



WITHIN: GOD'S STORY OF SAVING OUR SOULS

Lesson 4: How Does Sin Block Flow?

Objective

The objective of this lesson is to help students understand how water—essential for physical life in biblical times—serves as a powerful metaphor for spiritual life and the soul. By exploring wells, cisterns, and flowing water in Scripture, students will learn how staying connected to God as the true source of living water brings renewal, while sin and self-reliance disrupt that flow. (You can choose to spell the capital words throughout the text for additional practice.)

Featured Scripture

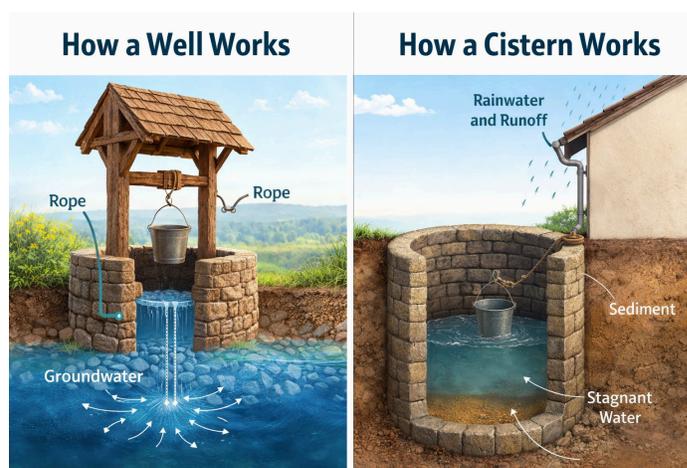
“Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.’” (John 7:38, NLT)

Lesson

When you want WATER today, it's as easy as turning on a faucet or grabbing a bottle from the store. It's hard to imagine that in America, widespread indoor plumbing is less than a hundred years old. For most of human history, water was not instantly accessible—it had to be FETCHED, carried, protected, and conserved. Daily life revolved around it: drinking, cooking, washing clothes, bathing, and watering animals all depended on access to water.

Because of this, cities were intentionally built near rivers, lakes, or reliable springs. In Bible times—and in many places still today—water determined whether civilization could exist at all.

To survive in dry regions, people relied on two main systems: **WELLS** and **CISTERNS**. Wells were dug deep into the earth to tap into spring-fed aquifers—sources of water that were naturally replenished and continually flowing. Cisterns, by contrast, were storage systems carved into rock, something like an ancient rain barrel. They didn't produce water; they merely collected runoff and rain.



Cisterns came with serious problems. Though often plastered to prevent leaks, they **CRACKED** easily, allowing precious water to seep away. Even worse, because the water didn't move, it could become **STAGNANT**. Stagnant water—water that does not flow—was quietly dangerous in the ancient world. People may not have understood germs, but they understood the results. Bad water led to sickness. What was meant to preserve life could slowly poison it.

All of this physical reality becomes a powerful spiritual metaphor.

Scripture tells us our souls are like containers too. A soul that functions like a cistern relies on its own wisdom, effort, coping mechanisms, and temporary fixes. It stores what it can, but nothing **FRESH** is coming in. Over time, the water grows stale.

A soul connected to a living source—to **God Himself**—is entirely different. It is continually replenished, fresh, life-giving, and abundant.

The prophet Jeremiah exposes the tragedy of choosing the wrong system:

“For my people have committed two evils:
They have abandoned Me—
the fountain of living water.

And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns
that can hold no water at all.”
(Jeremiah 2:13, NLT)

Notice the order. The first evil is not behavior—it’s **abandonment**. Walking away from the SOURCE. The second evil naturally follows: trying to replace God with something we can control. Sin creates a broken system—one that was never designed to sustain life. Life needs to be connected to a source.

SPELLER QUESTIONS:

1. What is one of the main things people need access to in order to live? **Answer:** Water
2. What were two types of containers for water before plumbing? **Answer:** Cistern and well
3. What kind of problems can stagnant water cause? **Answer:** Germs, sickness
4. How can your soul become like a cistern? **Answer:** (Student reflection; e.g. Turning to one’s own self for sustenance, but it can only work for so long.)
5. What practices help keep a person connected to God as the source of life? **Answer:** (Student reflection e.g. “Reading the Bible, prayer, worship.”)

