

Scriptures

Exodus 17:1-7

John 4:5-42

Water of Life

session essentials

**We drink from Jesus' life-giving water.**

- ◆ In today's gospel, Jesus asks a Samaritan woman for water. We tell this story, but focus on the Old Testament story in which God helps Moses bring water to God's people.
- ◆ Older children can identify with the people who feel in need of help.
- ◆ In today's session, we celebrate God's ready willingness to help God's people when they are in need.

Core Session

- ◆ Getting Started (*empty backpack*)
- ◆ Old Testament Bible Study
- ◆ Comic-Strip Posters
- ◆ Praying Together

Enrichment

- ◆ Explore the Good News
- ◆ Today's Gospel
- ◆ Express Yourself: Go with the Flow!
- ◆ Lenten Challenges
- ◆ Info: Where You'll Find Everything Else

Helps for Leaders

- ◆ More about Today's Scriptures
- ◆ Reflection
- ◆ Using Music and Musical Activities

✓ Getting Started (5-15 minutes)

Participants play a round game based on an imaginary trip through the desert.

Sit in a circle with participants. Ask them to imagine that they are going on a long camping trip into a dry and dusty desert. They will find very little water along the way, and the hot days will make them very thirsty.

Ask participants to play a round game based on this desert trip. *Directions to the participants:*

- ◆ Pass the backpack around the circle.
- ◆ The first player says, “I am going to the desert, and in my backpack I will take (*name an object*).”
- ◆ The next player says the same sentence, first repeating the first player’s choice, then adding an item to the backpack.
- ◆ Help one another keep the game going as long as possible. See how many things you can take along inside the backpack!

When finished, discuss:

- ◆ What were the most important things in our packs? How many of us would take water? Why?
- ◆ Why is water important in our lives? In what ways do we use water?

Invite participants to read about another camping trip.

✓ Old Testament Bible Study

(10-15 minutes)

Participants discuss God’s gift of water in the desert.

Explain why the Israelites are in the desert:

- ◆ God commanded Moses to lead God’s people out of Egypt where they had been slaves.
- ◆ God’s people traveled through the desert with few supplies. God promised to take care of them.
- ◆ But God’s people complained that they needed more food. So God provided manna, a food like bread, and quail, a kind of bird, for the people to eat.
- ◆ Now the people complain again. Can you guess what they complain about now?

Distribute Bibles and invite participants to follow along as you read **Exodus 17:3-7** aloud.

After the reading, discuss:

- ◆ What do the people need?
- ◆ What does God give to the people?
- ◆ What does God give to us?
- ◆ What needs of ours does God take care of?
- ◆ Can the people trust in God? Why or why not?
- ◆ Can we trust in God? Why or why not?

✓ Comic-Strip Posters (10-25 minutes)

Participants make comic-strip posters retelling today’s story.

Divide participants into groups of 3-4 participants each. Ask each group to make a comic-strip poster of one of today’s scripture stories by following these directions:

- ◆ Divide your poster into four panels.
- ◆ Use drawings and words to tell the whole story in four panels.
- ◆ Decide how you will divide up the work; please make sure everyone in your groups takes part in the project.

Hang the finished posters on a wall.

✓ Praying Together (5 minutes)

Activity Soundtrack: Play “The Moldau.” (Open your Spring-A *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Companion Music* for options on obtaining this music.)

Invite participants to continue experimenting with using scripture verses as prayer. Help the participants memorize these words from John 4:14: *Whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.*

Memorize the verse together by saying it together slowly and rhythmically several times. Then pause and say:

- ◆ Think about something you think Jesus wants to give you today.
- ◆ Silently answer Jesus.

Pause, then slowly repeat once more the scripture verse above. Close by praying:

- ◆ Lord Jesus, help us hear what you want to give us; help us say yes. *Amen.*

Note: Distribute this week’s *At Home with the Good News* to group members (or e-mail it to families).

□ Explore the Good News

(5-15 minutes)

On page 1 of today's *Explore the Good News* group members will find the scripture skills activity called Explore God's Word. Ask participants to complete the activity in pairs or trios.

