

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 6

CONVERSATION STARTER

What's the best story you've heard recently? It could be from a TV show you watched, a book you read, or just a fun anecdote from a conversation with a friend. What do you think made this particular story so memorable?

WHAT ARE YOU THIRSTY FOR?

Have you ever been so thirsty your mouth felt like sandpaper? Where all you wanted was a taste of cool water on your tongue? It's this image the Biblical authors have in mind when they describe our deep longing for God's life-giving presence. In the beginning, the first humans lived in the Garden alongside a river that flowed out into all of Creation. When it came to God's life-giving waters, they could drink their fill. But these humans were thirsty for something more, they didn't trust that these waters would be enough to sustain them and so they looked to their own wisdom. So God removed them from the Garden and their access to the waters of life was cut off. Much later, the Prophet Ezekiel is given a vision by God of what the nation of Israel had become. God shows him a valley of dry bones. And it is only when God pours out His water and Spirit over them that these bones come back to life!

In John 4, Jesus meets a woman at a well. He tells her that no matter how many times she drinks the water, she'll always end up thirsty again. But if she would only ask for a drink of living water, water that comes from Jesus himself, she'd never be thirsty again. Jesus is making the claim that when we drink from him, we are accessing the life-giving water that comes from God. Drinking from Jesus speaks to the idea of internalizing him, his teachings and his way of life. It is only in following the way of Jesus, in listening to his teachings and allowing our hearts to be transformed by the Spirit, that we find satisfaction, that our thirsts are truly quenched. All other waters will only leave us wanting.

When it comes to your life, what are you thirsty for? What do you long for or desire? Next, what are the things you turn to in order to quench that thirst? Are those things actually satisfying you? Discuss with your group.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. In Jesus' day, it was rather scandalous for a Jewish Rabbi to be caught alone with a Samaritan woman. Jews and Samaritans didn't get along, to say the least. Who would you be scandalized to see Jesus hanging out with? Why do you think that is?
3. To the Jews, the Samaritans were seen as different and wrong. Who are the people around you who you see as wrong? What are the barriers you erect around yourself and those people?
4. After talking to Jesus, the woman returns to her town and tells everyone she meets about her encounter, and as a result, many come to believe in him. Do you find it difficult to share your own Jesus encounters with others? Why or why not?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

Think about the people you identified as outsiders during your group discussion. These could be people you tend to shy away from, a person you notice who is always alone, people who have different opinions than you, who come from different backgrounds, etc.. What would it look like to remove the barriers separating you and this person? Take a moment to brainstorm one or two practical ideas for moving toward them this week. As you reflect, pay attention to any fears, anxieties, or nerves that arise. Ask yourself where these might be coming from and whether or not they are based in truth. Finally, what are some positive outcomes that could potentially come from moving closer to this person?