

## Main Points and Lesson Summaries

### *Come to the Waters*

2015–2016 PW/Horizons Bible Study

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### Introduction

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- The theme for this study is **biblical images of water**. “Just as water nourishes our bodies, so the scriptures on water nourish our souls” p. 4.
- The study explores some of the 800 references to water in the Bible, including “the delivery of God’s people through the parting of the Red Sea and the crossing of the Jordan River, the judgment of people of weak faith, and the adoption of the people of God through baptism” (p. 4).
- Every living thing needs water; we often take for granted the many ways we use water.
- “Through the water stories in the Old Testament we learn about the nature of God and how God has dealt with creation throughout history” (p. 4).
- “In the New Testament, we learn about Living Water and the waters of baptism” (p. 4).
- Humans cannot live without water and Christians cannot live without the Word of God. “Water and Word go hand in hand as we strive to live as faithful followers” (p. 5).
- “Water and Word work together to quench the thirst of our bodies and souls” (p. 5).

### Lessons

Each lesson includes one or more Bible passages that deal with water; each also focuses on a theological theme or issue.

### Things to Look for in the Study (p. 6)

- **Opening Litany** from Isaiah 55:1–3
- **Bowl or pitcher of water:** provide a bowl or pitcher of water for lessons one, two, four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine; the bowl is empty for lesson three.
- **Hymnal references:** There are hymnal suggestions at the end of each lesson. Incorporating hymns into group time is an excellent way of teaching the lesson themes.
- **Suggestions for Leaders:** Suggestions are in five steps
  1. Testing the Waters: Preparation for the Leader
  2. Skimming the Surface: Light conversation about the Bible study and topic
  3. Diving In: Activities and conversations to deepen understanding
  4. Resurfacing: Concluding questions
  5. Coming Ashore: Closing prayer/activity
- Scope and Sequence
- Practice of *Examen*: Spiritual discipline to discern the presence of God

## Lesson One: Birthing Waters

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- **Scripture:** Genesis 1:1–2:4

*Genesis 1:1–2*

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

- **Lesson Focus:** Out of the waters of chaos God created everything. God saw the goodness of creation and gave humans responsibility for caring for it. The seventh day, a day of rest, is a part of creation, too.
- **Lesson Direction:** Explore the creation story, God’s goodness, the role of humans, and the place of rest in creation.

### Lesson Overview

- Waters of Chaos (Genesis 1:1–2)
- The Liturgy of Creation (Genesis 1:3–25)
- Created in the Image of God (Genesis 1:26–31)
- The Goodness of God
- Take Care of the Garden
- Rest

### Main Points

- God gave birth to goodness out of the waters of chaos. We are born in goodness.
- God is not intimidated by the waters of chaos; God is in charge and initiates the loving activity of creation.
- God created humans and gave them special responsibilities to take care of the garden and to follow God’s example of rest.
- God calls us to be in relationship with God, each other, and all of creation.

## Lesson Two: Life Giving Waters—Baptism

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- **Scripture:** Matthew 3:13–17

*Matthew 3:13–17*

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. **And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”**

- **Lesson Focus:** The waters of baptism give life. Lesson two considers the meaning of baptismal waters, for Jesus, the early church, and for our lives today.
- **Lesson Direction:** Examine baptism and its meaning.

### Lesson Overview

- Meaning of Baptism
- Baptism Before the Time of Jesus
- The Baptism of Jesus
- Baptism in the New Testament
- Baptism in the Early Church
- Your Baptisms
- Efficacy of Baptism
- FAQs about Baptism and Renewal of Baptism

### Main Points

- Baptism is a sacrament of belonging and of grace.
- Baptism is our gracious adoption into God’s community; Christians “have no solid identity outside of community.” 1 Cor 12:13: “We are baptized into one body.”
- Roots of baptism are found in Jewish practices.
- Baptism is an outward sign of repentance.
- Jesus’ baptism is the beginning of a new creation.
- Presbyterian practice of baptism.
- Remembering and renewing our baptisms.

### Lesson Three: Absence of Water—Thirst and Longing

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- **Scripture:** Exodus 17:1–7; Psalm 42:1–2; 63:1; John 19:28

*Psalm 42:1–2*

As a deer longs for flowing streams,  
 so my soul longs for you, O God.  
 My soul thirsts for God,  
 for the living God.  
 When shall I come and behold  
 the face of God?

