



just WATER

SESSION 1

MOVEMENT MESSAGE

JESUS BUILDS BRIDGES AND BREAKS CYCLES.

INTRODUCTION

The first JUST WATER message will prepare you to begin your own Just Water journey and will show you the potential of the movement in the greater story of God. We hope it will serve as a source of hope for the injustices that you feel in your hearts and those that you see in the world.

You will get to ask questions that will ultimately guide your pursuit of Jesus. What will you do with Jesus? How does He build bridges and break cycles? As you (and your group) wrestle with the gravity of these questions, you'll begin to make important discoveries about your role in the Justice Movement.

This series will ask you to get uncomfortable and to get involved. It's not our natural response to go, but a movement will be born in a heart after God. The first step is knowing that God brings us close and strengthens us to do His work.

VIDEO

Click on the link to the right to watch and download the *Break the Cycle* video for Session 1.

Or visit <https://vimeo.com/131470385>



THINGS WE BELIEVE

We believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe in the power of God's Word.

We believe we are in need of God in all aspects of life.

We believe that freedom through Jesus is for the whole human race, and all can turn to Him.

We believe in God working through us.

We believe we are called to be about God's justice, mercy, healing, and reconciliation in the world.

We believe that young people discover their worth in the bigger story of God when they have opportunities to serve and exercise their faith.

We believe in active dreaming.

We believe in wonder, awe, and celebration.

We believe in rest and in hope.

THINGS WE VALUE

WE ARE CHRISTIAN

As members of the worldwide Church, we tell the story of Jesus' and His ability to redeem our hearts and creation.

WE ARE BEING TRANSFORMED

God, who is holy, calls us to a life of the same. We believe that the Holy Spirit searches our hearts to clean us up from sin; to renew us in the image of God; to give us the ability to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength; and to be able to love our neighbors in the same way. God creates the character of Christ in us.

WE HAVE A JOB

We are sent to respond to the stories that shouldn't be in the world with God's story. It is a story with redemptive potential. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to go everywhere the wind reaches, sharing hope and truth, reflecting Jesus, interrupting cycles of injustice, and participating with God in building the Body of Christ.

(Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 6:1)



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TEACHING OUTLINE

MESSAGE: JESUS BUILDS BRIDGES AND BREAKS CYCLES.

CONNECTION

All of us feel the tension when we are stuck in a cycle. Whether it's a bad habit or a difficult situation. Being stuck in it isn't what we want, but resisting it can seem just as scary.

We've been a part of stories that shouldn't be in the world--and they're not hard to find. Sometimes these stories are subtle and hard to see, but there are many stories visible to all. It's a story that everyone knows but may feel helpless to do anything about.

THE ACHE

Have you ever said to yourself, "I know it's bad, but there's nothing I can do about this"? It's tempting to think we can't do anything — until we meet someone who believes that they can.

Hearing about so many problems can cause a numb "I just can't take another sad story" feeling. Like a baseball or football team that has the ability to symbolically destroy the other team in scoring, there's a moment when the "mercy" rule applies. Because losing hurts.

GOD SPEAKS

The prophet Amos paints a picture of what it could be like when we're surrounded by awful things that seem immovable or unchanging. Because our power is not from us but from God (2 Corinthians 4:7), we should choose jumping in instead of numbing out. The prophetic imagination of Amos leads the way:

*Do you know what we want?
We want justice—oceans of it.
We want fairness—rivers of it.
That's what we want. That's all we want. **Amos 5:24 (The Message)***

But how do we echo this message and live it when it's our instinct to care more about who is watching than about who is hurting?

Answer: You pray for transformation. You ask for God to interrupt our cycle and change it. You ask for God to show you your worth in Christ. The truth is, you are worth Jesus to God. Your renewed life was so important to God it was worth sacrificing Jesus for. God loves all of us that much. And that knowledge has the potential to change how you feel about you and how empowered you feel about influencing others in this world.

John 3:16, Mark 2:18-22, John 5:1-9

The process begins with us. Before you can reach out, you have to look in. You have to know what Jesus can do within you before you can tell others what Jesus can within them. First, you have to make the move from casually hanging around the idea that Jesus can break the cycles to actively reaching out and asking Him to do it in your life.

Can you imagine sitting next to a pool that heals people? There'd be a line to get into that pool! You could make a lot of money selling tickets to that pool! There was a pool like this in Jerusalem, and when it was stirred it could heal the ones who were first to the water. In John 5, we meet a man who waited by those waters for decades. The remedy was scarce. He was trapped in a cycle of not being able to reach the water. Each time he was able to get there, it was too late.

