

Lesson 5

Providing Spiritual Nourishment to the World

How you can be a refreshing fountain of life

The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him, John 7.38.

Jesus made this statement during the Feast of the Tabernacles, one of the key gatherings of Jews during the year. During this festival each year one of the special ceremonies involved a priest drawing water from the pool of Siloam and pouring it out at the altar in the temple while the people chanted Isaiah 12.3: "You will draw water from the wells of salvation." It is with this imagery in mind that Jesus made this statement, demonstrating that He himself is the source of living water, or salvation.

During Old Testament times, waters, springs, and rivers were frequently used as symbols of God's provision and blessings. Jeremiah wrote:

"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water," Jeremiah 2.13.

In this context, Jesus' words serve as a powerful claim to his divinity and his role as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Going back to John's writing, the Apostle clarifies that the "rivers of living water" Jesus spoke of referred to the Holy Spirit, which would be given to every Christian after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. This teaches us about the empowering of the Spirit who is present inside our life. The Spirit regenerates us, empowers us for spiritual service, and gives us the ability to spiritually nourish others through a life marked by joy, purpose, and a connection to the divine. Christians have been called by God to be conduits of God's grace, love, and power in a dark world in desperate need of spiritual nourishment.

Understanding Spiritual Nourishment

Spiritual nourishment is as vital to our soul as physical food is to our body. It builds our connection with God, strengthens our faith, and equips us to navigate the challenges of life with grace and resilience.

Living by the Word of God

At the core of spiritual sustenance is the Word of God. Jesus declared in Matthew 4:4, *Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.* Here, our Lord stresses the indispensable nature of God's Word in our spiritual life. The Scriptures are not mere texts but a living guide, providing wisdom, comfort, and direction. To truly thrive spiritually, we must immerse ourselves in the Bible, letting it shape our thoughts, decisions, and actions. Going along with this, we must never forget that we have been called to share its teachings, spreading the light and hope it offers to a world in need.

Prayer

Just as water sustains life, prayer is the life-giving force for our soul. It is the intimate conversation between the Creator and the created, a channel through which we pour out our hearts, seek guidance, express gratitude, and intercede for others. Through prayer, Christians connect with God, drawing strength and peace from His presence. Furthermore, intercessory prayer showcases the power of collective faith, as believers stand in the gap for others, drawing them closer to God's love.

Acts of Love and Service

Faith, while deeply personal, is not meant to be held within. Real spiritual nourishment manifests in the way we engage with the world around us. Acts of love and service are the hands and feet of faith in action. By serving others selflessly, be it through volunteering, helping a neighbor, or offering a listening ear, we can provide a genuine demonstration of God's love.

“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another,”

John 13.34-35.

These things not only nourish the souls of those being helped but also enrich the spiritual life of the giver, reaffirming the truth that in giving, we receive, Acts 20.35.

Practical Ways to Nourish Others

With the world around us thirsting for hope and meaning, we are called to be conduits of the "living water" – the love and grace of Jesus Christ. This overflowing isn't just a spiritual concept; it translates into tangible actions that leave unmistakable marks on hearts and lives.

Evangelism

At the heart of spiritual overflow is evangelism. By sharing the gospel, we introduce others to the love and redemptive power of Jesus Christ. This act of sharing isn't just about words; it's an invitation to a relationship with the Savior. When we share Jesus, we give others the opportunity to tap into the "living water," finding hope, purpose, and eternal life in Christ. We need to follow through on Peter's admonition:

but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you, 1 Peter 3.15.

Discipleship

Beyond initial introductions to faith, discipleship plays a crucial role in our spiritual journey. We must invest time, energy, and wisdom in the spiritual growth of another person. Through discipleship, mature believers guide newer ones, helping them navigate their spiritual journeys, deepening their relationship with God, and equipping them to, in turn, be fountains of faith for others. Paul charged Timothy:

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others, 2 Timothy 2.2.