On page 2 group members will find an activity called Travel through the Old Testament. This ongoing activity is designed to help older children understand the continuity of the Old Testament with the New Testament. Jesus lived and taught the Jewish heritage into which he was born. Today's paper focuses on Moses and the exodus from Egypt.

□ Today's Gospel (15-30 minutes)

Participants invent roleplays based on Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman.

Help participants find **John 4:4-15**. Ask participants to follow along as you read the passage aloud. Pause as indicated to discuss the passage in small sections.

Read John 4:4-6. Discuss:

- ◆ Why does the writer tell us that Jesus passed through Samaria? What was important about Samaritans? (*As necessary, explain that Jesus was a Jew; the Jews and the Samaritans were enemies.*)
- ◆ How does Jesus feel after his trip?

Read John 4:7-9. Discuss:

- ◆ What does Jesus ask from the woman?
- ◆ How does she answer Jesus? Why?

Read John 4:10-15

- ◆ Jesus and the woman are using the word *water* in two different ways. How is the water Jesus talks about different from the water the woman talks about? (*Participants may not grasp the full meaning of Jesus' spiritual metaphor, but can point to several differences—Jesus' water cannot be seen or touched, it will keep us from being thirsty again, etc.*)

- ◆ How does the woman respond to what Jesus wants to give her?
- ◆ What do you think Jesus wants to give us?
- ◆ How do we respond to what Jesus wants to give us? Why?

Divide participants into pairs. Ask each pair to invent a roleplay between Jesus and any real or imaginary person. Ask participants to include:

- ◆ Jesus offering something to the person
- ◆ the person's answer to Jesus

□ Express Yourself (10-20 minutes)

Go with the Flow!

Activity Soundtrack: Play Smetana's "The Moldau." (Open your Spring-A *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Companion Music* for options on obtaining this music.) This lovely music captures the rippling of water in streams that mingle and join to form a mighty river.

Before the session review the contents of the *Express Yourself... Go with the Flow!* poster, attached to this document. This poster is designed as a group of enrichment activities built around the center photograph titled *Fountain in Front of St. Peter's Square*.

In the session play music as you view the photograph together. Explain:

- ◆ This fountain stands in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican in Rome. It is one of a pair built in the 1600s.
- ◆ We have water in our church, too. We have a baptismal font to which we bring new people who want to join the Church.
- ◆ Imagine we are standing near this fountain. Imagine we hear Jesus say to us as he said to the Samaritan woman, "Whoever drinks the water that I will give will never again be thirsty."
- ◆ What would we ask Jesus about this water?
- ◆ What would we say to Jesus about this water?

(cont. on p. 4)

Read aloud to the group members lines from Claude McKay's poem "Thirst," printed here and on the poster. Ask group members to follow along on the poster as you read:

My spirit wails for water, water now!
 My tongue is aching dry, my throat is hot
 For water, fresh rain shaken from a bough,
 Or dawn dews heavy in some leafy spot.
 My hungry body's burning for a swim
 In sunlit water where the air is cool,
 As in Trout Valley where upon a limb
 The golden finch sings sweetly to the pool.
 Oh water, water, when the night is done,
 When day steals gray-white through the windowpane,
 Clear silver water when I wake, alone,
 All important of parts, of fevered brain;
 Pure water from a forest fountain first,
 To wash me, cleanse me, and to quench my thirst!

Invite group members to follow the directions after the poem to write a new poem "on the back" of McKay's poem. This new poem will represent a dialogue between the poet and Jesus.

Note:

- ◆ Learn more about Jamaican poet Claude McKay at <http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/25>.
- ◆ View *Fountain in front of St. Peter's*, attached to this document.

Lenten Challenges (10-20 minutes)

Participants review the Lenten challenges from a poster made in the session for the 1st Sunday in Lent.