THE HOPE

Living water isn't scarce. Our healing isn't wait-listed, hoarded, or corrupt. Jesus didn't come to put a patch on the things that are broken in your life. Jesus came to make you new.

And Jesus answers the cry for justice in the stories around us. He sees how many people are going without, and He is asking us to be a part of the healing.

APPLICATION

God is able to break the unhealthy cycles in your life and hopes to use your story to help others find the bridge out of brokenness and into a full life.

- 1) Embrace what Jesus is doing in your life and accept His help.
- 2) Let your life be repurposed as an OFFERING.
- 3) Be in the culture, but not made of it. Be re-made in God's love.
- 4) As you come to life, the world around you will come to life too.

ACTIVITY

Illustrate a bridge together with your group. Draw it in the dirt, on a piece of paper, or on fabric. Talk about what a bridge does, what its purpose is. Then imagine Jesus building a bridge using the materials of your life. What materials would he choose to support the highway of justice around you?

LANDING

Jesus builds the bridges. Jesus breaks the cycles. Trust Him to do the work of satisfying every thirst.



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TEACHING SCRIPT

MESSAGE: JESUS BUILDS BRIDGES AND BREAKS CYCLES.

CONNECTION STORY:

Tell a personal story about a time when you were dealing with one of these things:

- you were stuck in a bad habit
- a cycle you were stuck in that hurt you or your family
- you couldn't see a solution for the cycle of injustice around you

(Feel free to tell a funny story. There will be plenty of space for more serious stories.)

Maybe they're things that have been wrong for a long time. Maybe they are things that just happened five minutes ago. We can take a walk to see it. We can turn on the news for five minutes, read the internet, scroll Twitter, or visit websites that voice concerns about global problems. We can name so many!

THE ACHE

Have you ever said to yourself, "There's nothing I can do about this" when facing a situation that's too big for you? It's tempting to think we can't do anything — until we meet someone who believes that he or she can. Our hope is that you will see the possible in the middle of the impossible and make a decision to do something different.

Hearing about so many problems can cause a numb "I just can't take another sad story" feeling. But it's important for all of us to move from feeling to action. To making a decision about what you believe and acting on that.

It's tough to move beyond passive acceptance. We're uncomfortable with the cycle, but fighting it hurts more.

STORY:

Parents have a way of knowing when a child is ready for potty training. Sometimes you'll see a small child standing still (not normal), gazing off into the atmosphere. Maybe they have a quizzical look on their face, maybe their eyes aren't blinking. Sometimes they hide from you while they do this. This is how you know that they're getting close to being able to be trained to use a toilet (or latrine).

Parents try everything when teaching their kids this new skill. And no parent wants to see their child continue to wear a diaper into adulthood or to make messes.

They don't want them to stay stuck in a cycle that needs to end.

They don't want them to sit in the mess that they're used to making.

They don't want that for someone they love.

And God doesn't want that for you.

Our lives were meant for a new cycle. The cycle of sine we were born with needs replacing. Our lives have been broken from the beginning and we are used to living with the brokenness, unless we learn another way. Unless we accept what God has offered. You can break the cycle. You can interrupt its momentum.

You can stop the cycle's. Whatever "it" is.

No more passive acceptance. No more open wounds. No more imprisonment. No more missing pieces. No more fear. No more silence. It's time to take a stand against death, disease, fear, and uncertainty in your life. When you are able to move out of it, you will be able to help others move out of it too.

Think about some things your cycle brings.

Hurts lead us to do and be things we wouldn't necessarily want to do and be.

Painful habits plague us with guilt and harm our bodies, hearts, and minds.

Hangups that we can't get passed, forgiveness seems so far away.

We feel what it is, but a feeling doesn't help the cycle change.

The thing is, a feeling of discontent won't stop cycles of injustice. You have to turn the feeling into active resistance.

But this requires a strong force of interruption.

(Possible Story)If you've ever owned an electronic device, you know they don't last forever. Why? Because electronics get slow. The code inside is a straight line when we buy it but with every App, every call, every text, the code is interrupted. The interruptions make it so the code takes longer to start again. Sometimes it never can start again. It just gives up. It can't handle the force against it.

God has a method for breaking the code of injustice in the world.

GOD SPEAKS

Meet the Israelites. They were set aside by God to be representatives of His justice (God's putting things right) in the world.

