

The Water of Life



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 2:10, Isa. 40:31, Matt. 9:2–7, John 4:1–26, 9:1–11, Rom. 6:1–6.*

Memory Text: “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (*John 4:14*).

It is amazing how our senses can deceive us. The earth is spinning on its axis at about a thousand miles per hour, while careening around the sun at about 18 miles per second. And yet, despite all this motion, it feels to us perfectly immobile. Meanwhile, things like tables, chairs, rocks, and people (matter, basically)—however solid they appear to our senses—are mostly empty space. At any given moment, billions of subatomic particles from the sun are burrowing through our bodies, and yet we do not feel, see, or hear any of them. And, despite all outward appearances, our human bodies are made mostly of—water. Water? Yes, we are truly aquatic beings, in the sense that our bodies are made up of about 60 percent water. Our brains, believe it or not, are about 85 percent water. Even our hard bones are about 10 to 15 percent water.

Full of wonder and mystery, water is foundational to all physical life. Without it, we could not exist. This week we will take a look at both the spiritual and physical aspects of this truly essential liquid.

The Week at a Glance: God is the Source of physical and spiritual water, which is essential for life.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 24.*

The Living Water

Read John 4:1–26. What are the different ways water is used in this story? What do the different kind of waters mean? What message is there from this story for us today?

Jesus met a woman in Samaria who had come to draw water at Jacob's well. He asked for a drink. In the ensuing conversation, He told her that He could give her water that would take away her thirst forever and referred to Himself as the "Living Water." Such a concept implies His ability to satisfy the need for peace, joy, freedom from guilt, forgiveness, and a sense of oneness with God. Christians find such a solution in Jesus Christ. It is wonderful that He has offered to all of us an opportunity to come and unite with Him in service. His offer is still valid today, for He never changes. Many have found their restlessness, insecurities, and sense of futility transformed as they partake of His compassion, love, and acceptance.

God has promised us an abundance of spiritual water, as long as we seek Him. In Revelation 22:17, He invites us all to "take the water of life freely." We can experience an abundance of the Holy Spirit in our lives as long as we are close to Jesus Christ, the Fountain of Life. In His love, He invites everyone to drink freely of the Water of Life (*John 4:13, 14*). His invitation to receive this Living Water forever is extended to all of us. As God provided the children of Israel water from the rock, so Jesus is this Water of Life (*1 Cor. 10:1–4*) to us today.

No matter who we are, no matter what our past has been, no matter what our mistakes are, and even no matter what our present situation is, the offer of this Living Water is for us. We are told to drink freely of it. It's offered to us through the grace of Christ.

No question, Jesus is Living Water for all of us. What has your own experience with this water been? How have you known for yourself the benefits and promises found in it? Are you taking of it freely, or are you holding yourself somewhat back? If the latter, ask yourself why. Whatever immediate gains you might think you are getting from holding back, how could they possibly compare to promises offered us in Jesus?

The Waters of Baptism

Read Acts 8:35–39. Here Philip preached the Scripture to the eunuch, telling him the good news of Jesus. The eunuch accepted Jesus Christ as the Son of God. When they saw water, he asked Philip, “What hinders me to be baptized?” He then was baptized by Philip, and he went on rejoicing.

There is no miracle in the water itself; it is a symbol of cleansing. It is the gift of the Spirit that transforms the life. Baptism is an outward proclamation of the acceptance of Jesus. Read John 3:5–8. Jesus told Nicodemus that “ ‘unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’ ” (*NKJV*).

What takes place when someone has been baptized by immersion (*Rom. 6:1–6*)?

A genuine conversion symbolized in baptism by immersion signifies the cleansing of one’s life. The New Testament mentions baptism by immersion many times, emphasizing the importance of this rite in our Christian experience.

“ ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’ ” (*Acts 2:38, NIV*).

When we are saved, we are spiritually baptized into Christ (*Gal. 3:26, 27*) and received into His body, the church (*1 Cor. 12:13*). In biblical symbolism, baptism by water represents inner cleansing (*Eph. 5:25, 26*) and spiritual rebirth (*John 3:5*), both of which are central themes of salvation.

Many people take baptism for granted, but for many in the world, the act requires immense courage. In a few countries, baptism can lead to isolation from spouse, family, and community and to imprisonment or even to death.

Among Jesus’ last recorded words on earth were these: “ ‘Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned’ ” (*Mark 16:16, NIV*). Think about that for a moment. Jesus’ very last call is to believe in Him, which includes a call to be baptized. If He puts it in that category, we cannot overlook its significance.