Hospitality

Through the simple act of opening our home or life to others can be a living testimony to God's love. Hospitality, in its essence, is an embrace—a gesture that says, "You're welcome here." Whether it's sharing a meal, offering a place to stay, or just providing a listening ear, these acts of kindness can provide immense spiritual nourishment, demonstrating the warmth and inclusivity of God's kingdom.

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling, 1 Peter 4.9

Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality, Romans 12.13.

Support

Life, with its highs and lows, is a journey best undertaken together with others. For Christians, mutual support forms the bedrock of their spiritual life. Encouraging our brothers and sisters during moments of doubt, standing by them during trials, or celebrating joys and milestones together not only builds individual growth but it also fortifies the local church family, making it a beacon of hope and togetherness in a dark and divided world.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ, Galatians 6.2.

Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing,
1 Thessalonians 5.11.

Overcoming Obstacles

What Jesus wanted to convey in His teaching is the kind of life that embodies a heart so full of God's love and grace that it spills over to touch the lives of others. But sometimes we fail to follow through. Life presents many obstacles that can hinder us from truly overflowing. To fully understand and navigate these challenges, we must confront and overcome three major barriers: selfishness, fear, and distractions.

Selfishness

The first significant obstacle to overflowing is selfishness. By nature, we are inclined towards self-preservation, putting our needs, desires, and interests first. This self-centeredness can make it difficult for the "living water" to flow through us to others. In His life and teachings, Jesus consistently highlighted the virtues of selflessness and sacrifice. To overflow means to give generously of ourselves, sometimes even at our own expense. This act of self-giving mirrors Jesus' love for us—a love that led Him to the cross. Overcoming selfishness entails a daily decision to prioritize others, valuing their needs and well-being as much as, if not more than, our own, Philippians 2.3-4. It requires recognizing the divine worth in every person and striving to serve them selflessly.

Fear

Another substantial barrier to overflowing is fear. Sharing one's faith can seem intimidating. The fear of rejection, ridicule, or misunderstanding can paralyze us, preventing us from stepping out in faith. Jesus not only commands believers to share the gospel, Matthew 28.18-20, but He also promises His continual presence and support. With this divine assurance, we can confidently engage with others, trusting that He will guide and protect us. By continually remembering and planting this promise deep in our heart, we can develop the type of courage that will overcome fear and passionately share our faith.

Distractions

Today, distractions abound. Technology, work, leisure, and even daily routines can easily draw our attention from God. This can lead to spiritual stagnation, where our connection with God weakens, preventing us from overflowing. To combat this, it is essential to stay rooted in the Word, regularly engaging in prayer, worship, and fellowship. Joining and actively participating in the local congregation provides the necessary accountability and encouragement to keep distractions at bay and maintain a vibrant relationship with God.

Conclusion

Our world, now more than ever, is in dire need of spiritual nourishment. Every day, countless souls search for meaning, purpose, and hope—often in places and things that offer only temporary satisfaction. As Christians, filled and sustained by the "living water," we have a unique mission and privilege. We are called to be fountains of God's grace, love, and truth, overflowing to quench the spiritual thirst of those around us.

Can you identify one tangible way to provide spiritual nourishment to someone in your life? Whether it's through a kind word, an act of service, or sharing the gospel message, take that step, and be a shining light of God's overflowing love.

For Discussion:

1. What does the imagery of "streams of living water" convey to you personally?
2. How does the historical context of the Feast of the Tabernacles enhance our understanding of Jesus' statement in John 7.38?
3. How does Jeremiah 2.13 relate to our modern-day understanding of seeking satisfaction

outside of God?

4. Why is spiritual nourishment as essential as physical nourishment? Can you provide personal examples?
5. What practices help you stay connected to the Word of God and maintain a thriving spiritual life?
6. How has prayer played a transformative role in your relationship with God?
7. How do you manifest your faith through acts of love and service?
8. What does true Christian hospitality look like in a modern context?
9. How do you personally confront and overcome the obstacles of selfishness, fear, and distractions in your walk with Christ?
10. What steps can you take this week to be a conduit of God's grace and love?