

SESSION 2: LET THE WATERS BE SEPARATED

Genesis 1:6-8 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

6 And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7 So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. 8 God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

Introductions and warm up task

- Introduce yourselves to your group.
- Imagine how you would cope if you had no access to water: how would that impact your everyday life eg taking care of family, preparing food? Or how about if there was 1 metre of water everywhere in your village. How would you travel, walk the dog, live?

Let us pray:

God our Mother, Living Water, River of Mercy, Source of Life, in whom we live and move and have our being, who quenches our thirst, refreshes our weariness, bathes and washes and cleanses our wounds, be for us always a fountain of life, and for all the world a river of hope springing up in the midst of the deserts of despair. Amen *Miriam Therese Winter, p104 The Book of a Thousand Prayers.*

Bible discussion

In your group share out these passages: 1 Kings 18:22-45, Mark 4:35-41, Matthew 3:13-17

Read the passage through and then answer the following questions:

- If you had to describe your passage in three words, what would they be?
- What does the passage tell you about who God is?
- What does the passage tell you about his relationship with his creation?

Feedback your thoughts together or to the bigger group. Look to draw out themes of God as creator and his relationship with his creation.

INPUT: All about relationships

Here's something we know: God himself is in relationship. By his own very nature, he is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Tim Keller describes this as a dance – as though the three persons of God dance together in community.

And so, is it any surprise that we find relationship embedded right throughout the natural world? You'll have done the water cycle in primary school – one of nature's expressions of relationship, mimicking the dance of God as water moves through the cycle. Likewise, animals and life have a cycle. In the great words of the Lion King (feel free to sing!) - 'It's the circle, the circle of life.'

Water demonstrates something of the characteristics of God. It is part of his creation but what is its relationship status?

Sadly, it's not all going well. Where there should be rivers, there are droughts. Where there should be dry land, there are floods. We are living in unprecedented times. We are seeing this in the UK with all the flooding. The impact on the UK is a tiny glimpse of what is going on elsewhere. *(from SYTL Youth Resource)*

Discussion

In Chapter 2 we see that 'the existence of this world and the universe which it inhabits is not by chance but comes from God who chose to create it out of the overflowing of the love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' *P 49 Saying Yes to Life*

Creation could only happen, therefore, 'if God opened up a space within herself, as it were, where this could occur. But in so doing, God would limit, and humble, Godself, allowing creatures to exist in a free space within her' *T Finger quoted on p35 Saying Yes to Life*

- How does this expand your understanding of this world and its relationship to God?

Reflection

Think about Ungwa Sangani's story on *p41,42 of Saying Yes to Life*.

- Reflect on our own usage of water and using water in our everyday life.
- Reflect on the twin problems of water scarcity and flooding. How can we hold the tensions of not enough and too much?

Watch the interview with the Archbishop of Cape Town Thabo Makgoba.

- What does he say that makes you think and what is important to reflect on?

Action

"The reality of inequality and poverty in Africa is that whilst many people are worried about losing precious environmental services, there are hundreds of millions of others who have still never experienced them. We need to worry about environmental crisis, but we also need to engage with the poverty and inequality that already denies water to many citizens, meaning they live in a permanent state of crisis." *P45 Saying Yes to Life*

- What personal action will you take to look after the world's precious resource of water and those who depend on it?

A prayer on water from Nigeria

Dear Lord, it is exciting to know that you are the very source of life including water. We praise and adore you for the gift of water that sustains all life and constantly reminds us that you are the fountain of living water.

Teach us to use it thankfully, to consume it consciously, and to protect its purity.

Father, forgive us for the times we took it for granted. We confess our attitudes of greed, dominance, and insensitivity towards your beautiful creation, and particularly towards water. Lord, forgive us for the times we have used water selfishly, unwisely, and without regard for how it affects others. Forgive us for the actions we have taken to harm the different sources of water around us. Help us to see the effects of our actions not only on our immediate surroundings but also on people living in places plagued by drought. Help us to be conscious of our daily use of water; help us to be more willing to reflect on its symbolic nature and the lessons it teaches about you and your sustaining power.

Please guide us on how to protect the water bodies you made for your glory. Amen.

Prayer by Fwangmun Oscar Danladi. Oscar is a youth pastor at the ECWA Good News Church, Jos, and social activist at the Jos Green Centre, a centre for eco-entrepreneurship for young people.

Excerpt from Saying Yes to Life (page 44)