As necessary, review with group members that we are now in the season of Lent. Lent, which lasts 40 days, prepares us for the feast of Easter. The Church asks us to pick one or more ways to change our lives so that we become more like Jesus. Some ways that people use are prayer, doing without food or something else we're used to, giving money to the poor, reading the Bible, changing a habit or making peace.

Gather group members around the poster. Discuss:

- ◆ What ideas did we try this week? (*Accept that participants may not have tried any.*) What difference *did* our ideas make? What difference *could* our ideas make?
- ◆ What could you do for just one day to make a difference with a teacher or classmate?
- ◆ How could we share just a little money with people who need it?

INFO **Where You'll Find Everything Else**

- ◆ Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
 - Backgrounds and reflections for today's readings, titled *More about Today's Scriptures*.
 - An optional (and ongoing) *Faith Skills* activity exploring the Church.
 - A printable copy of *The Apostles' Creed*, to use in the optional Faith Skills activity.
 - A helpful article looking at *Older Children and the Lectionary*.
 - The *Express Yourself... Go with the Flow!* poster, to be used in today's Express Yourself activity.
 - A family paper, *At Home with the Good News*, to print and distribute *or* to e-mail to families for use at home.
- ◆ Open your Spring-A *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Seasonal Articles* to find:
 - Information on Spring-A's *Models of the Faith*.
 - A printable article suggesting ways to explore new works of visual art titled *First Impressions*.
 - An article exploring *Lenten Disciplines*.
 - More information on *The Gospel of John*.
 - An article exploring *Using Music and Musical Activities* in the classroom.
 - An article exploring the sacrament of *Baptism*.
 - The *Introduction for Intermediate* for **Living the Good News**.

More about Today's Scriptures

Today's readings deepen our understanding of the image of Jesus as thirst-quenching, life-giving water. In Exodus, despite the Israelites' quarreling and complaining, God gives the people fresh water from a rock. In his letter to the Romans, Paul characterizes the new life that is now ours in Christ. In the gospel, Jesus offers living water to a Samaritan woman.

Exodus 17:1-7

This is the second story about thirst and water in Exodus (see also 15:22-27). The geographical differences in the accounts led to the later rabbinical story that the miraculous rock, source of providential water, followed the Israelites in their wandering. Paul would later identify this rock with Christ.

For people living in an arid land, thirst was a powerful metaphor for a human's need for God. Moses now uses the staff that made the Nile foul to bring forth clean water. Israel's murmuring is a constant feature of the Exodus narratives. This incident at Massah (meaning *test*) and Meribah (meaning *quarrel*) became a byword for Israel's faithlessness.

Romans 5:1-11

Paul uses two metaphors to describe God's redeeming act in Christ: *justification*, the ending of a legal dispute, and *reconciliation*, the termination of a state of enmity. Christ's sacrifice demonstrates God's justifying and reconciling love for us.

The work of salvation was begun in Christ's ministry, death and resurrection and is now operative through the Holy Spirit. Whereas justification marks the beginning of this process, salvation marks its future completion. We enter more fully into salvation by participating in Christ's risen life and by anticipating a share in God's glory.

John 4:5-42

This is the second discourse in John's gospel on the meaning of Jesus as the revelation of God. The Samaritans were descendants of the peoples settled by the Assyrians in an area north of Judea after the fall of Israel (721 BCE). After the Jews returned from exile, enmity with the Samaritans developed and persisted

because these peoples worshiped other gods as well as Yahweh. Though later the Samaritans worshiped Yahweh alone, they had their own center of worship on Mount Gerizim instead of the Jerusalem temple.

In response to the woman's questioning, Jesus challenges her to recognize "the gift of God" (v. 10), the "living water" (v. 10) and the Messiah. Water is symbolic of wisdom in the Old Testament. In John, water represents the Holy Spirit and also Jesus' revelation interpreted by the Spirit.

The woman first recognizes Jesus as the expected prophet-like-Moses, the one in whom the Samaritans centered their messianic expectations. She brings up the dispute over the proper place of worship, but Jesus' answer focuses on the important issue—the response to God's gift of life. Jesus' reply finally invites the woman to acknowledge him as the Messiah.

