LifeGroup Leader Discussion Guide

CRASHING SUKKOT

Week: Water from a Strange River

Key Scripture:

“On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.” John 7:37

Key Theme: Jesus is the source of living water. The rituals, routines, and substitutes we turn to may temporarily satisfy our thirst, but only Jesus can give us the Holy Spirit, who brings lasting life, renewal, and joy.

Big Idea: We don't have to keep searching for water in empty places. Jesus invites us to come to Him and drink. The Holy Spirit is God's gift to everyone who believes in Jesus, bringing life that flows from within us.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for inviting us into your presence and for reminding us that Jesus is the source of living water. We confess that sometimes we look for satisfaction in all the wrong places. We get caught up in routines, responsibilities, and the busyness of life, and we forget to come to You to have our deepest thirst satisfied.

As we spend time together, would You help us be honest about where we are spiritually? Show us where we are dry, where we are waiting, and where we may be looking for refreshment in places that cannot truly satisfy. Holy Spirit, bring renewal to our hearts. Help us not simply go through the motions of following Jesus, but experience the life, joy, and freedom that come from walking with Him.

May our conversation encourage one another, deepen our faith, and help us become people through whom your living water flows to others.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Discussion Questions & Leader Insights

1. What did you find interesting or have questions about from the sermon?

Leader Insights:

This is an opportunity for everyone to reflect on the message and identify something that caught their attention. Some may have connected with the background of the Feast of Sukkot, the water ceremony, or the significance of Jesus standing up and making His invitation.

A helpful starting point is the contrast between the elaborate religious ceremony happening around Jesus and His announcement that He Himself is the source of living water.

- What surprised you about the connection between Sukkot and Jesus' invitation?
- Why do you think Jesus chose this particular moment to make His announcement?
- Was there something in the sermon that challenged or encouraged you?

Leader Reminder: Don't rush this question. It gives everyone an opportunity to participate and helps identify themes that may be worth exploring further.

2. Read John 7:37-39. What part of that scene catches your attention most, and why do you think Jesus used the language of thirst to describe spiritual life?

Leader Insights:

The setting makes Jesus' words particularly powerful. During Sukkot, the people remembered God's provision of water in the wilderness. Each day, the High Priest carried water from the Pool of Siloam and poured it out at the altar.

At the very moment when everyone's attention was focused on the water ceremony, Jesus stood up and made an extraordinary invitation:

"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink." (John 7:37)

Jesus wasn't pointing people toward another religious ceremony, tradition, or spiritual experience. He was pointing them toward Himself.

Thirst is a powerful picture of our spiritual condition. Just as physical thirst reminds us that our bodies need water, spiritual thirst reminds us that we have needs that cannot be satisfied by possessions, achievements, relationships, or religious activity.

Consider discussing:

- Why do you think Jesus invited the thirsty rather than simply calling everyone to follow another religious rule?
- What does thirst tell us about our need for God?
- What does it mean that Jesus doesn't just offer living water but actually invites us to come to Him?

Key Takeaway: Jesus doesn't simply offer something that might make life better. He offers Himself as the source of the life our souls desperately need.

3. What is the difference, in your own life, between going through religious motions and actually drinking from Jesus as your source?

Leader Insights:

It's possible to be involved in church, attend services, participate in a LifeGroup, read the Bible, and even serve others while experiencing spiritual dryness.

Religious activity is not necessarily the same as a living relationship with Jesus.

The difference is that religious motions can become something we do out of obligation, habit, or expectation. Drinking from Jesus involves coming to Him personally, trusting Him, depending on Him, and allowing His Spirit to renew us.

This is particularly important for those who have been Christians for many years. Familiarity with church activities can sometimes replace the freshness of our relationship with Jesus.

Consider discussing:

- When have you found yourself doing the right things spiritually but feeling disconnected from God?
- What helps you move from simply knowing about Jesus to experiencing a daily dependence on Him?
- What spiritual practices help you draw near to Jesus rather than simply check something off your list?

Leader Reminder: Avoid creating the impression that spiritual disciplines are unimportant. Prayer, Bible reading, worship, and gathering together are valuable. The question is whether these practices are helping us connect with Jesus or have become substitutes for that connection.

Key Takeaway: God isn't looking for us simply to maintain religious activity. He wants a relationship with us.

