

“What is Living Water in the Bible?”

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Jesus Talks with the Samaritan Woman at the Well - FreeBibleImages.org - Used under license

"Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.'" (John 4:10)

This lesson explains the meaning of living water in the Bible, and provides examples of living water -- physical and spiritual -- from the Old and New Testaments.

Consider. What does "living water" mean to you? How would you explain "living water" to someone else?

1. Living water is flowing and fresh

"Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of flowing [living] water" (Genesis 26:19, brackets added, Ref. 1). Read Genesis 36:18-22 for context.

"Living water" in the physical sense is water that is flowing and fresh as from a running stream or a perennial spring. Its motion and freshness resembles life, in contrast with stagnant water or water that is turbid (muddy or sediment-filled) or salty.

The Hebrew word for *flowing* in Genesis 26:19 is *chay* (pronounced *khah'-ee*). *Chay* is an adjective which means *alive* or *living* (Strong's Concordance - Ref. 1). When *chay* describes water, it means *flowing* and *fresh* (Brown-Driver-Briggs - Ref. 1). Also see Zechariah 14:8.

In the Bible, living water in the physical sense implies freshness, movement, and life.

2. Living water is spiritual blessing and life-giving power

Living water in the spiritual sense is spiritual blessing and life-giving power. God is the source -- the fountain -- of living water for his people. Jesus, the Son of God, is the giver of living water. Unlike the idols, lusts, and material things the world seeks to satisfy its thirsts, the living water that Jesus gives us satisfies our thirsts perpetually and springs up in us to eternal life. The living water that Jesus gives us overflows in us and blesses others.

a. God is the source -- the fountain -- of living water

"For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). Also read Jeremiah 17:13, and Psalms 36:9.

In Jeremiah 2:13, Jeremiah 17:13, and Psalms 36:9, the Hebrew word for *fountain* is *maqor* (pronounced *maw-kore'*) and means figuratively a *spring* (Ref. 2).

God, the fountain [or *spring*] of living water, provided the Israelites every blessing they needed. Yet, the Israelites deserted God, practiced idolatry, and sought after gods that would not profit them (Jeremiah 2:8-11). Today, God, the fountain of living water, provides us every blessing we need. That brings up the question -- Are you seeking God who can truly satisfy your thirst, or are you trusting in "broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13)?

b. Jesus Christ -- the Son of God -- is the giver of living water

"Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water'" (John 4:10). Read John 4:1-15 for context.

Jesus Christ -- the Son of God, the Messiah -- is the giver of living water (John 4:10, John 4:14). However, in John 4:10, early in his conversation with the woman at the well, there were two impediments preventing the woman from receiving the living water that Jesus gives. First, she did not know [Greek word *eidó* means *perceive*] who it was who was speaking to her (Ref. 3). At first she thought Jesus was an ordinary Jew (John 4:9). Later in the conversation she did understand who Jesus was -- the Messiah, the Christ -- and she proclaimed Jesus to the people of her town (John 4:25-26, John 4:28-29) resulting in their coming to Christ (John 4:39-42).

Second, when Jesus began the conversation with the woman at the well, she did not know [*perceive*] what the gift of living water really was (and still is). When Jesus first mentioned living water to her (John 4:10), she thought of living water only in the physical, flowing sense (John 4:11). Moments later in the conversation, Jesus helped her to think of living water in the spiritual sense. In John 4:13, Jesus said (referring to the physical well water), "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again." Jesus then explained the spiritual benefits of living water. "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14).

When Jesus described the spiritual meaning of living water -- perpetual, life-giving power that springs up to eternal life (John 4:14) -- the woman then expressed her desire to have that living water. She said, "Sir, give me this

water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water" (John 4:15).

So, note the two conditions from John 4:10-15 for receiving the life-giving living water that Jesus gives:

- 1) *Perceive* who Jesus really is (the Messiah, the Christ), and
- 2) *Desire* to have the living water that Jesus is willing to give.

c. The living water that Jesus gives us satisfies our thirsts perpetually and springs up in us to eternal life

"Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never be thirsty; but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up to eternal life" (John 4:14).

(1). The living water that Jesus gives us is eternal in its duration and satisfies our thirsts completely

Jesus said to the woman, *"Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never be thirsty" (John 4:14)*. Jesus recognized that the Samaritan woman was thirsty; however, she was seeking to satisfy her thirst in the ways of the world (John 4:16-18, 1 John 2:15-17). In contrast with the ways of the world which are temporary and cannot satisfy our spiritual thirst (broken cisterns that can hold no water), the living water that Jesus Christ gives us eternally satisfies our thirst.

(2). The living water that Jesus gives us becomes in us a fountain springing up to eternal life

Jesus said, *"The water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up to eternal life" (John 4:14)*. The living water that Jesus gives us as believers -- spiritual blessing and life-giving power -- is a perpetually flowing fountain within us that is active, dynamic, and vigorous. The Greek word that John uses for *springing* is *hallomai* (pronounced *hal'-lom-ahee*) which means *leaping, springing, gushing* (Ref. 4). The living water that Jesus gives us provides us abundant life (John 10:10). The living water that Jesus gives us helps us to enjoy the quality of eternal life now with him while we are on earth and as we anticipate being in heaven with him.

d. The living water that Jesus gives us flows from us and blesses others

Jesus said, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:38).

To discuss this verse, let's consider "three directions" -- *to us, in us, and from us to others*.

To us -- God is the source, the fountain of living water (Jeremiah 2:13). That living water -- God's blessing and spiritual power -- flows from God to us (Isaiah 44:3).

In us -- The living water that Jesus gives us is a life-giving fountain that springs up *in us* (John 4:14). The living water that Jesus gives us completely satisfies our thirsts and endures to eternal life.

From us to others -- Jesus said that for those that believe in him, from our innermost being "will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). From God we shall receive an abundance of spiritual blessings not only to refresh us, but also so we can be instrumental in refreshing and comforting others (Ref. 5). As believers, we do not "end" at satisfying our own thirsts, but we become a fount, using the spiritual gifts God has given us, so others may derive refreshment (Ref. 6). As faithful stewards of God's grace, we are to use the gifts, spiritual blessings, and life-giving power that God has given us to bless others (1 Peter 4:10).

Apply. Know "the thirst of your soul, the readiness of the Giver, and the sweetness of the living water that Jesus offers. Fall at his feet and ask, and get the water of life" (Alexander MacLaren - Ref. 7, John 4:15).

Related Lessons

"Come to the Waters (Isaiah 55:1)"

"What is Eternal Life?" (John 17:3)

"Do Not Love the World" (1 John 2:15)

References

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