

# LIFE IN THE DESERT

## Connect Resource

**Dates:** Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June to Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2024

**Purpose of this campaign:** To unpack how we as a church can prepare the way for the Lord on behalf of others in our city and beyond - in our schools, universities, our friends and neighbors, family members, in our nation and in our world.

**Key scripture for this campaign:** Isaiah 43:19

**4 weeks of supporting points to the overarching point of this campaign.**

**Week 1:** Life in the Desert

**Week 2:** Life through Witnessing: Sharing Christ with others.

**Week 3:** Life Through Prayer: Praying for Others

**Week 4:** Life Through Generosity: Giving what we have to others.

## Week 1: Life in the Desert

Date: Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June

Key Point of this week: Preparing the way for the Lord for others.

Key Scripture: Isaiah 43:18-19

Supporting points:

**Isaiah 43:18-19 NIV**

*“Forget the former things;  
do not dwell on the past.  
<sup>19</sup> See, I am doing a new thing!  
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?  
I am making a way in the wilderness  
and **streams in the wasteland.***

As the church we carry the living water everywhere we go. What does it look like to prepare for streams in the desert? How can we prepare the way for the Lord for others?

### 1. The world is a wasteland and wilderness.

The world we live in is a desert, a wasteland! People are going from mirage to mirage.

The **wilderness in the Bible**, denotes everything painful and trying, with all the misery of this fallen world. Whether it was the Israelites’ being bitten by poisonous serpents or thirsting from lack of water, these served as reminders of the sin and misery that Adam brought into the world. The Israelites’ wilderness wandering also proved to be a painful reminder of the sinfulness of the human heart. While there was a shortage of water in the wilderness, there was no shortage of sin. Just about every kind of sin manifested itself in the 40 years that the Israelites spent wandering through the barrenness of the wilderness of Sinai and Paran (Num. 10:12).

We need to remind ourselves that the people around us are living in a desert, with no help, no hope, and no living water to quench their thirst. We have the answer, Christ is the **oasis** that brings life giving water to a thirsty soul.

### 2. We are called to bring streams of life into that wilderness

**ISAIAH 35:6-7 ESV**

*For waters break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;  
7 the burning sand shall become a pool,*

*and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down,  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.*

Isaiah 35:1-7 speaks of the day when the desert and parched land will be glad, when the glory of God and splendor of God comes. When the burning sand (means mirages) will become real pools of water. This is the promise of a life that comes to Christ, what was previously a mirage of hope will become a reality.

**Streams in the desert** is a symbolic term that describes the refreshment comes from the Spirit of Christ living within us. Sharing Christ with someone is bringing life in the desert. When the prophet Isaiah prophesied about streams in the desert, he promised that Christ would come and be the source of living water. Jesus himself is the fountainhead of living water.

Bringing streams in the desert is about satisfying the thirst for God. When the prophet Isaiah prophesied about streams in the desert, he promised that Christ would come and be the source of living water. But it doesn't end there. He left his Spirit to dwell in us so that streams of living water would continually flow in and through our lives.

When streams flow in a desert, they are from a geyser buried below. The water gushes up from underneath the dry ground. This same principle holds true in our lives. When there are streams, even in our desert times, those streams come from underneath the surface. They come from the internal well of the indwelling Holy Spirit. From him, living waters flow freely even in the season of life that feels like a desert.

The picture of streams in the desert is a common one in scripture, as God encourages his people in need. In **Isaiah 41**, the Lord promises his people that, in their frailty, he will supply:

#### **Isaiah 41:17-20**

*"The poor and needy search for water,  
but there is none;  
their tongues are parched with thirst.  
But I the LORD will answer them;  
I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.  
I will make rivers flow on barren heights,  
and springs within the valleys.  
I will turn the desert into pools of water,  
and the parched ground into springs".*

### **3. Witness is the goal**

The first thing to remember is that **the goal is to be obedient to bearing witness**. Talking about Christ is the goal, not just leading them to the salvation moment. Remember the clock metaphor, you may just take them to the next point in their salvation journey.

## Isaiah 12:3

*With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*

We have to understand that those who don't know Christ are living in the wilderness, they don't have water. They are walking around on a path that will eventually lead to death.

As Christians we have the good news that Christ is the water in the dry land. No-one who comes to him will thirst again. The Holy Spirit empowerment in our life is living water that brings life in the desert.