Since sin entered the world, it's been infested with brokenness--with injustice. God's people fell into painful cycles. One cycle was the habit of forgetting who God was. When they'd get stuck, turn their backs, go their own way, God would hear their cries and His heart would break for His people, and God would come to their rescue. But they would forget, and the cycle would continue. They were trapped by the same issues, the same forgetfulness, the same sin.

But God loves His people. God's love for us is a covenant love. That means it's unbreakable. By God's very nature, He can't stop loving us. It's who God is. It's what God does.

At the same time, God's commitment to justice is also a covenant commitment. God works to make the wrong things right again. God's action since creation is making things and relationships right again. That's who He is. That what He

does.

Because of God's commitment to justice, God won't ignore sin. He won't ignore the brokenness. But because of his love, this unbreakable covenant love, God won't ignore us. He had to find a way to accomplish justice without breaking his covenant with the ones he loved so much.

John 3:16 says, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

Jesus became the vast and ever-expanding, once-and-for-all interruption to the vicious, broken cycles of this world. In Jesus, God took all of the injustices onto himself and replaced them with Justice that flows like a river and righteousness like a never-ending stream. The love of Jesus is the answer that Amos was looking for. Jesus is God's declaration that things aren't right — but that they most definitely will be made right in Him.

What does this mean for you? For me?

Look at John chapter 5, the story happens at the Pool of Bethesda during one of the Jewish festivals in Jerusalem.

Jesus isn't in the midst of the festival where everyone who's anyone would be. Jesus camps outside at the Pool of Bethesda, a place where the disabled, blind, lame, and paralyzed people were. Jesus was showing the world that God's justice is unbiased. He was saying with his presence at the pool, that the vulnerable were a priority.

The Scripture says that whenever the pool was stirred, the first person who touched the water would be healed of their affliction. What would happen is similar to what happens when someone opens up a pack of gum in the middle of a group of teenagers. The first ones to the pack get a piece of gum, and the stragglers are left with none. Except the people at the pool had a lot more at stake than fresh breath. They were fighting for their lives.

So the water would stir, and there would be this race of hurting, sick, and disabled people all trying to get to the water where only one would be healed.

Here's where we all need to learn a new word. *Scarcity*. There's scarcity in this story — something a lot of people need and not enough of it to go around.

The pool was located just a short distance away from where a celebration was taking place. A celebration full of people with the means to most likely care for every individual gathered around that pool. And yet they're forced into this cycle of waiting by the water in hopes that they will be the lucky one this time to receive the help they need.

In our world today, two-thirds of the resources available are consumed by one-third of the people. The greater majority is forced to sit by the pool. Some of us would have been sitting by that pool. Some of us would be at the festival. Jesus wants us to see that regardless where we find ourselves, our attention should be given to the one in need.

The man Jesus encounters has been an invalid for 38 years. It doesn't tell us how long he's been sitting by the pool, but it wouldn't be a stretch to imagine most of that time he has been there. So imagine this vicious cycle. Every day this man sits by the water. And each time the pool is stirred he crawls, claws, strains, does whatever he can to get to the water just to watch someone else beat him there. Every day for over thirty years. It's not right.

And you've probably felt that way about someone or something that you've seen around you. People without homes living on the street. Children begging. Children who are abused. Water sources diminishing. Someone getting treated unfairly. You know it's not right when someone is denied their basic needs.

Jesus' first words to this man seem almost like a joke. Jesus asks him, "Do you want to get well?" Of course he wants to get well! He's been lying by this pool for years in hopes of getting well. Every time the water stirs he tries to get to the water and every time someone gets there first and his condition remains unchanged.

Interestingly, the man replies like this:

“Sir, I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

What a strange response. Sometimes we can get so accustomed to the broken cycles within us and around us that we can't see anything else. We can't see a way that the cycle can be broken because, in reality, we've grown comfortable with the brokenness. It's what we know.

“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.’ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.”

Jesus steps in, breaks the cycle, heals this man, and teaches the rich pre-occupied partiers in the distance that they have a job to do--that they're missing the joy of justice.

The same question is for us too. Do you want to get well? When you see the broken cycles in your own life and the lives of those you love, when you see the broken systems of this world that have some people struggling just to have clean water while others take the resource for granted and even waste it without thinking. When you see

APPLY IT

You could be sitting there thinking about the broken cycles in your life, or the broken cycles that you see around you. You could be asking, How do I begin? The first step is handing it to Jesus. Truly giving it over. Saying here is my old and busted up way of being. Here is my mess and the messed-up, vicious cycle we've created. The stuff in me and the stuff I see around me. From my own sin to water insecurity. We need you, Jesus, in all of it. Make it all new.

