



PROJECT BLUE

A BIBLICAL REFLECTION



PROJECT BLUE

INTRODUCTION

What is Project Blue?

Project Blue is a project of CHIC2015. Through Project Blue we will have the chance to do three things:

- 1) Become aware of the need for clean water and sanitation in India and around the world.
- 2) Become engaged in the issues of injustice that exist in the world due to the lack of clean water and sanitation.
- 3) Work together to raise funds for the work that Covenant World Relief (CWR) is doing in India and throughout the world to provide clean water and sanitation for poor, marginalized communities.

Use this resource for small groups, sermons, an event, or Christian Formation time.

WHY CLEAN WATER?

Though the need is great, there is so much hope in joining the work that God is doing. It is really two-fold and ties in with the CWR tagline “partners in transformation.” We hope for transformation on both ends of Project Blue. Of course, we are working for transformation in communities that will now have access to clean water. But, we are equally hoping for transformation in each of us. That we would be transformed by new understandings of poverty, injustice, and access to clean water; transformed in seeing “others” as our brothers and sisters and worthy of dignity and respect, and transformed more and more into the likeness of Christ.

On a big picture level, there are several opportunities:

Clean water saves lives. Bottom line—bringing clean water is a fast way to save lives.

Clean water makes people healthier. By eliminating water borne diseases and promoting better sanitation, people lead healthier lives.

Clean water gives people more time. When people no longer have to walk miles to access water, when they no longer have to spend extra energy on accessing water for household tasks like cooking, cleaning, and washing, they are freed to attend school, enter the workforce, and to better their families and communities.

Clean water better the economy. As more people are able to enter the workforce and people are healthier, the economy of the country grows.

Clean water promotes equity. Women are disproportionately effected by the lack of clean water—they are the ones who typically spend hours gathering water; they are the ones who spend hours traveling to wash clothing; they are the ones who care for children who are sick because of water-borne illness. When they have access to clean water they can spend their time doing other things to better their family and communities. Girls who used to have to spend their days carrying water can now go to school. As communities form water committees, women are often the leaders of these committees. When women are seen as having leadership ability and skill, family dynamics and community structures change.

Through Project Blue we, as CHIC2015, will be able to work together to raise money that can help this important work continue through Covenant World Relief. After CHIC2015, students will be key leaders in a denomination-wide emphasis on clean water through Covenant World Relief.

RESOURCES COMING THIS SUMMER

- 2015 Resolution on Clean Water
- Kids Helping Kids: Water
- Covenant World Relief interactive water experience for your entire congregation



PROJECT BLUE

SESSION ONE

Water Access

READ

Genesis 21:8-21; Exodus 15:22-27; and Exodus 17:1-7.

REFLECT

- 1) What do these passages have in common? What is different?
- 2) Who do you identify with in these passages? Who do you not identify with?
- 3) What sticks out to you in these passages?
- 4) What questions do you have after reading these?

ENGAGE

For those of us who can walk out of bed and step into the shower; for those of us who can simply walk to the sink and turn on the faucet when we are thirsty; the need for water may not be something we think about.

But this was definitely something the people of Israel thought about. In the Old Testament, we hear about God's people wandering in the desert for forty years! You can bet having access to water was something that was probably pretty important to them. Some of the great stories from the Old Testament are about God providing water for people in impossible situations.

When Isaac sent Hagar and Ishmael away, we read in Genesis 21 about how they were wandering through the desert of Beersheba and ran out of water. Running out of water is pretty much a death sentence in the desert. Hagar is so distressed that she puts her son down and walks away, not being able to bear the thought of watching him die. But God sees her, and he sees her son. He told her to not be afraid. And suddenly, she saw a well. God saved their lives. And God was with the boy as he grew.

In the story of the Israelites from Exodus 15, the Israelites run out of water in the desert. When they did finally find water, it was unfit to drink. But God provides again, and in this instance, Moses throws a piece of wood into the water and it became clean.

Many of us take water for granted. Did you know that not everyone has running water in their homes? There are people *right now* in your country who don't have water running through their faucets. In some poorer communities, you can still find people who do not have access to water. They have to drive or walk to a water source in order to collect water for bathing, brushing their teeth, and washing their dishes. There are also many who are facing drought right now, impacting not only their daily lives, but their livelihood as well.

Around the world, this is a global problem too.

Watch the short video, *Water Changes Everything* (available on YouTube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCHhwXvQxg).

The same way water was a struggle for the Israelites in the desert, it is a struggle for others in our world today. God miraculously provided for his people, once through a well, once through a rock, and once through a piece of wood! Access to clean water is a major issue that we will be discussing in the next few weeks.