Read again Romans 6:1–6. How have you experienced the reality of Paul’s words there? How has your “newness of life” in Christ changed you? What have you been spared from? In what areas do you still need more change? How can you better cooperate with the Lord, who offers to wash away your sins?

The Uses of Water

Genesis 2:10 reveals that in the Edenic earth, even before sin, water was available for God's creatures. What's implied in that fact?

As creatures, we all need air, water, and food to preserve our existence (*Gen. 1:29*). In the description of Eden, aside from the presence of a beautiful garden, there was also a river that gave rise to four other rivers, Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates. God provided water to preserve the lives of His creatures.

As God's creatures, we need water in order to survive. In fact, every body cell, tissue, and organ needs water to function. Water helps to regulate body temperature, transports nutrients and oxygen to the cells, removes waste, prevents constipation, moistens tissues, cushions joints, and keeps blood flowing throughout the body. We need to drink more water than our thirst demands. Many liquids, such as water, milk, and fruit and vegetable juices, contribute to hydration; however, alcohol and caffeinated beverages may paradoxically increase fluid loss, which may be harmful.

Pure water is superior to many other drinks. Start your day with one or two glasses of water and continue drinking water between meals to make sure you are well hydrated.

Water has other healthful functions, as well. Hand washing may reduce transmission of many infectious agents from person to person. A large percentage of infectious disease would be eliminated by hand washing, especially before eating. Daily bathing removes accumulated dirt, which can lead to disease, as well.

Read Leviticus 11:40; 13:6, 34, 53, 54; 15:1–13. What point comes through here?

A fair amount of scholarly debate exists regarding the purpose behind these cleansing rituals in the Old Testament. Many argue that these are purely ritual, with no health aspect involved at all. And though in some cases that point seems more obvious than in others (such as when the priests had to wash their hands and feet before going into the tabernacle [*see Exod. 30:20, 21*]), with what we know today about germs and cleanliness, the Lord could have instituted these things for health purposes as well, even if the Israelites themselves had no idea of germ theory and the like.

Whatever the facts are, today we know that using water to keep ourselves clean gives us wonderful health benefits.

The Power of Water

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (*Isa. 40:31*).

Meditate upon this text. What promises can you take from it for yourself? How can you apply it to yourself?

An historic experiment conducted by Dr. Pitts at Harvard University had athletes—walking on a treadmill at three and a half miles per hour in a hot environment—consume as much water as they lost in their sweat. At the end of the experiment, the athletes felt as if they could continue walking—seven hours later!—G. C. Pitts, R. E. Johnson, F. C. Conzolzio, “Work in the Heat as Affected by Intake of Water, Salt, and Glucose,” *American Journal of Physiology* 142:253, 1944. The same athletes, deprived of water during the experiment on another day, reached the point of exhaustion within three and half hours.

The message is obvious. Water can give us power and energy, especially when we are doing strenuous work. In contrast, inadequate water intake may result in dehydration, which leads to fatigue and exhaustion much more quickly than if we were drinking enough water. Also, insufficient water can impair our vital functions. Though compensatory mechanisms may come into play, a chronic water deficiency will lead to ill health.

It is possible that adequate fluid intake may limit some symptoms such as headaches, thus decreasing the need for headache medicine, which can cause bad side effects, especially if used often. As most athletes know, during prolonged and arduous exercise, water requirements increase significantly.

Nevertheless, it is possible to drink too much water, resulting in water intoxication. The appropriate amount of water intake depends upon multiple factors, such as temperature, body size, and kidney function, but it should be sufficient to result in pale or clear urine in normal circumstances. In most cases people should make an effort to drink a minimum of six to eight (at least 250 ml per glass) glasses of water per day, more when doing strenuous work in hot environments.

How much water are you drinking each day? Make a conscious choice to keep track of how much water you are drinking, and if you're not getting enough, what's holding you back from doing something so simple and yet that holds so many benefits for you?

Water as Therapy

“He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight” (John 9:11).

Read John 9:1–11, the story of Jesus healing the man blind from birth. What is different about this healing miracle in comparison to some of the others? See for instance Matt. 8:8–13; 9:2–7; Luke 8:46, 47. What possible meaning could be found in this difference, if any?

It is essential that water used both internally and externally be clean. Many people have difficulty accessing pure, clean water. Water taken from contaminated sources requires either chemical treatment or boiling to make it safe for consumption and domestic use.