We need to bring this life to everyone we meet. Over the next three weeks we are going to talk about bringing life in the wilderness for our neighbours, family, friends and work colleagues.

They are thirsty and we have the answer.

## Week 2: Life Through Witnessing: Sharing Christ with Others

**Date:** Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**Key Point of this week:** Sharing the Living water of Christ through relationship.

**Key Scriptures:** John 4:1-30 (Samaritan Woman at the well) and John 7:37

### Historical Context, Commentary + supporting references:

John 4 commentary: Jesus uses the phrase *living water* in two instances in the Bible. The first is in [John 4](#). Jesus and his disciples had traveled into Samaria. Jesus was tired and sat [at a well](#) while his disciples went into a nearby town to buy food. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus asked her for a drink (verse 7). The Samaritan woman was quite shocked because Jesus was a Jew, and Jews and [Samaritans](#) had a long history of mutual animosity. She naturally asked him why he was speaking to her, since he was Jewish.

Jesus ignored the question and went right to the point: “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water” ([John 4:10](#)). Notice that he does not say that he *is* the living water, but that he would give living water to her. It would be his gift to her, and when she received it, she would never thirst again. Of course, Jesus was speaking of a spiritual truth, whereas the woman’s thoughts were fixed on physical water, the type that could only be procured with a bucket down a well. But, as the conversation progressed, the woman began to understand what Jesus was saying to her about the living water. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/living-water.html>)

### Supporting points:

#### 1. Jesus, the source of living water

Jesus used this metaphor when He spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well:

##### John 4:14

*“Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*

Jesus likened the gift of his Spirit to living water.

##### John 7:37-39

*“<sup>37</sup> On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>39</sup> By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him*

*were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”*

Witnessing is about quenching the thirst for God in people’s lives. It is about having eyes of opportunity, to find the “cracks in the door.” When someone says, I’m lonely, or my family is sick, maximize that moment and provide them with the good news that Jesus is to that situation. The goal is to see a need fill a need, hear the thirst and offer them living water.

## **Revelation 21:6**

*And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.*

## **Revelation 22:17**

*The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.*

## **2. See a need, fill a need (practical steps on witnessing)**

Sharing Christ is not about a three-point sermon, it is about sharing the good news of your testimony and what Christ has done in your life.

### **1 Peter 3:15**

*But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,*

So how do we do this, how do we bring the living water of Christ to a thirsty people.

#### **a. Be open and ready when you hear the need/thirst.**

Here are some sentences that tell us this person is thirsty, and that there is a need that Jesus can meet:

My family is sick.

I’m battling with relationship challenges.

I’m new to town – transition/change.

I’ve changed schools.

#### **b. Start with connection.**

*I remember when my family was sick, you know what really helped me...*

This is a great way to come with respect and on common ground. Meet them where they are.. *I remember transitioning in my work career, you know what really helped me..* Like Peter says, come with the hope you have with gentleness and respect.

#### **c. Share your testimony with boldness.**

Then share your testimony. Your testimony is powerful, so be bold in what God has done in your life.

**Say things like:**

*This scripture helped me..*

*I had someone pray for me and I got healed.*

Witnessing to others is about hearing the thirst in their lives and sharing your testimony of what Christ has done in your life. When Jesus witnessed to the woman at the well, he heard her need and met it with living water. The amazing thing about the story of the Samaritan woman is when Jesus met her thirst, she went and met the thirst of her community. This is exactly what we see in [John 4](#), as the Samaritan woman, “leaving her water jar, . . . went back to the town” and told everyone about Jesus the Messiah (verse 28).

**More scriptures on witnessing:**

**Matthew 5:16**

*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

**Romans 1:16**

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

**Matthew 28:18-20**

*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

**Acts 1:8**

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

**Mark 16:15**

*And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.”*

## Connect Questions

9<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Life Through Witnessing: Sharing Christ with Others

### Connect Group Discussion Questions:

**GATHER:** (ensure that these questions center around community)

- The woman at the well had “gotten herself into the mess”. What helps us to be more like Jesus in that situation = not judging or issuing instructions, just giving an invitation.
- Encourage each other with stories of some of the unusual “divine appointments” you’ve encountered, which have moved people closer to God?

