

# The Water of Life



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 2:10, Isa. 40:31, Matt. 9:2–7, John 4:1–26, 9:1–11, Rom. 6:1–6.*

**Memory Text:** “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (*John 4:14*).

It is amazing how our senses can deceive us. The earth is spinning on its axis at about a thousand miles per hour, while careening around the sun at about 18 miles per second. And yet, despite all this motion, it feels to us perfectly immobile. Meanwhile, things like tables, chairs, rocks, and people (matter, basically)—however solid they appear to our senses—are mostly empty space. At any given moment, billions of subatomic particles from the sun are burrowing through our bodies, and yet we do not feel, see, or hear any of them. And, despite all outward appearances, our human bodies are made mostly of—water. Water? Yes, we are truly aquatic beings, in the sense that our bodies are made up of about 60 percent water. Our brains, believe it or not, are about 85 percent water. Even our hard bones are about 10 to 15 percent water.

Full of wonder and mystery, water is foundational to all physical life. Without it, we could not exist. This week we will take a look at both the spiritual and physical aspects of this truly essential liquid.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 24.*

**To view and/or download a Hope Channel program on this week's lesson, visit [www.lifesbeat.org](http://www.lifesbeat.org).**

## The Living Water

**Read** John 4:1–26. What are the different ways water is used in this story? What do the different kinds of waters mean? What message is there from this story for us today?

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Jesus met a woman in Samaria who had come to draw water at Jacob’s well. He asked for a drink. In the ensuing conversation, He told her that He could give her water that would take away her thirst forever and referred to Himself as the “Living Water.” Such a concept implies His ability to satisfy the need for peace, joy, freedom from guilt, forgiveness, and a sense of oneness with God. Christians find such a solution in Jesus Christ. It is wonderful that He has offered to all of us an opportunity to come and unite with Him in service. His offer still is valid today, for He never changes. Many have found their restlessness, insecurities, and sense of futility transformed as they partake of His compassion, love, and acceptance.

God has promised us an abundance of spiritual water, as long as we seek Him. In Revelation 22:17, He invites us all to “take the water of life freely.” We can experience an abundance of the Holy Spirit in our lives as long as we are close to Jesus Christ, the Fountain of Life. In His love, He invites everyone to drink freely of the Water of Life (*John 4:13, 14*). His invitation to receive this Living Water forever is extended to all of us. As God provided the children of Israel water from the rock, so Jesus is this Water of Life (*1 Cor. 10:1–4*) to us today.

No matter who we are, no matter what our past has been, no matter what our mistakes are, and even no matter what our present situation is, the offer of this Living Water is for us. We are told to drink freely of it. It’s offered to us through the grace of Christ.

**No question, Jesus is Living Water for all of us. What has your own experience with this water been? How have you known for yourself the benefits and promises found in it? Are you taking of it freely, or are you holding yourself somewhat back? If the latter, ask yourself why. Whatever immediate gains you might think you are getting from holding back, how could they possibly compare to promises offered us in Jesus?**

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## The Lesson in Brief

▶ **Key Text:** *John 4:14*

▶ **The Student Will:**

**Know:** Understand the uses of water for drinking, washing, and therapy, as well as its symbolic use in baptism and its representation as the Water of Life.

**Feel:** Cherish the nurturing, cleansing, healing qualities of both literal and spiritual water.

**Do:** Use water appropriately, internally, externally, and spiritually.

▶ **Learning Outline:**

**I. Know: The Benefits of Water**

**A** Not only is water an essential building block for life, but daily use of it is essential for the health and maintenance of our physical, mental, and spiritual lives. Why is literal water such an apt metaphor for Living Water? What benefits of water can improve your quality of life?

**II. Feel: The Blessings of Water**

**A** How would you describe the blessings of a drink of water and a cool shower on a hot day?

**B** If our bodies appreciate the refreshment and cleansing properties of water, how does Living Water help a parched spiritual experience?