- **Lesson Focus:** We have dry spells in our lives—our bodies and our souls thirst. How do we survive times of little or no water?
- **Lesson Direction:** Explore physical and spiritual thirst in the Bible and in the dry times of our lives.

### Lesson Overview

- Physical Thirst

- Soul Thirst
- Jesus' Thirst

*John 19:28*

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty."

*Psalm 69:21*

They put **gall** in my food  
and **gave me vinegar for my thirst**"

- Our Thirsts and Types of Thirsts
- Thirst for Community

### Main Points

- Exodus: If God is here, where is the water? Turning faith into sight. Water stories are often about faith rather than water.
- How do we react to life's circumstances? Victor Frankl
- Soul thirst is yearning: the body cannot live without water; we cannot live apart from God (Psalms 42, 63)
- Jesus thirsts: he longs for the moment to end so he can be with God.
- Congregations must satisfy the thirst for community.

### Lesson Four: Dangerous Waters—God's Deliverance

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- **Scripture:** Joshua 3, Psalm 69:1–3

*Psalm 69:1–3*

Save me, O God,  
for the waters have come up to my neck.  
I sink in deep mire,  
where there is no foothold;  
I have come into deep waters,  
and the flood sweeps over me.  
I am weary with my crying;  
my throat is parched.  
My eyes grow dim  
with waiting for my God.

- **Lesson Focus:** The Israelites need to cross the Jordan River; the Psalmist is emotionally and spiritually drowning—everyone needs God's help. God does not disappoint.
- **Lesson Direction:** Consider the ways God saved the Israelites and how God saves us today.

### Lesson Overview

- Deliverance (Joshua)
- Deliverance Today
- Psalm 69:1–3
- Deep Waters

### Main Points

- At times we experience too little water, and at times, too much. We can be overwhelmed by this life-giving source.
- Scripture teaches us about God’s deliverance. Physical and metaphorical drowning are part of our reality (Joshua cannot cross the Jordan; the Psalmist is drowning in circumstances and tears).
- Vision and trust are key to deliverance today.
- We experience deep waters; God provides help. We help ourselves when we cry and seek help.

### Lesson Five: Stormy Water—Faith

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- **Scripture:** Matthew 14:22–33

*Mathew 14:25–27*

And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

- **Lesson Focus:** The disciples encountered stormy times in their faith and we do, too. What does it mean to be people of faith? How does our faith sustain us?
- **Lesson Direction:** Look at the ways Jesus, Peter, and the disciples react to a storm. How does their faith define them? How does our faith define us?

### Lesson Overview

- Storms in Matthew
- What Is Faith and What Good Is It?
- Trust
- Faithfulness/Fidelity
- Faith Is a Way of Seeing
- So What Good Is Faith?
- Talking about Our Faith

### Main Points

- God walks on water in Job 9:8, Psalm 77:19, and Isaiah 43:16. In Matthew 14, Jesus does the same and shows he is the son of God (theophany). Jesus says, “it is I,” similar to “I am who I am” in Exodus.

- God stretches out God’s hand to save the Israelites, and Jesus stretches out his to save Peter.
- Faith is believing through trust (relaxing into God; floating), faithfulness (commitment of the heart), a way of seeing (reality is gracious).
- Four types of faith: experienced, affiliative, searching, owned.

### **Talking about Our Faith**

- Helps us “connect the dots between biblical teaching and life experiences”
- Strengthens the faith community
- Builds trust
- Deepens the faith of individuals—when we articulate our faith, we grow

## **Lesson Six: Waters of Justice and Righteousness—Justice**

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- **Scripture:** Amos 5:21–24

*Amos 5:21–24*

I hate, I despise your festivals,  
 and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.  
 Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,  
 I will not accept them;  
 and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals  
 I will not look upon.  
 Take away from me the noise of your songs;  
 I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

**But let justice roll down like waters,  
 and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.**

- **Lesson Focus:** Because of their shallow worship and sinful living, Amos calls the waters of justice and righteousness to roll down on the Israelites. What places in our world need the cleansing waters of justice and righteousness?
- **Lesson Direction:** Explore Amos’s calls for justice and righteousness. Where are justice and righteousness needed today?

### **Lesson Overview**

- Justice and Righteousness
- Justice and Righteousness and Water
- Action Time: Ideas for Home and Church

### **Main Points**

- Amos is angry because of hollow, hypocritical worship and called for waters of righteousness to flow in. The rich are abusing the poor.
- Righteousness and Justice appear in the Old Testament 80 times.
  - Righteousness: living in right relationship to God.

