



THE GARDEN

9 WEEK BIBLE STUDY

embrace
PASTOR SHANNON MAROCO

And he (she) will be like a tree
firmly planted [and fed] by
streams of water, which
yields its fruit in its season;
its leaf does not wither;
and in whatever (s)he does,
(s)he prospers
[and comes to maturity].

PSALM 1:3 (AMP)

The Water Source

Big Idea

From the very beginning, there was water. “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Genesis 1:1-2).

Water is the centerpiece of life. The Garden of Eden, which was the first backdrop to human civilization, was abundantly full of all manner of life. All the wild animals, all the birds in the sky, and all kinds of trees and vegetation—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food (Genesis 2:19, 9) lived and thrived in the garden. The secret to the richness and beauty of the Garden of Eden was its water source. “A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters” (Genesis 2:10). Without this river, Eden would have been a barren, colorless, dried-up landscape. Similarly, if we lack true living water, which is Jesus, we too will be a barren place.

By divine design, water is the most crucial resource for all life on earth. Modern technology makes accessing water effortlessly, and we seldom consider its source; we simply turn on the tap and fill our cups. How easily we take this essential element for granted.

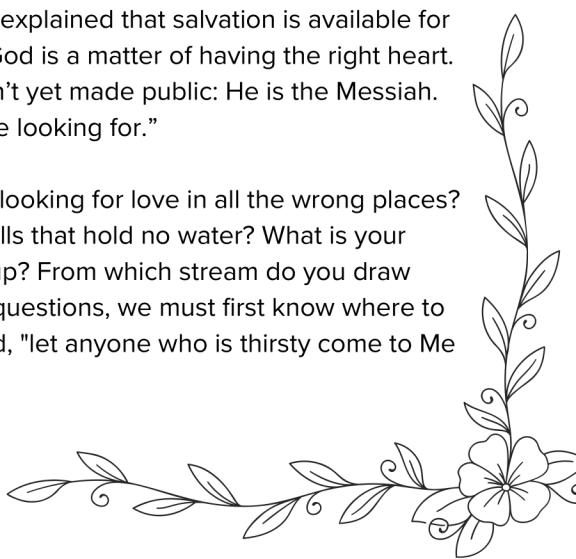
Think about the Nile River, which runs through the Sahara Desert in northeastern Africa. It is the longest river in the world and it flows through the earth's largest, driest desert. When seen from space, the river looks like a large crack in a clay pot. The banks of the Nile are green and full of life, a striking contrast to the surrounding desert. The land surrounding the water source is abundant and fertile. Apart from the water, the cruel heat of the desert makes all life a struggle. But the Nile is living proof that if there is enough water, the desert will bloom.

The Israelites understood the importance of water, from the times of wandering in the desert, where God quenched their thirst by providing water from a rock to each tribe digging wells for their livelihood in the promised land. In Jeremiah 2:13, God revealed Himself as the fountain of living waters. He condemned the Israelites for forsaking Him as their water source by trying to dig their own wells, which hold no water. How often have we also tried to dig our own wells of independence and self-sufficiency instead of running to God?

Similarly, we see this same scenario playing out in the New Testament when Jesus revealed Himself to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well. The secret He explained to her there is that our lives must be established in Jesus, our source of living water.

That unnamed Samaritan woman had been trying to dig her own wells for a long time but had found no water. We find her story in John 4:1-30. For years, and for whatever reasons, she had sought the favor and comfort of man after man, digging herself deeper and deeper into sin each time. She went to Jacob's well in the heat of midday in shame, and because she was a social outcast, her hope for love and acceptance was completely dried up. Jesus defied social norms (men didn't speak to women) and racial prejudice (Jews wouldn't have associated with Samaritans) by initiating the conversation with her that afternoon. She tried to blow Him off, but when He offered to give her a drink instead, she began to ask Him questions. He revealed to her that not only did He have what she needed, but He knew everything about her. He exposed her secrets and addressed her emptiness by promising to fill her continually with living water. He explained that salvation is available for all people and that worshiping God is a matter of having the right heart. Then He declared what He hadn't yet made public: He is the Messiah. He told her, "I am the One you're looking for."