Even the Wells Can Stopped Up

In the ancient Near East, wells were so vital that stopping them up was considered an act of aggression. Genesis 26:15 tells us the Philistines became jealous of Isaac’s prosperity and **filled his wells with DIRT**. These weren’t just holes in the ground—they were inherited sources of life, dug by his father Abraham.

Isaac had to move to find new land, digging new wells repeatedly only to face opposition again and again. Thirteen verses describe his FRUSTRATION. But when he finally found space and water flowed freely, he worshiped God.

Sometimes it feels like outside forces—conflict, sin, distraction, fear, oppressive attacks—are trying to block our access to the flow that sustains us. Like Isaac, we can't stop digging. Life depends on it.

Jesus: The Fountain of Living Water

It's no accident that wells, springs, rivers, fountains, and living water appear **over a hundred times** in Scripture. Jesus steps directly into this imagery and makes a bold claim:

“Anyone who is thirsty may come to Me!
Anyone who believes in Me may come and drink!
For the Scriptures declare,
‘Rivers of living water will flow from His heart.’”
(John 7:37–38, NLT)

At a well in Samaria, Jesus tells a woman who has spent her life drawing water again and again:

“Those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again.
It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them,
giving them eternal life.”
(John 4:14, NLT)

Jesus doesn't just offer water—**He is the Fountain**. And because He gives us His Spirit, that living water doesn't just FLOW to us; it flows through us.

Restoring the Flow

Think of the SPIGOT on the side of your house. The water is always available—but it doesn't flow unless you connect a hose and open the valve. Sometimes the connection is loose or the threads are misaligned, and water sprays out sideways. Sometimes there's a kink in the hose, stopping the flow altogether. The solution isn't more water—it's removing the obstruction.

Sin works the same way. Sin—doing what is wrong in God’s eyes or failing to do what is right—**KINKS the line**. It stops the flow. And every one of us has experienced that.

But because Jesus died and rose again, He made a way for the flow to be restored.

Scripture gives us two simple, powerful steps: **CONFESSION and REPENTENCE**.

Confession, from the Greek word *homologeō*, means “to say the same thing.” It is agreeing with God about reality—about His ways, His truth, and His commands. It is alignment. It also means humbly admitting when our lives have not matched that reality, when we have missed the mark.

Repentance (*metanoia*) naturally follows. It is a change of **mind** that leads to a change of direction. We turn away from sin and realign our thinking and actions with the flow of God’s life.

And truthfully, this isn’t a one-time event. It’s a rhythm we return to again and again as God keeps our hearts open and the living water flowing.

“If we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”

(1 John 1:9, NLT)

CLEANSING is a sign that the water is moving again. You can tell that your heart and mind are more at peace with this agreement. (Incidentally, did you know that the word “AMEN” that we often say at the end of our prayers actually means, “Yes, we agree. We stand under this!”?)

God never intended your soul to survive on your own stored-up rainwater. You were designed for a **living source**, for constant renewal, for rivers—not reservoirs.

If the water feels stale, don’t create a better cistern. Return to the Fountain. Where living water flows, life always follows.

This connects right back to the Shema, which has been an anchor for us during this series: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength... and love your neighbor as yourself.” Love God. Love others. Love yourself. This is alignment. This

is agreement. This is an unkinked hose that causes growth. This is being resourced in your very soul by the Fountain, Jesus Christ.

SPELLER QUESTIONS:

1. What did the Philistines do to Isaac's wells? **Answer:** DIRT or Filled them with dirt.
2. What did Jesus say was flowing from His heart? **Answer:** RIVERS of living water
3. What two steps does Scripture give for restoring the flow that sin blocked? **Answer:** Confession and repentance
4. How does the story of Isaac's wells connect to spiritual resistance today?
Answer: (Student reflection; e.g. Sometimes it feels like you are doing the right thing and then outside of your control, you get bullied or lose strength.)
5. What does it mean to you to live "resourced in your very soul" by Jesus? **Answer:** (Student reflection e.g. "He provides strength and peace for living life fully.")

Context Clues

In Jesus' time, conquering powers like Rome often reshaped daily life by reshaping **water access**. When the Romans took control of a region, they frequently built **aqueducts** to carry fresh water from distant springs into **city centers**. This was not modern plumbing, but it was revolutionary. Water that once required long daily walks could now flow steadily into public fountains, pools, baths, and markets. Cities grew larger, cleaner, and more stable. Public life expanded because survival took slightly less effort.