- Justice: knowing the difference between right and wrong and working to make right happen; advocacy.
- Justice and righteousness are “the ways we walk the talk of our faith.” Helping is righteous work; naming root causes is justice work.
- We must take care of the garden (water issues).

## Lesson Seven: Streams of Mercy—Forgiveness

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- **Scripture:** Isaiah 35:1–2, 5–7; Psalm 51:1–12; Matthew 6:12

*Isaiah 35:1–2*

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,  
and rejoice with joy and singing.

- **Lesson Focus:** Christians forgive and are forgiven. What can we learn about forgiveness and streams of mercy from the psalmist and from Jesus?
- **Lesson Direction:** Explore the need to forgive and to accept forgiveness.

### Lesson Overview

- Isaiah 35:1–2, 5–7: From images of God’s Judgment (34:9: streams of Edom turned into pitch, sin) to compassion and forgiveness (the dry land will be glad and the desert rejoice and blossom, forgiveness)
- Psalm 51: One of seven penitential psalms. Water images describe the cleansing the psalmist desires. God washes sins away.
- Matthew 6:12: We stand in need of God’s grace—always. “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”
- What Is Forgiveness?
- What Is Sin?
- How Do We Seek Forgiveness?
- When Forgiveness Is Difficult

### Main Points

- Forgiveness from God is a restoration of right relationship with God through confession and acceptance of the mercy of God.
- When forgiveness is given or received there is deep gratitude. It quenches a deep thirst.
- Two categories of sin: commission (we did it) and omission (we should have done it).
- We seek forgiveness by asking for it.
- Sometimes it is hard to forgive our debtors. Forgiveness is a journey.

## Lesson Eight: The Hospitality of Living Water—Compassion

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- **Scripture:** John 4:1–30, 39–42; Acts 2:44–47

John 4:7–10

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) 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.”

- **Lesson Focus:** Jesus is the living water. The Samaritan woman, and people today, need this water. When we welcome living water into our lives, we learn the importance of hospitality and compassion.
- **Lesson Direction:** Look at the conversation between the Samaritan woman and Jesus and consider living water and why hospitality is important.

### Lesson Overview

- The Woman at the Well, John 4:1–30, 39–42
- Response to Living Water
- Hospitality in the Bible
- Hospitality in the Neighborhood
- Hospitality at Church
- When Hospitality and Compassion Are Challenging

### Main Points

- Offering or experiencing forgiveness and reconciliation is often part of showing compassion.
- In the Samaritan woman story, a physical need becomes an opportunity for Jesus to extend hospitality of water and teach about a new kind of water—the Living Water. Jesus’ longest discourse!
- Jesus breaks through racial and ethnic boundaries. Salvation is for everyone.
- Samaritan woman sees living water as filling a physical need, Jesus offers himself as filling a spiritual need.
- “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:37–38).
- The Samaritan woman showed hospitality and then brought others to faith.
- We are to be hospitable because God was hospitable to us from the moment of creation.
- Showing hospitality is enjoying the presence of Living Water among us.
- Being a Christian, proclaiming the Good News, and showing genuine hospitality and compassion are interwoven in our lives of faith.

### Lesson Nine: River of Life—Hope

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- **Scripture:** Revelation 21–22



### Revelation 22:1–2

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

- **Lesson Focus:** In the Revelation to John we get a picture of the end time, with the fullest revelation of God and God’s creation. This is a cause of great hope. We learn that we live in between the revelation of Jesus Christ and this final revelation, and that we are to witness to this as we live out our faith.
- **Lesson Direction:** Explore the end times as described in the Revelation to John and our responsibility as people of faith between now and then.

### Lesson Overview

- Revelation 21–22
- Hope
- In-Between Times
  1. Play Your Long Suits
  2. Help Make the World a Better Place
  3. Love Your Sisters and Be There for and With Them
  4. Make Room for New Generations and the Emerging Church

### Main Points

- The river of life flows forever and there are no more chaotic seas.
- Grace and mercy flow from God into the waters of creation and humanity.
- We spread the Good News with the purpose that, “At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2:10–11).
- We are to bear witness to the Living Water, the Christ among us calling us to obedience and faithfulness.

### Resources

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#### Horizons Website

<http://horizons.pcusa.org>

#### Notes

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