Have we been like that woman, looking for love in all the wrong places? Or like the Israelites, digging wells that hold no water? What is your source of water? What fills you up? From which stream do you draw nourishment? To answer these questions, we must first know where to find the water source. Jesus said, "let anyone who is thirsty come to Me and drink.



Whoever believes in Me, as scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them" (John 7:37-38). If we seek Him, we will find Him; and seek Him we must, for only He can quench our thirst. When we draw from the "well of life," we first receive our salvation and infilling of the Holy Spirit, then we overflow and pour out upon others and become waterways of His glory and bring forth revival. And when we drink the water He gives, we will never be thirsty again.

The psalmist explains that water is critical to our spiritual needs as well. We need to be firmly planted near the streams of water so that the branches of our life don't wither (Psalm 1:3). If we do this, we will bear fruit in season and prosper in all we do. Our physical bodies will die without water, and so too will our spirit. Yet Jesus says that if we drink of the water He gives us, we will never thirst again, and it will become a spring of water welling up within us to eternal life (John 4:14).

Finally, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal anything that might be blocking or slowing the flow of living water in our lives. Proverbs 28:13 warns that if we conceal our sins, we will not prosper. Perhaps we're hiding a secret sin or harboring bitterness or prejudice in our hearts that could taint the water. We need to confess these things as the Holy Spirit reveals them to free up the flow of water from its source. Imagine the widespread drought and devastation that would happen if the Nile was blocked or its headwaters were contaminated. Every settlement along the river would be destroyed, crops would be lost, and it would be a struggle to survive. We must look for blockages in our life that would hinder living water flow or hidden sins that would contaminate and defile it at its source.

Just as we desperately desire a cold refreshing drink of water on a hot summer day, may we also be desperate and thirst after God in ways we never have before. May we be planted by the streams of living water, and be refreshed by His presence. Like it says in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

Discussion

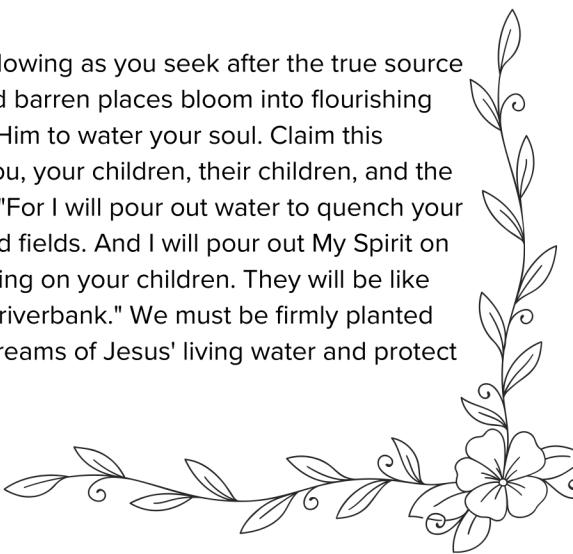
A well-watered garden is a flourishing garden. If you're not flourishing or seeing growth, ask the Holy Spirit why. Are you firmly planted by the streams of living water? What is your water source?

How do you cultivate a hunger and thirst for His presence?

What blockages do you have that hinder the flow of His living water in your life?

Takeaway

Today, you can be filled to overflowing as you seek after the true source of life, Jesus! Watch your dry and barren places bloom into flourishing gardens of beauty as you invite Him to water your soul. Claim this promise from Isaiah 44:3-4 for you, your children, their children, and the generations that will follow you: "For I will pour out water to quench your thirst and to irrigate your parched fields. And I will pour out My Spirit on your descendants, and my blessing on your children. They will be like watered grass, like willows on a riverbank." We must be firmly planted and deeply rooted beside the streams of Jesus' living water and protect the water source at all costs.



Dear Thirsty One,

Drink. Let me refresh you with the deep spring waters from my heart of love for you. Take root. Dig deep to the water source that never runs dry. Stay close to My living water. Draw from it. Thirst hard after it. It will saturate your dry and weary soul and cause every thirst of your spirit to be satisfied. I will water you.