

Bible Study: Water and the Bible

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The Bible is full of stories and references to water. The material below can be augmented by an examination of a concordance or a Bible Dictionary. You will find references under *washing*, *rain*, *water works*, *river*, *drink*, and so on. Remember that the biblical references to water come from the contexts of various cultures, climates, and technologies.

1) Share your actual lived experiences with water – personal, family, communal.

Do any of these actual lived experiences relate - directly or indirectly - with the following biblical passages?

- Exodus 17:1 “no water for the people to drink”
- Psalm 23:2..... “beside still waters”
- Psalm 137:1..... “by the rivers of Babylon”
- Mark 4:36–41 “then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm”
- John 19:28–30..... “I am thirsty”
- Revelation 7:16–17 “springs of water of life”

Can you think of other biblical references that might relate to your personal experiences? Brainstorm all the biblical references to water that you can think of.

2) What symbolic significance does water have for you?

Do any of these biblical references relate – directly or indirectly – with your personal symbolism?

- Psalm 1:3..... “like trees planted by streams of water”
- Jeremiah 2:13 “cracked cisterns... can hold no water”
- John 4:7–42..... “a Samaritan woman came to draw water”

Can you think of other biblical references that might relate to the symbolic significance water has for you?

3) Consider some of the specific symbolic realities of water in the Bible.

How do these images speak to you?

- Water – cleanliness Leviticus 15: 1 - 15
- Water – healing Mark 8: 23
- Water – blessing..... Deuteronomy 11: 13, 14, Hebrews 6: 7
- Water – welcome and
hospitality:..... Matthew 10: 42
- Water – value 1 Chronicles 11: 15 - 19
- Water – initiation Mark 1: 9 - 13
- Water – repentance..... Acts 22: 16
- Water – liberation Exodus 14
- Water – destruction Joshua 24: 6
- Water – fear..... Psalm 107:23-32; Matthew 8:23-27
- Water – refreshment..... Isaiah 49:10; Revelation 21:6
- Water – hope Revelation 22:1-5
- Water – God..... Jeremiah 2:13; Psalm 36:8-9; Revelation 4:1-6
- Water – fruitfulness..... 1 Corinthians 3: 6 - 8
- Water – Holy Spirit John 7: 37 - 39
- Water – wise planning Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- Water – ministry..... 1 Corinthians 3: 5 - 9
- Water – grandeur..... Job 38; Psalm 104
(especially verses 3, 6, 10-11, 25-26)

Do your own investigation to find out how else water figures symbolically in the Bible.

This bible study is an excerpt from the United Church of Canada's publication: "Waters of Life: Issues, Ethics and Actions: Five Study Sessions for Faith Communities" by David Hallman.

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