To help us remember those without water this week, I want to give you a challenge: Be thankful for the water that you have, recognize that others do not have the same opportunity.

DISCUSS

- 1) Now that you have heard about the Israelites struggle for water and about the struggle for some today, how does that make you feel?

- 2) What do you think God's opinion of the clean-water crisis is?
- 3) What do you think God is teaching you through the stories of Hagar, Moses, and the Israelites?

INTERACT

- 1) Identify a local water source (a pond, river, etc.).
- 2) Have everyone bring a container with them (an empty milk gallon is a good option).
- 3) Take a walk to the water source and fill up your containers.
- 4) Debrief when you return: What was easy? What was hard? How would your life change if you had to walk for water every time you needed it during the day (to drink, to cook, to wash your clothes, to brush your teeth, to go to the restroom, to clean)?

RESPOND

- 1) Keep a tally of every time you use water this week (when you take a drink of water; use water for cooking, flush the toilet, take a shower, brush your teeth, etc.).
- 2) Extra Credit: Try to add up how much water you use in one day. Come back and see which one of you used the most and least water in a week.
- 3) Pray a prayer of thanksgiving every time you use water. Thank God for the blessing of clean water access.



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SESSION TWO

The Power of Water

READ

Genesis 1:2; Genesis 7:22-23; Exodus 15:4-5; Matthew 5:44-46; and 2 Peter 3:5-6.

REFLECT

- 1) What do these passages have in common? What is different?
- 2) Who do you identify with in these passages? Who do you not identify with?
- 3) What sticks out to you in these passages?
- 4) What questions do you have after reading these?

ENGAGE

"Long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed" 2 Peter 3:5-6.

Peter sums it up for us pretty clearly. Genesis 1:2 talks about the existence of water even before God spoke the earth into creation. As the Old Testament continues, we read many stories about how water influences the lives of the people within the pages. Sometimes water is a blessing, but sometimes water is destructive.

For forty days and forty nights rain fell onto the earth, flooding it. "Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth" Genesis 7:22-23. In total, the land was flooded for 150 days.

When Moses escapes with the Israelites, the sea opens for them allowing safe passage. But as Pharaoh's army chases, the sea crashes over them and no one survives.

Water can be a powerful and destructive force. This is something we see even today.

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9JDzBTwiig>

It's hard to know what to do when faced with such destruction.

But I want to present you with another story. About another type of power.

Read: John 13:1-17.

Jesus, the most powerful human being in the world, decided to use his great power to do what?

- To be humble.
- To wash feet.
- To serve others.
- To give an example for others.

Although there are forces in the world which can be overwhelmingly powerful and out of our control—like tsunamis and other natural disasters—we can't forget that we have power as well because we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us.

We can't prevent natural disasters, but we can respond and help those in need. We can't save the world, but we can do our part. The more we walk in the ways of Jesus, the more our hearts and minds will be focused on serving others.

Watch this short video, *CWR and MTI Respond in the Philippines* (<http://covchurch.tv/cwr-mti-haiyan>)

We, as humble servants, can be powerful too.

DISCUSS

- 1) How should we use our power?

- 2) What does it mean that we should wash each other's feet?
- 3) Whose feet should we wash?
- 4) Read Ephesians 3:14-21 as a closing prayer.

INTERACT

- 1) Have a water balloon fight.
- 2) Try some of these activities from this video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTuZgwxzVJ8>
(Note: this video is not something you will want to show to your entire youth ministry; beware of inappropriate content in the ads at the end.)
- 3) Wash one another's feet.

RESPOND

Grab a water bottle and use it to collect change. Bring your water bottle with you to CHIC and donate the change to Covenant World Relief during the CHIC offering. CWR uses these funds to provide for those who need it in times of crisis.



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SESSION THREE

Water Is for Everyone

READ

John 4:4-26.

REFLECT

- 1) Who do you identify with in this passage? Who do you not identify with?
- 2) What sticks out to you in this passage?
- 3) What questions do you have after reading this passage?

ENGAGE

One of the amazing things about this story is that Jesus interacts with this Samaritan woman. Being a Samaritan, she is confused as to why Jesus, a Jew, is speaking with her. Normally, Jews of that day would have taken a different route to avoid the Samaritan villages. The Samaritans were of a different ethnic group and the Jews saw them as unclean. She must have been wondering what Jesus was doing there in the first place. She was shocked when he spoke to her and asked her for water.

One of the most amazing things about Jesus was that he crossed lines that others didn't. He cared for others no matter whether they were Greek or Jew, slaves or free, men or women, Samaritan or not! He hung out with women and recruited them as leaders in a patriarchal, male-driven world. He broke the norm and made it clear that he, as "living water," is available to everyone.