Yet this convenience came with a reminder of power. Aqueducts were symbols of Roman control and order—evidence that Rome could command nature itself. Most ordinary people still fetched water by hand, but now they did so in the shadow of arches and channels that proclaimed imperial strength. Against this backdrop, Jesus' language about **living water** carried even greater weight. Rome could deliver water to cities, but

only God could place a spring within the human soul—one that no empire could build, control, or conquer.

Then & Now

In Numbers 21:17, Israel responds to God's provision in the wilderness by singing:

"Spring up, O well! Sing to it!"

Rather than simply drawing water, the people **sing to the source of life**, participating in what God has already given. This act reflects a biblical pattern of addressing the soul—calling it back to trust, hope, and alignment with God.

Modern neuroscience helps explain why this matters. Singing in agreement with a song, even if you just think the words, engages your soul to come alive. Whether in be alone or with a group of people, singing creates agreement, energy and flow. Music can even heal. Dr. Alexander Pantelyat, M.D., a neurologist at the Johns Hopkins Center for Music and Medicine, notes:

"Music... connects to the amygdala, which generates emotional responses, including a release of dopamine... music and the other arts have an important role to play in wellness."

Singing engages the brain's emotional and reward systems, helping regulate mood and restore balance. In this way, singing to the well—and singing to our own souls—becomes both a spiritual and biological act: calling life, movement, and renewal where things may have grown dry. Listening to and learning the song, "Spring Up O Well," based on this Bible verse, might just be a way to get you singing to your own soul to flow! You can sing a song in your mind even if you aren't singing with your mouth.

Memorize: Write this on your heart

"Anyone who is thirsty may come to Me." John 7:37b

Go Deeper (Optional)

- Watch Bible Project's "Water of Life" (4:56)
https://youtu.be/PgmAkM39Zt4?si=HNpxs_n1eXi9KWOT
- Watch Bible Project's "What Does It Mean to Sin?" (5:42)
https://youtu.be/aNOZ7ocLD74?si=GSB_MI8JiELElfnZ
- Watch "What is Flow Theory? What Does it Mean for Our Students?" (4:47)
<https://youtu.be/iUsOCR1KKms?si=9yxevnacgCNSH6R2>
- Watch "This Is Your Brain On Music" (6:12)
<https://youtu.be/kZJ8BfEu-P8?si=4NKMFSxNNmV2FK16>
- Listen to the chorus, "Spring Up O Well" (3:11)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJeVbrN5NCc&list=RDGJeVbrN5NCc&start_radio=1
- Read the story behind Spring Up O Well and "Camp Choruses"
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PA1FP4rZzaCKTJUSqwyJHU_PZ_RZnwNt2XMZxUfCtz8/edit?usp=sharing

Options for Expression (Assignment for Open Spellers)

Choose **one** (or more) of the following ways to demonstrate your understanding of going to God as your fresh and flowing source for life:

- **Write a heartfelt prayer to God about your desire to be connected to the flow of His Spirit.**
 - Think about about how you want your life to function.
 - Think about times that you tried to do things your own way and that you want to know how to do things in agreement with Christ's ways.
- **Poem / Acrostic / Song Lyrics**
 - Write a poem or song about the flow or the fountain.

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- **Physical activity:** Learn the song “Spring Up O Well” and throughout the week practice the actions that you can learn with your Communication Partner. Here’s a link: <https://youtu.be/i50we-A2c70?si=oxvsRRjLle2-S7sj>
 - Have fun with it! Even if you aren’t able to do the exact movements, just move! Beat a drum! Dance! (But hey, Communication Partners, DO THOSE ACTIONS in front of them!)
 - Write about how it felt in your body to sing and move to this song.

Spelling Words to Practice This Week

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|----------------|---------------|
| 1. WATER | 12. OBEDIENCE |
| 2. WELL | 13. LIVING |
| 3. CISTERN | 14. STREAMS |
| 4. FOUNTAIN | 15. WASTELAND |
| 5. RIVER | 16. RENEWAL |
| 6. FLOW | 17. WORSHIP |
| 7. SOUL | 18. SINGING |
| 8. HEART | 19. JESUS |
| 9. CONFESSION | 20. LIFE |
| 10. REPENTANCE | |
| 11. ALIGNMENT | |