in her village, as is evidenced by her visiting the well, which was often a source of social support among women, at midday, when the sun is highest and harshest. Expecting to have the well to herself, imagine her surprise when a Jewish man shows up and seems to know everything about her! Their meeting at the well is no accident, and Jesus draws upon the imagery of water to invite the woman into a deeper, more fulfilling spiritual life. In this sense, of course, the water of the well provides both physical and spiritual sustenance.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Concrete thinkers will have a ball with this session. While conversations about symbolism and rituals may be lost on them, they will appreciate the tactile, tangible nature of this session's subject. Children see and interact with water every day, so much of this session will naturally connect with their everyday lives. And water is fun! If possible, you may even consider taking your group outside near a creek or other body of water for this session.

SESSION PREPARATION

- "Baptism Questions" (p. 8): Display the newsprint with questions and answers from session 1.
- "Water Play" (p. 30): Set up a water station with one or more large tubs of water, bowls, pitchers, measuring cups, and various containers. Cover the floor around the water tubs with a tarp or plastic tablecloth. Have towels on hand.
- "Water, Water, Everywhere" (p. 31): Gather children's Bibles or story Bibles.



GETTING STARTED



Post the newsprint with questions and answers about baptism from session 1, “Baptism Questions” (p. 8). Invite the children to add questions and answers throughout the session.

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- Tubs, bowls, pitchers, and cups of various sizes
 - A large container of water
 - Towels

WATER PLAY



As children arrive, invite them to engage with the water play station. Lay out towels on the table and floor, along with a large container of water and smaller containers to pour, measure, and splash in the water.



Some children will likely get wet! Have extra towels on hand for drying exuberant children and their clothes.

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- Bowl of water

WATERS OF BAPTISM



Place a bowl of water in the center of the group. Invite the children to dip their fingers in the water and make a cross mark on the back of their other hand. Say to the group, “Through the waters of baptism, God claims you as God’s own beloved child.”



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

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- Internet-connected device (optional)

THOUGHTS ON WATER



Lead the children in a free association exercise on the word *water*. Invite them to name any words, thoughts, pictures, or images that come to mind when they hear you say *water*. Encourage everyone to participate; there are no right or wrong answers! Share with the children that in today’s session we will explore the importance of a key part of baptism—water!



If you have an internet-connected device handy, type the words the children name into a word-cloud generator, such as [bit.ly /FMWordCloud](https://bit.ly/FMWordCloud), to give an interesting visual representation of your conversation. Type each word or phrase on a separate line. The more times a word is written, the larger it will appear in the final graphic. Include *water*, and possibly other key words that you want to emphasize, a number of times in your word list to ensure it figures prominently in the picture. To keep the spaces in two or more words together, such as “thirst quenching” or “water, water, everywhere,” don’t use punctuation. Put the tilde (~) between each word, such as “thirst~quenching” or “water~water~everywhere.” The tilde denotes a space in a word-cloud generator.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

THE VERY THIRSTY WOMAN



Read the adapted Bible story from John 4:1–32 on Resource Page 1 or from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, page 236. Pause for a few moments to allow the story to settle into the children's hearts and minds. Then wonder together using these questions:

- How do you think the woman felt about Jesus at first?
- Why was she so surprised by Jesus' question?
- How did Jesus want the world to be different?
- What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "I can give you water that will fill you with life"?
- What made the woman so happy at the end of the story?

- Resource Page 1 or *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* edited by Elizabeth Caldwell and Carol Wehrheim (Flyaway Books, 2018)
- Internet-connected device (optional)



Use an internet-connected device to play water sounds during or after the story, such as the YouTube video "Relaxing River Sounds—Peaceful River Forest—3 Hours Long—HD 1080p—Nature Video" (bit.ly/FMRiverSounds), 3:00:26.

WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE



Form pairs or small groups. Provide children's Bibles or story Bibles, copies of Resource Page 2, and pencils, at least one book per group. Encourage the children to find a space to work apart from the other groups. Instruct them that, when you say "Go," they are to work within their groups to think of as many times water is mentioned in the Bible as possible and write them down on their paper. They can list a story in general ("crossing the Red Sea") or use the Scripture reference ("Exodus 14"). Start with three to five minutes and gauge their interest level to determine how long they have to work. When time is up, have them share their lists and see how many different stories with water your whole group was able to name.



Encourage younger children to look for pictures of water and point them out to their group.

- children's Bibles or story Bibles
- Copies of Resource Page 2



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

WATER COLLAGES



Gather at a table. Give each child a piece of card stock and a pair of scissors. Spread the magazines and glue out across the table and invite the children to make water collages by cutting out pictures of water and gluing them on the card stock. As the children are working, ask them about the pictures they have found and draw attention to scenes that show life in and around water.

When everyone has finished their individual water collage, place all the pictures together to create a group mural of water. If possible, display it on a wall.