Reflection

Been there, done that. We've all been where Jesus is today: tired from travel, thirsty, stuck where he does not much want to be, in hostile territory. We can almost feel the grit from dusty roads making his eyes water. Yet he turns this unlikely scene into a place and time (high noon is significant) of revelation.

At first, the Samaritan woman recognizes the awkwardness of a Jewish teacher breaking taboos by talking to her, and tries to brush him off. His promise of a remarkable gift intrigues her, though. She has the gift of wonder.

For his part, Jesus has utter disregard for the rules that minimize her on two counts: her gender and her nationality. The bubbling water he offers her symbolizes the full human life God wants for all people, full of hope and dignity.

Then Jesus draws her beyond the question of where to worship, a raging controversy then. More important than the place of worship, he says, is its quality. In one conversation, he frees her from calcifying attitudes and stale thought patterns.

No wonder she abandons her water jar, symbol of the old drudgery. She has some good news for her village.

Using Music and Musical Activities

by Susanne Meyer

Sadly, music is something that many adults experienced as youngsters, but haven't kept in their lives in a meaningful way. If we left it up to the media and the only music we heard came from the radio or television, we would be robbing ourselves of a rich and vast musical and spiritual world! Music is something that young and older adults can enjoy in a myriad of ways.

Listening to music can be an intensely personal and introspective time. This intrapersonal activity of listening can be as varied as the many different personalities we come across daily.

Lyrics are essentially poetry that is accompanied by music and a stanza written by a songwriter or lyricist may be just the words we needed to hear at a particular point in our lives.

Slow and meditative music can allow us to slow down, check in with ourselves and relax our physical bodies and our minds. We may access emotions or thoughts that are invited to come to the surface. The intensity of these emotions is awesome.

Lively, energetic music can wake us up, again, both physically and mentally. Attending a live music concert is something we need to be reminded to do more often.

Music also is an activity to share. Making music is as important to our well-being as laughter!

Personal expression and participation is a joyful experience whether one is singing in the choir, playing in a drum circle or dancing around the room. Music making is for everyone—not just the musically gifted or talented. It is a natural human endeavor that anyone can do—alone or with a group. To open ourselves to thinking in a more musical manner, here is a creative activity that you might wish to use sometime in your sessions.

A Sound Diary

Invite the group members to keep a Sound Diary for a few weeks, with entries that focus on sound awareness.

You might suggest:

- ◆ Record the sounds you hear in a place that you frequent on a daily basis.
- ◆ Listen to and critique a new style of music.
- ◆ List which sounds you consider noise and which you consider music...and why.

Diary entries may be drawings, poems, narratives, graphic notation, colors, etc. Keeping these sound journals allows group members to become more in touch with the sounds around them and the natural music in their lives. This is an enjoyable activity that can be done alone or shared by a group.

Music Memory Posters

Music is an activity to share and music making is for everyone—not just the musically gifted or talented. It is a natural human endeavor that anyone can do—alone or with a group. To open ourselves to thinking in a more musical manner, here is a creative activity to use sometime in your sessions.

Distribute a sheet of poster board to each participant and offer these instructions:

- ◆ Draw 10 circles on your poster.
- ◆ In the first circle list early musical memories or songs you remember having sung to you as a child.
- ◆ In the second circle list songs from school or camp or church.
- ◆ In the third circle list any musical works that you have performed.
- ◆ In the fourth circle list songs you can sing or pieces you can play from memory.
- ◆ In the fifth circle name recordings you couldn't live without.
- ◆ In the sixth circle list examples of your least favorite music.
- ◆ In the seventh circle list music you've heard in the last 24 hours.
- ◆ In the eighth circle list music that you have taught to others.
- ◆ In the ninth circle list music that intrigues or challenges you.
- ◆ In the tenth circle list musical hidden pleasures that others might be surprised to know about.

This is a great intrapersonal activity that brings out some of our deepest memories. It's an opportunity to reacquaint ourselves with ourselves! If we then share our posters with others we can get to know each other on a deeper and more meaningful level.