Water is beneficial externally as well as when used internally. It may be used externally in treatments known as hydrotherapy. The intelligent, careful use of hot and cold wet towels in this process of hydrotherapy may bring relief to a number of conditions. Caution should be employed in cases of poor circulation, persons with diabetes, or neurological illnesses. It could very well be to your advantage to get proper training in the use of hydrotherapy.

“But many have never learned by experience the beneficial effects of the proper use of water, and they are afraid of it. Water treatments are not appreciated as they should be, and to apply them skillfully requires work that many are unwilling to perform. But none should feel excused for ignorance or indifference on this subject. There are many ways in which water can be applied to relieve pain and check disease. All should become intelligent in its use in simple home treatments. Mothers, especially, should know how to care for their families in both health and sickness.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 237.

How conscientious are you with your health habits in general? That is, how could you be taking better care of yourself now? Why wait until your bad habits make you sick? How much better it would be to start following good health principles now and prevent disease instead of going through the hassle of seeking to be cured.

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, “Beverages,” pp. 419, 420, in *Counsels on Diet and Foods*; “Frequent Bathing,” p. 104, in *Counsels on Health*.

“Those who treat the sick should move forward in their important work with strong reliance upon God for His blessing to attend the means which He has graciously provided, and to which He has in mercy called our attention as a people, such as pure air, cleanliness, healthful diet, proper periods of labor and repose, and the use of water.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 303.

“The priest had that morning performed the ceremony which commemorated the smiting of the rock in the wilderness. That rock was a symbol of Him who by His death would cause living streams of salvation to flow to all who are athirst. Christ’s words were the water of life. There in the presence of the assembled multitude He set Himself apart to be smitten, that the water of life might flow to the world. In smiting Christ, Satan thought to destroy the Prince of life; but from the smitten rock there flowed living water. As Jesus thus spoke to the people, their hearts thrilled with a strange awe, and many were ready to exclaim, with the woman of Samaria, ‘Give me this water, that I thirst not.’ John 4:15.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 454.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** In some parts of the world, people can walk into a grocery store and find about forty varieties of bottled water. In other parts of the world, folk have to struggle to find enough clean water to drink. What can we do to help those who don’t have enough water for life’s basic necessities? What is the water situation where you live? How can we improve the stewardship of water in our communities?
- 2** If you have access to a health professional or someone who knows about the topic of water, ask him or her to come to class and spend some time giving more details about the use and benefits of water. Ask, too, about the daily things we can do in order to derive as many health benefits as possible from the use of water.
- 3** Jesus tells us to come and drink freely of the water of life (*Rev. 22:17*). What does that mean? How do we do that? What requirements, if any, are placed on us in order to drink of this water?

The Lost Cow

Subba Rao was worried. His cow had wandered off while grazing, and Subba couldn't find her. Like most people living in the villages near his in Andhra Pradesh, India, Subba Rao relied on his livestock for a livelihood. Now his cow was missing. Subba asked his neighbors if they had seen his cow, but no one had. Subba asked people in the neighboring villages if they had seen his cow, but again no one had seen her. Subba grew more concerned, for the cow was his most valuable possession, and she was about to have a calf.

Subba offered gifts to the idols in his home and prayed that his cow would find her way home. But days passed, and the cow did not return. When three weeks had passed with no word about the cow's whereabouts, his friends encouraged him to forget about her. Surely she was dead by now.

Then someone suggested that Subba Rao ask the Adventist pastor who lived in the village to pray for his cow. Subba saw no harm in trying, so he went to see the pastor and asked, somewhat reluctantly, whether he would pray for Subba's lost cow. The pastor agreed. He called together several church members to meet and pray together for Subba's missing cow. Subba watched and listened to the believers' prayers. The pastor and church members urged Subba to believe in Jesus, the true and living God, the only God who could hear and answer his prayers. Subba nodded thoughtfully.

Three days later Subba's cow returned home. The next day the cow delivered a healthy calf. Subba Rao and his family rejoiced over the lost cow. He told the pastor and the church members of their answered prayers.

The pastor invited Subba and his family to come to church and worship God, who had heard and answered Subba's prayers. Subba accepted, and today he and his family worship in the Adventist church regularly. The family is learning more about the God who cares for them and even cares for their cow. Soon Subba and other members of his family will be baptized into God's family. After all, if Jesus cares about their missing cow, how much more does He care about them?

Our mission offerings help plant churches in villages throughout India and around the world.

SUBBA RAO *shares his faith in his home village of India.*