- Card stock
- Magazines
- Scissors
- Glue sticks



Home, garden, and travel magazines will be particularly useful for this activity.

- Internet-connected device
- Pitchers of cold water
- Cups



This video gets a little detailed at times. If the children get distracted, gently guide their attention back to the video. Emphasize the overall theme that water is necessary for life.

WATER = LIFE

NS T C

Ask the children if they realize that our bodies are actually mostly made of water. Allow them to share other facts they know about water and the human body. Show the YouTube video “What happens if you don’t drink enough water? Signs of Dehydration + 4 ways to keep hydrated” (bit.ly/FMNoWater, 5:50), which explains why our bodies need water. While engaging the children in conversation using the following questions, provide cups of cold water for the children to drink:

- ✦ What is something new you learned from this video? Something surprising?
- ✦ Have you ever been *dehydrated* (not had enough water in your body)? What did it feel like?
- ✦ What are some of the things our bodies do better if they have enough water?
- ✦ If you didn’t have enough water to drink, would you be able to live your life like you do now? What might have to change?
- ✦ Can you tell a difference when your body has enough water? What does it feel like?
- ✦ What is a tip you are going to try to drink more water?



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

WATER PRAYERS

C

Remind the children that we use water every day. Talk through the children’s day-to-day schedule and note when and how water is a part of it. For example, we use water in the morning when we use the bathroom or brush our teeth, and we use water to wash our hands before eating. See how many water encounters the group can list throughout the day.

Once the group has tracked their entire day in their minds, emphasize how lucky we are to have so much access to water! Work together as a group to write a short prayer thanking God for the gift of water, and encourage the children to practice saying your group’s prayer every time they use water throughout the next week. Your prayer could be as simple as, “Thank you, God, for water,” or you could go so far to make it a song!



If any of your children don’t have regular access to clean water, shift the prayer to be a petition to God for clean water . . . and then advocate in your community so every child can have fresh water.

- Internet-connected device
- Newsprint
- Markers



Brainstorm first (no ideas are bad ideas!) and then be realistic about what the children can do to earn money to donate. Follow through on a service project. All talk and no action is not a model you want to set for children.

WATER CRISIS

NS T S

Tell the children that, just as water has the potential to give life, it can also *take* lives if it is dirty with diseases. Explain that millions of people around the world only have access to dirty water! Show the YouTube video “Water Changes Everything” (bit.ly/FMWaterChanges, 3:23) that tells about the world’s water crisis. Wonder together:

- ✦ What do you think it feels like to have to use dirty water?
- ✦ How do you think having to walk long distances to get water affects the families?
- ✦ How do you think they cook and clean with dirty water?
- ✦ Do you think people can tell which water has diseases in it?
- ✦ What do you think dirty water tastes like?
- ✦ How does having clean water in your community help the children? The adults?

- Why do you think some people have clean water and some people don't?
- What can those of us who have clean water do to help people who don't?

Brainstorm together ways that the children in your group may be able to raise money to donate to an organization working to get clean water to people. What water-related services can children offer? (*Some ideas might be washing cars, selling lemonade, and watering plants.*) Write their ideas on a piece of newsprint.

Help the children come up with plans to raise money as a group, on their own, with families, or as a church. When you do, they will be helping bring the water of life to communities around the world!



Check with your denomination, church, or community to see if there are organizations to support in the efforts to provide clean water. If you live in an area in which not all of your children have access to clean water, brainstorm ideas to help locally instead.



FOLLOWING JESUS

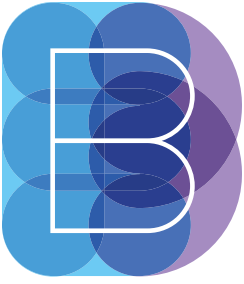
WATER BLESSING

Return to the bowl of water. Form a circle. One by one, invite each child to dip their fingers in the water and then turn to the person next to them in the circle and draw a cross on their hand, saying, “(Name), you are God’s child. God loves you!”

Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

God of oceans and seas /
and creeks and lakes, /
everywhere we see water /
we see your love for us. /
Thank you! /
Amen. /

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- Bowl of water from “Waters of Baptism” (p. 30)



BIBLE STORY

BASED ON JOHN 4:1–32

Turn on a faucet, and watch the fresh water flow. Water to fill a glass or a pet's water dish. Water to fill a pot for cooking rice. It wasn't always that easy. In Jesus' time, the village women carried large buckets from their homes to the well. They filled them and carried them home. Gallons and gallons of water.

Jesus was traveling through a town called Sychar in Samaria. He was thirsty, so he looked for a well. Jesus asked a village woman, "Would you give me a cup of water?"

The woman's mouth dropped open in shock. "You are Jewish. I am a Samaritan. Jews don't like Samaritans. Samaritans don't like Jews." (The Jewish people and the Samaritan people had a serious disagreement long, long ago. They couldn't agree about the correct place to worship God. It caused lots of problems.)

