

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 14

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is your favorite holiday tradition, and how did it get started in your family?

A MOMENT OF SILENCE

The reading for this week takes place during the Festival of Sukkot, or the Festival of Booths. For an entire week, Jewish people would spend time in little shelters that reminded them of their ancestors' time in the wilderness. Each evening, the High Priest walked around the Temple altar seven times before the crowd of thousands. He would then pour water onto the embers, creating a cloud of steam reminiscent of how God led them through the wilderness as a cloud of smoke. And through it all, the people would shout, "Hosanna! Hosanna!" *Lord save us. Lord save us.*

During the last and greatest day of the festival, however, as the priest prepared to pour out the water, the entire crowd would go silent. This time, the pitcher would be empty. A visceral symbol of how, if God doesn't provide rain or water, they will have nothing. It's a reminder that they are utterly dependent on God. The priest would then walk to a far pool, collect water, and repeat the ritual, again as the people shout *Hosanna* with growing fervency. Once again, the crowd would fall silent as the priest raised the pitcher and finally, water poured forth, anticipating the fact that God will indeed save them.

It's at one of these moments of silence that Jesus steps up to speak from the crowd, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." As the people remember how God will save them, Jesus boldly puts himself forward as the means through which they could encounter God's life-giving water. It's like Jesus is saying, *Are you looking for God to save you? To provide for you? Then here I am. Come to me!*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The crowds are seeking Jesus, and eventually, they find him. In what ways do you find yourself seeking after Jesus? Do you feel like you often find him in those places? Why or why not?
2. Are there environments or circumstances today where you feel unsafe or uncomfortable talking about Jesus? Why is that?
3. What happens to your relationships, career, and daily routines if you view them as opportunities to help people flourish and thrive?
4. In order to be a source of living water to others, we must first be connected to Jesus ourselves. What are the ways you stay connected to Jesus throughout your week?
5. Read John 8:1-11 together as a group. What do you find significant about the way Jesus treats the woman in this story? What should we learn from this story in regard to how we treat people around us who make mistakes?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

Spiritual disciplines are about providing opportunities within your day-to-day routine through which God can speak and move in your life. And as Jesus points out, for us to help others flourish and thrive, we must first be connected to the source of living water ourselves. To do that, we must build into our lives a habit of practicing spiritual disciplines. Below are a few examples of common disciplines that have been practiced for thousands of years by Christians from around the world. This week, pick one that interests you and decide how you might incorporate it into your routine. Remember, these disciplines are not about a legalistic practice of the faith but rather an opening of yourself to the work of the Spirit around and in you.

Disciplines:

- Prayer
- Bible Reading
- Fasting
- Solitude
- Silence
- Sabbath
- Journaling
- Service
- Confession
- Worship