

Introduction to Water in the Bible Small Group Study Fall 2023

Hello St. Philip's Small Group Members,

Starting in September 2023 we'll be doing several sessions on the use of Water in the Bible. Now, at first glance you might be wanting to say to me, "Respectfully, Pastor Patrick that is THE MOST BORING TOPIC OF ALL TIME. Water?? Really??? Water???? Could you have done anything more bland and boring, Pastor Patrick?" And on its face, you would be correct, right? Water . . . is there anything more ubiquitous than water. It is what you order in a restaurant when you don't want to shell out any money for drinks. It is what comes out of our faucets that we feel like we don't even pay for it. It has no taste (if it does, contact your water companyFAST!!!) It has no color. And yet . . . you and I both know that most of our planet is made up of water and most of our bodies are made up of water. So, there must be something special about it right? We know that it is critical for all of life to exist.

And if that is true in the physical world, it is true in the spiritual world as well – at least in Judaism and Christianity. In fact, it is a critical thing that exists throughout scripture. In fact, it is mentioned 722 times in scripture . . . so it is not insignificant at all!!! Think about it . . . some of the biggest events in scripture are centered around water:

- In Genesis at the very beginning, before a single thing was created God's spirit hovered over the waters - I mean consider that for a moment . . . before God said let there be light, there was water. Do you know the implication of that??? Oh, I'm not going to give that away just yet!
- Think about the Exodus from Egypt . . . to get out of Egypt, what does Moses lead the people through? WATER!! The red sea is divided!! Do you see the connection to Genesis? I'll help you do that this year.
- When the people finally come into the promised land what do they need to pass through? WATER!!
- When Jesus is baptized . . . WATER!
- Woman at the well . . . retrieving what? WATER!

And it makes sense, doesn't it? Because in the Middle East where Jesus lived and ministered is so very hot and in places it is so very dry. Water is EVERYTHING for them. It is life, it is refreshment, it cleans, it is a barrier, it is often unknown and scary. And all that plays out in scripture as much as it does in our lives. In fact, to understand the role of Water in the bible is to understand what God is doing with us and what God hopes for us. Remember, we only have two sacraments in the protestant church and one of them uses as its primary sign of God's grace . . . wait for it . . . WATER! Guess what, there is something very special in our faith about water and this study will get at just that.

In this study we'll be studying the various ways that water is used to reveal God's grace and love for us in the world. In our six sessions we'll study:

- September 17 - Water and Creation
- September 24 – No Small Groups – Calling of New Associate Pastor
- October 1 - Water and Old Testament Salvation
- October 8 - Water as Signs of Eternal Life
- October 15 - Water and the Sea (Fear and Grace)
- October 22 - Water and New Testament Salvation

I truly hope you enjoy these six sessions on Water and God's grace. Water features in so much of what we do as people of faith and how we understand faith and forgiveness, life and salvation, healing and rescue, creation and redemption.

My hope is that you never look at a rain shower the same way . . . that you never take for granted that glass of cold water again . . . that you never look at a shower as just a shower. For the water we are given is so much more than that.

Enjoy this study . . . always feel free to let me know if you have questions or thoughts along the way.

Blessings and Peace,
Pastor Patrick Downes
September 2023