**GROW:** (ensure that these questions prompt discussion on personal growth and maturity)

- Is there anything that holds you back from talking about Jesus with strangers? What about with people that you know? Perhaps it’s a fear of what they’ll think of you or maybe feeling inadequate. What could be your next step?
- Can you list a few of the different times Jesus or a particular verse has helped you with a life problem? What is your unique testimony of the difference He makes?

**GO:** (ensure that these questions prompt discussion on going and spreading the good news)

- What are some of the opportunities you have to talk to people without being in a rush? Maybe you fly for business or go to the same café every day. Are you able to allow yourself more time to talk? Do you pray for opportunities to talk about Jesus?
- The burden of convincing them does not fall on us, nor are they rejecting us but Christ. How does it help to know that we are just handing out invitations?

### Connect Group Resources:

(List any resources books or videos that you would feel would benefit our connect group leaders when leading discussion around the series)

J. John at Presence Conference 2014

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WibKBDJsMBE&ab\\_channel=J.John](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WibKBDJsMBE&ab_channel=J.John)

<https://thefour.au/> A gospel presentation online (this is the Australian version).



## Week 3: Life Through Prayer: Praying For Others

Date: Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Key Point: Praying with the rivers of living water of the Spirit for others

Key Scriptures: Isaiah 44:3 and Romans 8:26-28

### Supporting points:

The Spirit of God is the living water that is poured out on a thirsty land, producing streams on the dry ground. As believers, we are called to be filled with the Holy Spirit and let the rivers of living water bubble from within us in prayer for others.

#### 1. The living water is the holy spirit

##### Isaiah 44:3

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.

The living water is the Holy Spirit. Jesus extended the offer to everyone (“anyone” in [John 7:37](#) and “whoever” in verse 38). The requirement for salvation was faith in Christ (verses 38 and 39). The result of salvation would be the gift of the Holy Spirit (verse 39), likened unto “**rivers of living water**” (verse 38). Jesus repeats the promise of the Spirit to his disciples in [John 16:7–15](#).

The picture of the Spirit as “living water” leads us to the following conclusions:

- The Spirit gives life.  
Just as water refreshes and revitalizes a thirsty person, so the Spirit gives life to the believer, enabling God to produce fruit in his or her life. Just as, in Moses’ time, the water in the desert kept the Israelites alive, so the Spirit enlivens the followers of Christ (and, according to [1 Corinthians 10:4](#), the rock providing the water was a picture of Christ).
- The Spirit is active.  
He is living water, as opposed to still, standing, or stagnant water. He is an artesian well, “a spring of water welling up to eternal life,” in [John 4:14](#). He is a flowing river of water in [John 7:38](#).

#### 2. We are called to be a channel for the spirit’s work through prayer

Believers are channels for the Spirit’s work.

At the well in Samaria, Jesus said the water would be “in them” to well up and overflow ([John 4:14](#)). During the Feast of Booths, Jesus said the water would “flow from within them” ([John 7:38](#)). The Spirit gives gifts, and the believer “shall receive spiritual blessings, or

communications of divine grace, in so great an abundance, that he shall not only be refreshed and comforted himself but shall be instrumental in refreshing and comforting others” (Benson, J., *Benson Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, 1857).

## **Isaiah 44:3**

*Long ago, God told His people, Israel, not to fear, giving them this promise:*

*“For I will pour water on the thirsty land,  
and streams on the dry ground;  
I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring,  
and my blessing on your descendants”*

The Spirit, whom the Father likens unto water, was indeed poured out on all of those who put their faith in the Son. It’s just one of the many promises of God that are “yes” and “amen” in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20).

We should be allowing the living water of the Holy Spirit to bubble through us as we pray for others. We are called to pray in the power of the Spirit (Rom 8:26), on all occasions (Eph 6:18)

## **Romans 8:26-28**

*<sup>26</sup> In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God. <sup>28</sup> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who<sup>[a]</sup> have been called according to his purpose.*

## **Ephesians 6:18**

*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.*

## **Scriptures on Praying for Others:**

### **Colossians 1:9**

*For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,*

### **1 Timothy 2:1-4**

*<sup>1</sup> I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— <sup>2</sup> for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. <sup>3</sup> This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, <sup>4</sup> who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

## Week 4: Life Through Generosity

Date: Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2024

**Key Point:** Giving generously to provide help to others.

**Key Scriptures:** Proverbs 11:25, Jeremiah 2:13 and Ezekiel 47:6-12

**Supporting points:**

### Proverbs 11:25

*A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.*

### Refreshing others with generosity

We are called as people of God to take the blessing that God gives us and use it to refresh others. We are called to be like a river that allows the blessing of God to flow through us to the nations. The sin of Israel is that they stopped the blessing of God at themselves. They stopped being 'blessed to be a blessing' and became broken cisterns that contained the water of God for themselves, or a marsh that let the water of the river of God to go stale. Let's look at these two images to see what we can learn about living a life of generosity that allows the river of God's blessing to flow through us.