There are more than a few young people around the world who are saying, “Build the bridge, Jesus, break the cycles!” They're saying, “Use me to help replace brokenness with new life.”

Achiya is a mother in Bangladesh, a widow living with her son. Getting to a source of water is tricky. Rivers and ponds are filled with salt. She and her family bathe and wash with saltwater. They collect rainwater to drink and cook. During the dry season, she rents a tricycle or hires a driver and travels six miles to get water. When freshwater dries up, she goes to another pond--by boat. It takes an entire day for her to go to that pond.. She will do whatever it takes to provide water her for her family.

Thilak is 13. He lives in Sri Lanka. Every day, he helps his mom carry his life source from a well that is a half a mile away. He has five siblings. They share the water for the day. They depend on rain to water their garden. Human waste and waste from the community contaminate their ground water--a challenge that causes many illnesses. He hopes to help find a solution for the water contamination in his community.

Chelsea is a 15-year-old girl living in the USA. She attends a school where there are more than 10 drinking fountains. Water flows quickly from a faucet, it travels from rivers to reservoirs that are treated and it's safe to drink. She asked her family to build a garden instead of having grass in their yard at home. They conserve water this way, and it also helps them to save money on vegetables. She wants to conserve what is precious and be able to give more because she has made these personal decisions.

What binds these stories together is that these individuals have decided not to just sit by the pool or attend the festival while the broken cycles simply play out before their very eyes. They've decided to answer Jesus' question “Do you want to get well?” with a definitive “Yes!” Here is this cycle I've been enslaved by. Here is the pattern that has led to our brokenness. Take it and make it new through me.

Jesus came to disrupt the cycle of sin once and for all. To say that things aren't right, but they will be. Whatever broken cycle you're dealing with or whatever broken system you recognize, you don't have to passively accept it. You

can and should actively resist it.

Through Jesus, God is saying to us, “Give me your cycle—the cycle of sin, fear, regret, addiction, or [fill in the blank]. Reject its broken way, and I’ll show you a new way. ... Thirst for me and you’ll never be thirsty again.”

Throughout this series we are going to be drawing parallels between the work of Jesus, the imagery of water in the Story of God, and the need for clean water for individuals who don’t have it.

Water matters because it brings life. Where there is no water there is no life. [Jesus is the living water.] Jesus knew that in the same way our bodies get thirsty, our souls get thirsty, too.

Your first challenge is to drink only water during your Just Water journey. Every time you do drink water, think about what we’ve learned together, what it means for God to make things right as you respond to this challenge. Think about the voice you will be for those who don’t have access to basic human needs.

LANDING

God is able to break the cycle in your life and hopes to use your story to help others find the bridge out of brokenness and into wholeness and life.

- 1) Embrace what Jesus is doing in your life and accept His help.
- 2) Let your life be repurposed as an OFFERING.
- 3) Be in the culture, but not made of it. Be re-made in God’s love.
- 4) As you come to life, the world around you will come to life too.

Now you’re ready for your JUST WATER journey, and you’ll grow in your faith and you’ll learn about water. Water matters. Where there is no water, there is no life. Water is precious — the stuff people drink and the stuff Jesus offers. Both are vital for survival. You’re going to learn about what went wrong. And what we can do to make sure as many people as possible have access to both physical water and the living water Jesus offers.

“But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (Amos 5:24, NIV)



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SMALL GROUPS

NOTE FOR LEADER OR PARENT:

Ask questions in a pace that works for your group or family. Silence can be a good thing. Try to steer away from yes/no questions, and affirm the different contributions each person gives to the discussion. You can facilitate the group conversation to be most meaningful by giving more time to the places people feel most engaged.

GROUP QUESTIONS

- 1) What are some things you see in our world that break your heart?
- 2) Have you ever felt too small or too insignificant to change things that shouldn't be?
- 3) Before we can reach out, we have to look in. Have you seen ways Jesus breaks messed-up cycles in your own life?
- 4) Jesus asked the man by the pool, "Do you want to get well?" How do you think that question made him feel?
- 5) If your life were a bridge, what materials do you think it would be made of? (Cue the discussion to include personal qualities that could be used while serving others.)