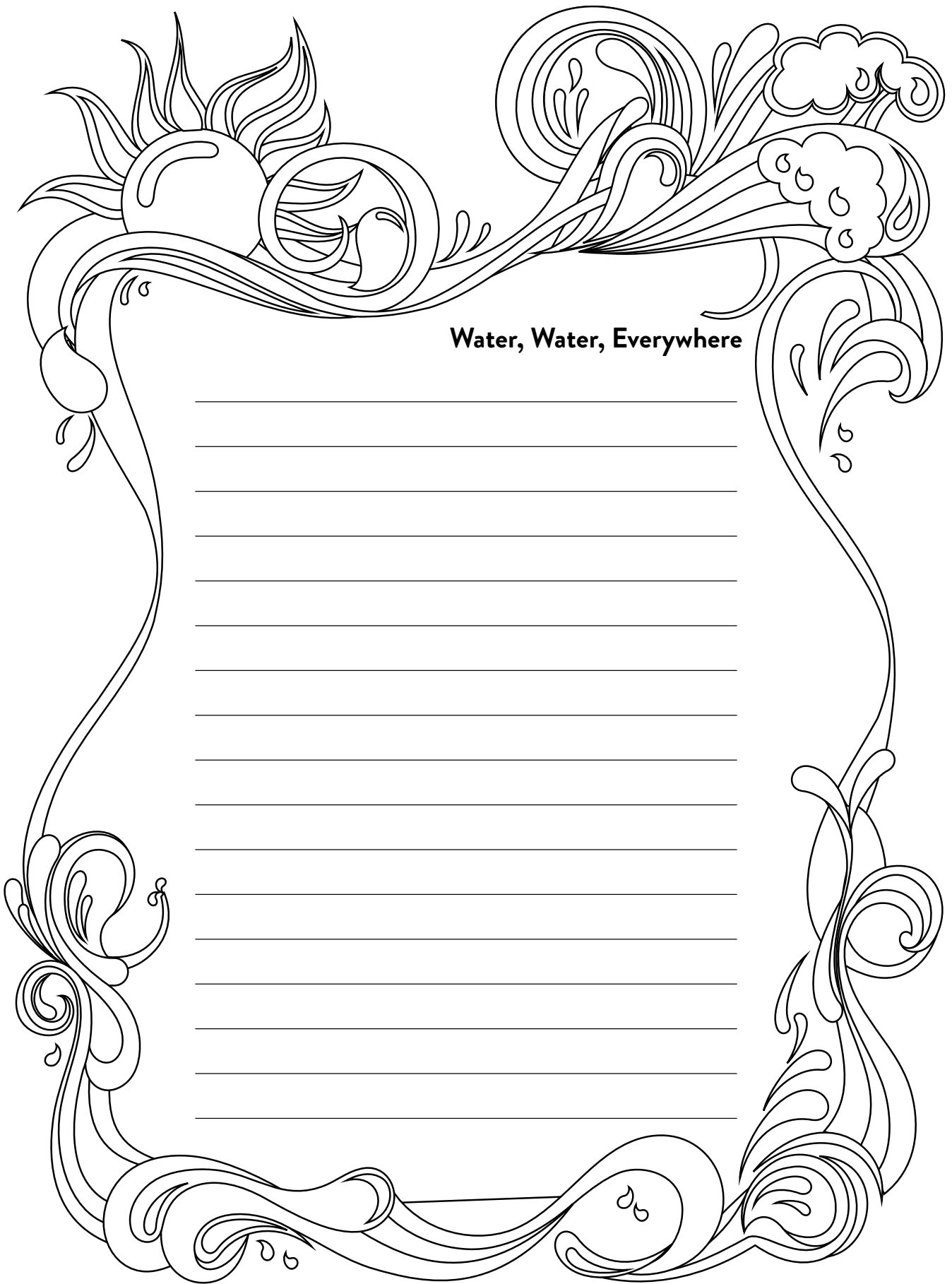
Jesus wanted the world to be different. He wanted to help people forgive one another. He wanted people to learn new ways to live in peace. Jesus said, "I am thirsty for the water in your well. But I think you are thirsty for water from mine. I can give you water that will fill you with life."

The woman had never heard of water like that. She couldn't imagine where Jesus could get it. Jesus told the woman things about herself: "I understand that your life is complicated and hard." Jesus and the woman talked and talked. "I am waiting for God's special one to come," she told Jesus. "He will teach us everything."

"I am God's special one!" said Jesus. The happy woman ran home to tell everyone the good news. "God's special one is here! He will give us the water of life!"

Jesus stayed two more days in Sychar. He made many new friends and told all who wanted to listen about God's generous love.

"The Very Thirsty Woman," excerpted from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth Caldwell and Carol Wehrheim. © 2018 Flyaway Books. Used by permission.



Water, Water, Everywhere