**III. Do: Appropriating the Benefits and Blessings**

**A** Pure water is one of the most essential ingredients for life and health. What can you do to make sure that you and others have an ample supply for all your needs?

**B** Even if plenty of good water is readily available to you, what lifestyle choices do you need to make in order to take full advantage of water's benefits?

▶ **Summary:** The appropriate use of water is critical for health, both for our physical life and, in its spiritual applications, for eternal life.

## The Waters of Baptism

Read Acts 8:35–39. Here Philip preached the Scripture to the eunuch, telling him the good news of Jesus. The eunuch accepted Jesus Christ as the Son of God. When they saw water, he asked Philip, “What hinders me to be baptized?” He then was baptized by Philip, and he went on rejoicing.

There is no miracle in the water itself; it is a symbol of cleansing. It is the gift of the Spirit that transforms the life. Baptism is an outward proclamation of the acceptance of Jesus. Read John 3:5–8. Jesus told Nicodemus that “ ‘unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’ ” (*NKJV*).

### **What** takes place when someone has been baptized by immersion?

*Rom. 6:1–6.*

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A genuine conversion symbolized in baptism by immersion signifies the cleansing of one’s life. The New Testament mentions baptism by immersion many times, emphasizing the importance of this rite in our Christian experience.

“ ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’ ” (*Acts 2:38, NIV*).

When we are saved, we are baptized spiritually into Christ (*Gal. 3:26, 27*) and received into His body, the church (*1 Cor. 12:13*). In biblical symbolism, baptism by water represents inner cleansing (*Eph. 5:25, 26*) and spiritual rebirth (*John 3:5*), both of which are central themes of salvation.

Many people take baptism for granted, but for many in the world, the act requires immense courage. In a few countries, baptism can lead to isolation from spouse, family, and community and to imprisonment or even to death.

Among Jesus’ last recorded words on earth were these: “ ‘Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned’ ” (*Mark 16:16, NIV*). Think about that for a moment. Jesus’ very last call is to believe in Him, which includes a call to be baptized. If He puts it in that category, we cannot overlook its significance.

**Read again Romans 6:1–6. How have you experienced the reality of Paul’s words there? How has your “newness of life” in Christ changed you? What have you been spared from? In what areas do you still need more change? How can you better cooperate with the Lord, who offers to wash away your sins?**

## *Learning Cycle*

### ► **STEP 1—Motivate**

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** The Bible frequently uses water as a symbol for the essence of spiritual life and well-being.

**Just for Teachers:** The imagery of water interweaves throughout Scripture as a rich symbol of spiritual health. Invite the members of your group to engage with this imagery in a way that enhances their understanding of this week’s lesson and of God’s plan for their lives.

A catchy slogan for a popular beverage advertisement enjoins: “Obey Your Thirst.” And with good reason. Thirst is the body’s cry for water. Nothing besides the air we breathe is more immediately essential to our physical life and well-being than water. Walk into almost any grocery or convenience store, and you will find a seemingly endless choice of beverages, each claiming to quench your thirst, restore your vigor, perk you up, or help you relax. From sports drinks to energy formulations to soda pops to a plethora of drinks containing alcohol—every product purports to be the most refreshing and beneficial.

The truth is, when you are thirsty, nothing satisfies like a tall, cool glass of genuine, crystal-clear, pure water. Though the substitutes come in a dizzying array of colors and scents and tastes to tantalize the senses, though they sparkle and effervesce, though their packaging and labeling are enticing, nothing quenches thirst better than water. Choosing anything else when you are thirsty only leaves you longing for the real thing.

**Opening Activity:** Bring a clear pitcher, filled with clear water, and a transparent and attractive drinking glass to class. Pour the water in the presence of the class, letting the sight and sound of the water impact their senses. Slowly take a drink of the water to demonstrate the satisfying properties of water. Leave the pitcher and glass on a table or lectern in full view to continue to underscore the visual lesson.