When he died, one of the miracles that happened was that the veil in the temple that separated the general public from the "holy" space of God was torn in two. No longer was God to be confined to a space. Now he lives with us, and among us. And he is for *all* people.

God loves all people.

Do we? If we do, do we back it up in our actions?

We are huge consumers. And we need to be aware that our actions affect the world.

There are chips in our cell phones and our laptops made from a mineral called coltan that can be found in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. People are fighting over this resource and it has caused a civil war.

If you look at the tags on your clothing, you might realize it was made in a country where child labor is the norm.

The things we do, the resources we use—they matter.

And another resource we need to be careful with is water. Why? We're running out. This is an issue for us.

"The United States is one of the world's biggest users of water—many Americans use as much water as approximately 900 Kenyans."—Danielle Nierenberg; FoodTank, 2013

Watch this short video, *Why Care about Water?* (<http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/env-freshwater-whycare>)

Read this infographic on water:

<http://graphs.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/The-water-problem.png>

Jesus wanted everyone to have living water. Are we willing to cut back to make sure that everyone can have water to live? We have to do a better job of sharing.

DISCUSS

- 1) What can we learn from how Jesus interacted with the Samaritan woman?
- 2) As global citizens and as Jesus's representatives in this world, what is our responsibility?

- 3) How do our actions affect others? Affect the world?
- 4) What are some practical things we can change in our lives to use the world's resources better?

INTERACT

Make a visual tally of how much water you use. Make it a contest and allow students to guess how much water is used in activities like flushing the toilet, taking a shower, brushing teeth, etc. To make the visual, you can use milk jugs or other large containers to represent how many gallons of water each activity takes.

This website is a helpful resource for this activity (<http://water.usgs.gov/edu/sq3.html>).

RESPOND

- 1) Can you use one minute less of water today? How about another minute less the next day? How many days can you go?
- 2) Some ways to do this: take a quicker shower; stop running the tap while you brush your teeth; don't run the water the entire time you do the dishes; repurpose your shower water by collecting it and using it to flush the toilet.
- 3) Who can cut down the most? Come back together next time and talk about how this went for each of you.



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SESSION FOUR

Water Is a Gift

READ

Romans 8:22-24 and Revelation 21:1-4.

REFLECT

- 1) What do these passages have in common? What is different?
- 2) Who do you identify with in these passages? Who do you not identify with?
- 3) What sticks out to you in these passages?
- 4) What questions do you have after reading these?

ENGAGE

Let's be honest. There is a good deal of pain in our world.

Sometimes things just seem so bad. Sometimes we turn on the news or we have things happen in our lives, and we think, "God I know you exist, but where are you?" As Christians, we believe that one day Jesus will come back again to restore and redeem the world.

Something important to note is that God doesn't talk about us going into some lofty new place. He is coming *here*. Heaven will meet earth. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.

For any of us who have had hurt, pain, or loss in our life, we can't help but hope for that day. We will no longer be in pain on this day. The people we love will no longer be in pain. The broken world around us will be restored.

We need to have hope. But until then, it still hurts doesn't it? We groan. We wince. We hurt. But we have hope.

We long for a new day. We long for the day when Jesus will come back again. We hurt, but we have hope.

In the meantime, we also have a job. As Christians, we are

to be God's representatives to the world.

We can never make the world a perfect place. But we do know that God loves the people he has created. We know that he longs for them to not suffer. And we can act in small and big ways to make a difference.

Some of the pain is caused by existing systems. It is not just an individual issue.

It's the fact that, "Every day 2 million tons (1.8 billion kilograms) of human waste are disposed of in waterways around the world."—National Geographic

It's the fact that the city of Detroit can turn off the water to tens of thousands of their most vulnerable residents.

It's the fact that companies can blow off the tops of mountains and ruin the water supply for anyone that lives nearby.

Watch this short video, *Covenant World Relief Spoken Word* (<http://covchurch.tv/cwr-spoken-word>)

DISCUSS

- 1) Where do we see pain in our world?
- 2) What does God call us to do in response?
- 3) What will we do in response?

INTERACT

- 1) Have time where students can list, reflect, write, or draw the ways they see the world in pain.
- 2) Go into your neighborhood and pick up some trash.
- 3) Organize a campaign to cut down pollution in your city. Write letters to corporations asking them to do their part to protect the environment.



RESPOND

If you believe this is an important issue, *speak up!* As Christians, we are challenged to fight for water resources, as well as those in need in our communities and around the world out of our desire to love God and to love others. This is an issue for everybody. Clean water is

important to us all. Get your friends and family involved in some of the challenges you have been working on here. Have them help collect change, take shorter showers, and recycle. When we do things together, we can be even more powerful.