

Samaritan Women

John 4:1-42

Lesson Highlights: There are so many stories that want to help us see Jesus as a life-giver, including this one where water is life. But Jesus doesn't just say "I'm water" to a crowd, or his disciples. He says it to a supremely unlikely conversation partner: a Samaritan woman with a hard story. It's not just like Jesus gives life, it's that life is for anyone and everyone.

STORY :

Once Jesus was traveling when he went through Samaria. Samaria was a region by Israel, but even though they were close to each other, the people were not close. They had different understandings of what God had done and how best to follow God, but those differences had become fights, had become a divide and had become 'we are enemies.'

But Jesus stopped in Samaria even so. He was hot, tired, and thirsty, and so he went to the well.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. You gotta know that this is not what anyone would expect Jesus to do. But Jesus asked her. And they got to talking, about water, about their shared stories of their ancestors, about who Jesus was because he said this weird thing, "I can give you living water." Did he mean literal water? No, this was a metaphor for who Jesus was.

Pause and ask: What might that mean? How is Jesus like water?

He told her, "Everyone who drinks this water gets thirsty again. I have water to give that makes it so you're never thirsty. It's water that keeps flowing forever, giving life. Of course the woman wanted this special water, so she said to him, "Give me this water, so I won't be thirsty again and I won't have to keep coming back here to the well."

Pause and ask: What do you think Jesus said next?

Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' (Is that what you guessed he'd say?) I don't know if it's what the woman guessed either, but now she was in a tough spot, because she had no husband, and told Jesus so, to which Jesus said, 'You

are right. In fact, you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband.'

Pause and ask: What does this mean about this woman, then?

She's a Samaritan, a woman, and a person people thought poorly of. Like three strikes in a baseball game. But given the way her culture worked at the time, she's also a victim, someone with limited power in her situation. There's so much she cannot control or change. But maybe this water, or this man, can?

When Jesus' disciples came and found him, they could hardly believe their eyes. Jesus, talking one on one to a Samaritan woman? But whatever they thought or felt, they kept their mouths shut and watched as she left her jar right there at the well and went back to the city.

'Come and see!' she told everyone she passed, "At the well there's a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?'

Can he? Several people believed her, and they asked Jesus to stay in town a while longer. For two more days, Jesus was with them, and that was a very important part of how people came to realize that the things Jesus was saying and doing weren't just for Israel, but for everyone. Even...maybe especially?... the unlikely people.

WONDER QUESTIONS :

1. I wonder if Jesus picked this woman for any special reason?
2. I wonder what it's like to "not be thirsty" in the way Jesus means?
3. I wonder how the disciples felt or thought about Jesus' choices to talk with her and then stay in a Samaritan town?

ACTIVITY :

GAME

Supplies: 1 clear glass, a pitcher of water, and a baking sheet with a rim.

Set up: Place the glass on the baking sheet.

Take turns pouring water from the pitcher into the glass. You can pour as much or as little in as you'd like. But! The water has to stay IN the glass. Whoever's pour takes the water over the edge is out for the round, and the glass gets emptied back into the pitcher again. Play as many rounds as you'd like.

CRAFT

1. “Living Water” Cup Craft

Connection: Jesus talks about living water that satisfies deeper needs, not just thirst.

Instructions: Kids decorate a simple paper or plastic cup to represent the well. Inside, they place a blue paper “water” insert with words or drawings that show what helps them feel full on the inside.

They draw or choose pictures for things like kindness, friendship, love, rest, forgiveness, and God’s presence.

Materials:

- Paper or plastic cups
- Blue paper or tissue
- Markers or crayons

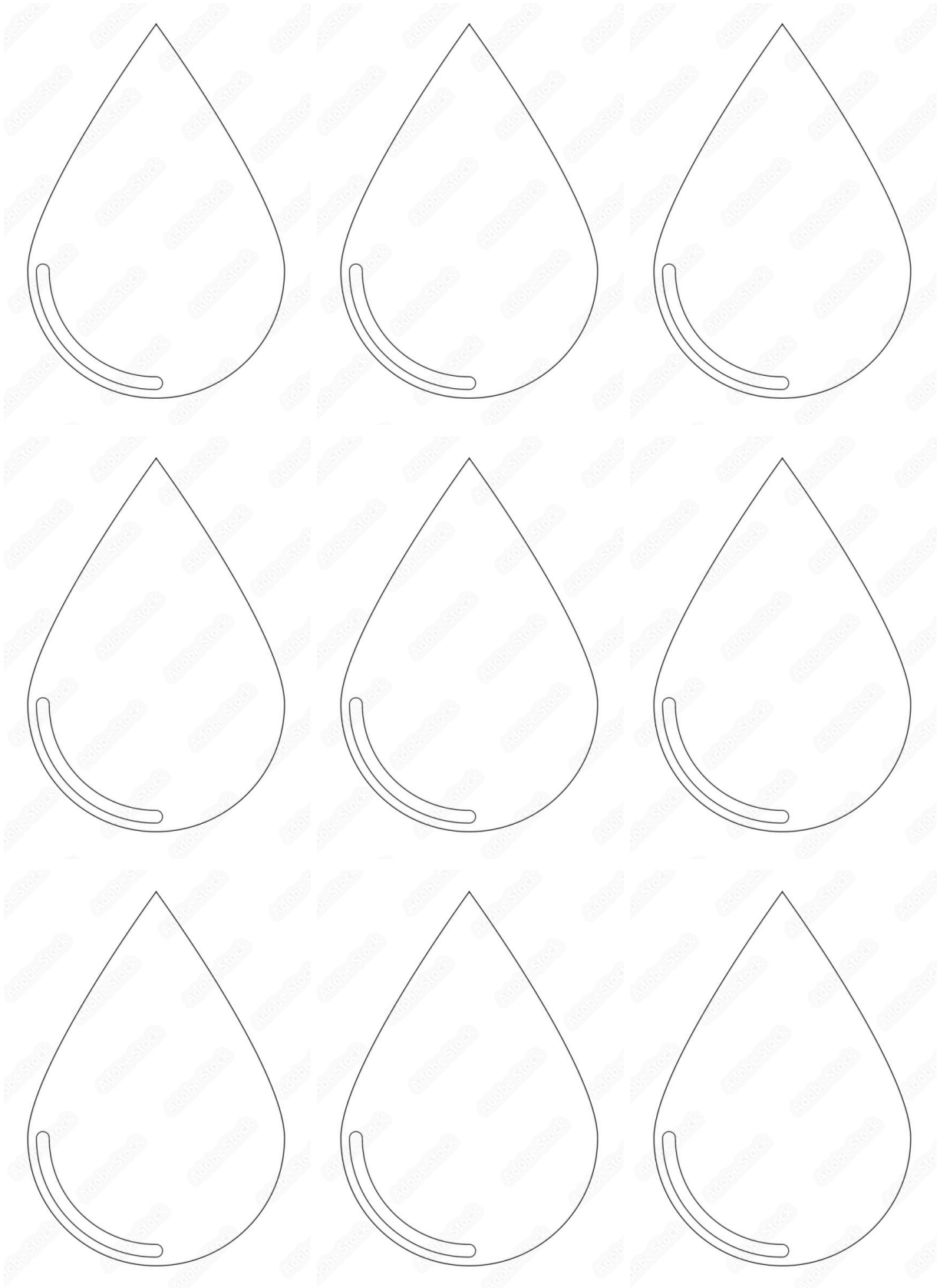
2. “Different but Welcome” Water Drops

Connection: Different people come together and belong in God’s story, but everyone belongs.

Instructions: Kids cut out water drops. Each drop represents a person who might feel left out or different. All the drops get glued into one shared well or river.

Materials:

1. Blue paper, or print the water drop images below
2. Markers
3. Large paper for the well or river
4. Glue



PRAYER:

Living water was a way of describing water that kept flowing, like from a spring or strong river. That ongoing flow meant the water was always there, and also that it was safer for people.

If Jesus is living water, one thing that means is that he's always there.

Let's make a list: where do you go in a typical week?

Collect answers, then say: All these places—Jesus is there.

Ok, one more list: what are some feelings you experience in a typical week? Maybe they last a long time, or just a short while, but what comes up? (i.e. happy, bored, scared, nervous, playful, sad.) Collect answers, then say: All these feelings—and more—Jesus is there.

- Is that easy or hard for you to remember? Why?
- Does it make any difference to remember Jesus was always there?

Based on what's shared, offer a short prayer. If you need a jumping off point, try:

God, you are always there, and that means we are not alone where we go and we are not alone with our feelings. Help us remember that. We'd like to experience the life you say we can have with you—full of joy and peace and love. Amen.