**Consider This:** Ask class members to describe their sensory experience as the water was being poured. How did the sound and the sight of the water impact their thirst? Did they feel thirsty before they saw and heard it? If not, how might their response to the literal water help them to understand that an awareness of their need for Jesus, the spiritual water, also is awakened by seeing and hearing Him? In what ways do we “see” and “hear” the Water of Life? What does this demonstration tell us spiritually about the importance of “obeying our thirst”?

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## The Uses of Water

**Genesis 2:10** reveals that in the Edenic earth, even before sin, water was available for God's creatures. What's implied in that fact?

As creatures, we all need air, water, and food to preserve our existence (*Gen. 1:29*). In the description of Eden, aside from the presence of a beautiful garden, there was also a river that gave rise to four other rivers—Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates. God provided water to preserve the lives of His creatures.

As God's creatures, we need water in order to survive. In fact, every body cell, tissue, and organ needs water to function. Water helps to regulate body temperature, transports nutrients and oxygen to the cells, removes waste, prevents constipation, moistens tissues, cushions joints, and keeps blood flowing throughout the body. We need to drink more water than our thirst demands. Many liquids, such as water, milk, and fruit and vegetable juices, contribute to hydration; however, alcohol and caffeinated beverages may paradoxically increase fluid loss, which may be harmful.

Pure water is superior to many other drinks. Start your day with one or two glasses of water and continue drinking water between meals to make sure you are well hydrated.

Water has other healthful functions, as well. Hand washing may reduce transmission of many infectious agents from person to person. A large percentage of infectious disease would be eliminated by hand washing, especially before eating. Daily bathing removes accumulated dirt, which can lead to disease, as well.

**Read** Leviticus 11:40; 13:6, 34, 53, 54; 15:1–13. What point comes through here?

A fair amount of scholarly debate exists regarding the purpose behind these cleansing rituals in the Old Testament. Many argue that these purely are ritual, with no health aspect involved at all. And though in some cases that point seems more obvious than in others (such as when the priests had to wash their hands and feet before going into the tabernacle [*see Exod. 30:20, 21*]), with what we know today about germs and cleanliness, the Lord could have instituted these things for health purposes, as well, even if the Israelites themselves had no idea of germ theory and the like.

Whatever the facts are, today we know that using water to keep ourselves clean gives us wonderful health benefits.

Learning Cycle CONTINUED▶ **STEP 2—Explore****Bible Commentary****I. The Living Water** (*Review John 4:1–42 with your class.*)

In the arid region where God chose to send His Son in human form, water was a scarce and precious commodity. Everyone knew what it was to thirst, and all knew the daily challenge of simply obtaining enough clean water to sustain life. So, when Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that He has water that is even better than what she draws daily from the town well, her interest naturally is peaked.

The Savior describes for her the gift of God that becomes, within all who receive it, a continuously flowing spring of Living Water. In the course of their conversation, the woman comes to understand the spiritual importance of Christ's words. Her longing for Living Water grows in intensity, and she asks the Savior for this most precious of all heavenly gifts.

**Consider This:** Jesus said, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (*Matt. 5:6*).

Why do you think it's true that seeking to quench our spiritual thirst at the fountains of this world only leaves one longing for something better? What is in the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus that indicates she knows a lot about unfulfilling quests for spiritual satisfaction? What are some of the common substitutes for Living Water that people in your community pursue in order to satisfy their deepest longings? What are some of the ways you can let them know that what all of us need most is Jesus and the experience of His cleansing, healing, life-giving grace?

**II. The Waters of Baptism** (*Review Romans 6:1–4 with your class.*)

The imagery of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Savior permeates the rite of Christian baptism by immersion. In baptism we are connected integrally with these acts of Christ on our behalf in such a way that they become our experience too. We die to the old life of sin and rebellion. We are buried with Christ as the water closes over us in baptism. And by the

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## The Power of Water

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (*Isa. 40:31*).

