



faith in action

The Samaritan Woman at the Well

"The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water'" John 4:15

Lesson: Challenges are a natural part of life that can often create real and daunting obstacles to our fully living into God's purpose, as we saw last week in the story of Moses. But, through faith, not even our challenges are too big for God. Judged and ostracized by her community, the nameless Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at a well was an unlikely candidate to be an effective evangelist for Christ. Add to this, she was also a woman and a Samaritan, an enemy of the Jews. But all of these challenges did not stop Jesus from extending God's grace to her, which she in turn invited others to share...and, in the end helped to bring the Living Water to a whole town!

This week, put faith in action by...

Examen Prayer

Developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola more than 400 years ago, the Examen Prayer is a timeless spiritual practice that can help adults, children/youth and families grow into more faithful followers of Jesus through daily "check-ins" with God. The prayer does so by inviting participants to review their day in light of both God's presence and their response to challenges, circumstances and others and concludes by asking God's help and grace for tomorrow.

The Examen is most often used to review all of the "high/lows" of the day. But, in keeping with this week's lesson, you may want to modify it so that it addresses judgment and the assumptions we make about others, how those conjectures influenced actions and how Jesus calls us to respond.

The prayer takes about 15 minutes and is a great time for families to connect with God and each other before going to bed. Flameless candles help to remind children/youth of God's presence during prayer.

Begin by THANKING GOD for being present throughout the day. Next, REVIEW THE DAY, adding prompts and guiding questions as needed. Then, ask WHERE GOD'S PRESENCE WAS FELT (especially in challenges) and WHAT JESUS TELLS US TO DO. Conclude by ASKING GOD TO BE PRESENT TOMORROW AND HELP SEE EVERYTHING/ONE THROUGH JESUS' EYES.

Living Water, Anyone...

The story of the Samaritan woman at the well gives us a glimpse into good old-fashioned evangelism happening in ancient "real-time." But we don't have to be near a well or in church to share the gift of God's Living Water with someone who is thirsty for Divine Love and Grace...especially in the age of COVID-19. So, this week talk to your family about a person (or family) that you think would like a drink of the everlasting water Jesus offers and why not send them a link to next week's online service or Summer Sunday School? You can even help your young disciple write an invitation email (complete with emojis!).





Amazing Grace

God's grace, or "mercy without merit," is amazing indeed! So, why not take some quiet time with your family this week to explore the meaning of God's gift of favor by not only listening to different renditions of the timeless hymn, Amazing Grace, but also to discuss its meaning - and application - in the world today. You may even want to delve into the life story of the song's composer, Reverend John Newton, who went from slave trader to ardent abolitionist after finding God's amazing grace after a near death experience at sea.

A Google search easily provides a host of performances, ranging from Aretha Franklin, Elvis Presley, Carrie Underwood and Destiny's Child to the more traditional versions performed by the Harlem Boys' Choir and Mahalia Jackson. There is even an impromptu version by President Barack Obama at the funeral of Reverend Pinckney, a victim of the Charleston South Carolina church shootings.



Samaritans Today

While there are only about 800 ancestral Samaritans living near the West Bank today, there are countless people who face the same personal challenges as the Samaritan woman at the well...challenges that are far too often based on cultural, religious, ethnic and gender-based bias. This week, why not commit to talking as a family about these symbolic Samaritans in the country and world and how Jesus calls us all to be bearers of Living Water in light of their struggles...and then think of ways to carry God's jug across the dividing line.

Woman at the Well Punch

All it takes is a gallon of blue Hawaiian punch, a two-liter bottle of lemon lime soda, and half a gallon of vanilla ice cream to make a frothy and cool drink sure to please a thirsty family on those hot summer nights. Be sure to remind whoever is taking the punch bowl to the deck or table that Jesus' Living Water is so much easier to carry!



Question: What do Jesus and water have in common?

Answer: They both help give us life, of course!

From creation to the woman at the well, scripture is rich with water imagery that gives God's hope of new life to the world. But did you know that over 1 BILLION people in the world do not have access to clean water within walking distance from their home and must travel in excess of 15 minutes to retrieve some? Try carrying a bucket filled with water around your yard for 15 minutes to see what that is like...then double it, for the round trip! Now imagine doing that in the hot desert sun like the Samaritan woman. Without access to this basic human need, the eradication of poverty and disease will NEVER be possible!

This week, help your children to learn and better appreciate the value of God's gift of water (which we all too often take for granted). YouTube features countless videos, many made by Christian and secular humanitarian organizations working for water security in third world countries across the globe, that can assist in helping to visualize the challenges people in these nations face. And then have a discussion about ways you can help sustain life in the midst of challenges. You can start by practicing water conservation at home or by building a rain barrel for your garden. Then think globally, remembering that, with God NOTHING is impossible!