#### 1. A fountain of life not a broken cistern

### Jeremiah 2:13

*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.*

This is an incredible description of two ways to live in your life, we are looking at it today in relation to your generosity to others. Jeremiah presents the life that is a fountain of living water or the life that is a cistern and a broken one at that.

**A fountain of living water** refers to a source of fresh, flowing water. Such a source was always available and did not dry up during months in which there was no rain. A deep well, which provided water from an underground river, was an example. A cistern, on the other hand, was a manmade object used to store rainwater. They were needed in cases when a fountain of living water was not available. The problem with a cistern is that the water is not fresh. In addition, cisterns would break, and the stored water would flow out and be lost. Such cisterns were completely useless.

We are called to be a well-watered garden, spring of water whose waters do not fail.

## Isaiah 58:11

*And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.*

We are called to be a spring of water that do not fail. That provide help and life to all around us no matter if the world is in drought or desert.

## 2. A river not a marsh

The Bible talks about the river of God in Ezekiel 47, this time bringing fresh water to the salty marsh lands. We are called to take the living water and blessing of God in our lives and let it flow, don't hold it to ourselves like the warning in Ezekiel. Don't contain the living water of God's blessing and let it become a stinky marsh. Let it flow!

## Ezekiel 47:6-12

*Then he led me back to the bank of the river. <sup>7</sup> When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. <sup>8</sup> He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah,<sup>(a)</sup> where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. <sup>9</sup> Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so, where the river flows everything will live. <sup>10</sup> Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea. <sup>11</sup> But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. <sup>12</sup> Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing."*

The blessing and fruit of your lives is for you and your family, but that is not all. We are called to be 'blessed to be a blessing'; to let the river of God's blessings flow through us to the community around us and beyond. Everything in God's kingdom is for us and to go through us.

## Psalms 41:1-3

*Blessed are those who have regard for the weak;  
the Lord delivers them in times of trouble.  
<sup>2</sup> The Lord protects and preserves them—  
they are counted among the blessed in the land—  
he does not give them over to the desire of their foes.  
<sup>3</sup> The Lord sustains them on their sickbed  
and restores them from their bed of illness.*

## Proverbs 21:13

*Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor  
will also cry out and not be answered.*

## More Scriptures on Blessing others:

2 Corinthians 1:4, 2 Corinthians 9:8-11, Genesis 12:2

Notes sourced from:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/streams-in-the-desert.html>

<https://faithalone.org/blog/fountain-of-living-waters-jeremiah-213/>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/living-water.html>

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/what-does-the-bible-say-about-streams-in-the-desert.html>

## Connect Questions

23<sup>rd</sup> June 2024

Life Through Generosity

### Connect Group Discussion Questions:

**GATHER:** (ensure that these questions center around community)

- How do we access the living water within us, compared to pouring things into a cistern (a rainwater tank)?
- Are there members of your group who are having a rough time. How can you encourage them and help them not to stagnate? (“If you’re going through a valley, don’t stop!”)
- What are some ways we can be like a spring of water for others? Discuss as a group.

**GROW:** (ensure that these questions prompt discussion on personal growth and maturity)

- We may not all have the resources to buy people lunch, but consider how generous God has been with you and how you might use that as a testimony.
- Are you feeling a bit “swampy”? What could be your next step?

**GO:** (ensure that these questions prompt discussion on going and spreading the good news)

- Maybe you give to a charity, to reach those you cannot physically reach yourself. Do you pray for the people they help to find God? Remember to pray over your gifts as they go out into the world.
- What is your next step in sharing life with others? Consider the five love languages (words of affirmation, quality time, physical touch, acts of service & gifts) and how they can help us make people feel loved - by us and by God. Perhaps there’s someone God has placed on your heart to reach out to.