**Meditate** upon this text. What promises can you take from it for yourself? How can you apply it to yourself?

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A historic experiment conducted by Dr. Pitts at Harvard University had athletes—walking on a treadmill at three and a half miles per hour in a hot environment—consume as much water as they lost in their sweat. At the end of the experiment, the athletes felt as if they could continue walking—seven hours later!—G. C. Pitts, R. E. Johnson, F. C. Conzozio, “Work in the Heat as Affected by Intake of Water, Salt, and Glucose,” *American Journal of Physiology* 142:253, 1944. The same athletes, deprived of water during the experiment on another day, reached the point of exhaustion within three and a half hours.

The message is obvious. Water can give us power and energy, especially when we are doing strenuous work. In contrast, inadequate water intake may result in dehydration, which leads to fatigue and exhaustion much more quickly than if we were drinking enough water. Also, insufficient water can impair our vital functions. Though compensatory mechanisms may come into play, a chronic water deficiency will lead to ill health.

It is possible that adequate fluid intake may limit some symptoms such as headaches, thus decreasing the need for headache medicine, which can cause bad side effects, especially if used often. As most athletes know, during prolonged and arduous exercise, water requirements increase significantly.

Nevertheless, it is possible to drink too much water, resulting in water intoxication. The appropriate amount of water intake depends upon multiple factors such as temperature, body size, and kidney function, but it should be sufficient to result in pale or clear urine in normal circumstances. In most cases people should make an effort to drink a minimum of six to eight (at least 250 ml per glass) glasses of water per day, more when doing strenuous work in hot environments.

**How much water are you drinking each day? Make a conscious choice to keep track of how much water you are drinking, and if you're not getting enough, what's holding you back from doing something so simple and yet that holds so many benefits for you?**

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

power of the Holy Spirit, we rise (“resurrected” from the watery “grave”) to walk in “newness of life.”

The apostle Paul exhorts us, as a result of these realities, to live our lives in the Spirit as resurrected people: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (*Rom. 6:3, 4*).

**Consider This:** A mere intellectual assent to the gospel is not enough. God desires to immerse us in a soul-invigorating experience of new life in the Spirit, characterized by freedom and transformation. (*See 2 Cor. 3:17, 18.*) How can you experience a life of freedom—for instance, freedom from the things that formerly diminished your physical and spiritual life and freedom—in order to live by the Spirit? Discuss why such a life is a continually growing and liberating experience of becoming more like Jesus.

▶ **STEP 3—Apply****Thought Questions:**

- 1 What happens to you when you become dehydrated? What symptoms do you experience first? What is the result if you quickly do not take in sufficient water? What are the spiritual ramifications of insufficient water intake?
- 2 How can we best express our gratitude to God for His physical and spiritual gifts that are foundational to the life He has given us?
- 3 What happens to your spiritual life if you constantly run low on Living Water? What is the spiritual remedy for this condition?
- 4 How thirsty am I for the Living Water? What are some of the things that might mask my true spiritual condition or mitigate my thirst for genuine spiritual refreshment?
- 5 In the spiritual realm, why do you think it is that any number or combinations of substitutes leave us continually longing for something different and something more?

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## Water as Therapy

“He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight” (John 9:11).

**Read** John 9:1–11, the story of Jesus healing the man blind from birth. What is different about this healing miracle in comparison to some of the others? See for instance Matt. 8:8–13; 9:2–7; Luke 8:46, 47. What possible meaning could be found in this difference, if any?

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It is essential that water used both internally and externally be clean. Many people have difficulty accessing pure, clean water. Water taken from contaminated sources requires either chemical treatment or boiling to make it safe for consumption and domestic use.

Water is beneficial externally, as well as when used internally. It may be used externally in treatments known as hydrotherapy. The intelligent, careful use of hot and cold wet towels in this process of hydrotherapy may bring relief to a number of conditions. Caution should be employed in cases of poor circulation, persons with diabetes, or neurological illnesses. It could very well be to your advantage to get proper training in the use of hydrotherapy.

“But many have never learned by experience the beneficial effects of the proper use of water, and they are afraid of it. Water treatments are not appreciated as they should be, and to apply them skillfully requires work that many are unwilling to perform. But none should feel excused for ignorance or indifference on this subject. There are many ways in which water can be applied to relieve pain and check disease. All should become intelligent in its use in simple home treatments. Mothers, especially, should know how to care for their families in both health and sickness.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 237.

**How conscientious are you with your health habits in general? That is, how could you be taking better care of yourself now? Why wait until your bad habits make you sick? How much better it would be to start following good health principles now and prevent disease instead of going through the hassle of seeking to be cured.**

*Learning Cycle* CONTINUED**Application Questions:**

- 1 What are some of the ways water is both life-giving and life-enhancing? How can you better avail yourself of the life-giving properties of water?
- 2 What strategies have you used to make sure you receive enough water internally each day? In what ways have you enjoyed and found water to be externally invigorating, as well?
- 3 What experiences do you have with water as a central part of a healing regimen?
- 4 What has my life been like when I've "taken the plunge" and entered into the experience of Living Water?
- 5 Why is it that a one-time experience of Living Water is not enough? What can I do to continue to enter into, and experience, Living Water on a regular, daily basis? What can you envision as the results of daily entering into the life that God longs to give you?
- 6 Why is it easy sometimes to get distracted or settle for substitutes to Living Water? How do I find my way back to the real thing when I have settled for something less?

**STEP 4—Create**

**Class Field Trip:** If possible, organize a Sabbath afternoon outing to a lakeside, river, waterfall, ocean, or the seashore. Alternately, display photographs of bodies of water or play a clip from a DVD of the ocean, such as from the "Planet Earth" series. Invite class members to contemplate the life-giving, cooling, refreshing, and restorative properties of water. Ask them to experience the beauty of it by composing a poem, a song, or a painting that praises God's creative power.

**Class Activity:** Companies spend millions of dollars on creating slogans and ads to entice you to buy their products. "Obey Your Thirst" has sold millions of soft drinks for the Coca-Cola Company. There are people perishing all around for lack of the Living Water. Create your own slogan for Living Water to be printed on a bumper sticker, a T-shirt, or a bookmark. What would your slogan say to entice others to drink of the Water of Life?

**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, “Beverages,” pp. 419, 420, in *Counsels on Diet and Foods*; “Frequent Bathing,” p. 104, in *Counsels on Health*.

“Those who treat the sick should move forward in their important work with strong reliance upon God for His blessing to attend the means which He has graciously provided, and to which He has in mercy called our attention as a people, such as pure air, cleanliness, healthful diet, proper periods of labor and repose, and the use of water.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 303.

“The priest had that morning performed the ceremony which commemorated the smiting of the rock in the wilderness. That rock was a symbol of Him who by His death would cause living streams of salvation to flow to all who are athirst. Christ’s words were the water of life. There in the presence of the assembled multitude He set Himself apart to be smitten, that the water of life might flow to the world. In smiting Christ, Satan thought to destroy the Prince of life; but from the smitten rock there flowed living water. As Jesus thus spoke to the people, their hearts thrilled with a strange awe, and many were ready to exclaim, with the woman of Samaria, ‘Give me this water, that I thirst not.’ John 4:15.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 454.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 In some parts of the world, people can walk into a grocery store and find about forty varieties of bottled water. In other parts of the world, folk have to struggle to find enough clean water to drink. What can we do to help those who don’t have enough water for life’s basic necessities? What is the water situation where you live? How can we improve the stewardship of water in our communities?
- 2 If you have access to a health professional or someone who knows about the topic of water, ask him or her to come to class and spend some time giving more details about the use and benefits of water. Ask, too, about the daily things we can do in order to derive as many health benefits as possible from the use of water.
- 3 Jesus tells us to come and drink freely of the water of life (*Rev. 22:17*). What does that mean? How do we do that? What requirements, if any, are placed on us in order to drink of this water?