4. Verse 39, John explains that Jesus meant the Spirit, whom believers would later receive, because Jesus had not yet been glorified. There was waiting built into the promise. Where are you waiting on God right now, and what does it mean to follow Jesus in a season when the full answer has not arrived yet?

Leader Insights:

John helps us understand that Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit, who would be given to believers following Jesus' death, resurrection, and glorification.

The promise was certain, but its fulfillment had not yet arrived.

This reminds us that following Jesus doesn't mean we always receive immediate answers, see immediate results, or understand everything God is doing.

Sometimes we are waiting for healing, direction, reconciliation, a breakthrough in a relationship, a loved one's return to faith, or clarity about the future.

Waiting can be difficult because we often want God to change our circumstances before we are willing to trust Him. But faith invites us to keep walking with Jesus even when we cannot yet see the outcome.

Consider discussing:

- What makes waiting on God particularly difficult?
- How do we distinguish between waiting faithfully and simply giving up?
- What can we learn from the disciples, who had to trust Jesus before they fully understood what was coming?
- How can the Holy Spirit strengthen us while we wait?

Leader Reminder: Be sensitive here. People may be waiting through painful or deeply personal circumstances. Don't rush to offer explanations or easy answers. Sometimes the greatest encouragement is simply reminding one another that God is present even when the answer hasn't come.

Key Takeaway: We don't have to wait until everything makes sense to trust Jesus. The Holy Spirit helps us remain faithful in the waiting.

5. Read Exodus 17:1-7. In the wilderness God gave water from the rock, and the water ceremony remembered that provision. When has God provided for you in a dry place, in a way you did not expect? How does remembering that provision change the way you face the dry place you are in now?

Leader Insights:

In Exodus 17, the Israelites were in the wilderness, and there was no water to drink. Their immediate response was to grumble and question whether God was really with them.

But God instructed Moses to strike the rock, and water flowed out for the people.

God provided for them in a place where provision seemed impossible.

The Feast of Sukkot reminded Israel of God's faithfulness during their wilderness journey. The water ceremony was a reminder that the God who provided water then was still the God who could provide for them now.

We all experience wilderness seasons. These may involve uncertainty, financial pressure, difficult relationships, grief, disappointment, or spiritual dryness.

One of the most powerful ways to strengthen our faith today is to remember God's faithfulness yesterday.

Consider discussing:

- Can you recall a time when God provided something you desperately needed in an unexpected way?
- How does remembering God's past faithfulness help you trust Him with present circumstances?
- Why is it sometimes easier to remember our current problems than God's previous provision?
- How might sharing stories of God's faithfulness encourage someone else?

Leader Reminder: Encourage people to share specific stories rather than general statements about God's goodness. Personal testimonies can become powerful reminders of God's faithfulness to the whole group.

Key Takeaway: Remembering how God has provided in the past gives us courage to trust Him in the present.

6. Read Isaiah 12:3. The crowds chanted about drawing water from the wells of salvation with joy. Joy is part of the picture, not just duty. Has your faith lately felt more like duty than joy? Do you feel dry in some area right now?

Leader Insights:

Isaiah 12 is a song of thanksgiving and praise. It pictures God's people drawing water from the wells of salvation with joy.

Notice that the picture isn't simply one of survival or obligation. It is one of celebration!

God doesn't invite us into a relationship with Him so that we can simply fulfill religious responsibilities. He invites us into a relationship that brings life, gratitude, freedom, and joy.

Sometimes, however, our Christian faith can become more about what we have to do than about the relationship we get to enjoy.

We can become so busy serving, attending, leading, and meeting responsibilities that we forget to stop and enjoy God Himself.

Consider discussing:

- What is the difference between serving God out of obligation and serving Him out of joy?
- When was the last time you experienced genuine joy in your relationship with Jesus?
- What tends to drain your spiritual joy?
- What might help you rediscover the joy of being loved, forgiven, and known by God?

Leader Reminder: There is nothing wrong with acknowledging spiritual dryness. Even mature Christians experience seasons when faith feels more difficult. The goal isn't to manufacture happiness but to return to the source of our joy.

Key Takeaway: Following Jesus isn't meant to be an endless list of religious obligations. It's an invitation to experience the joy of life with Him.

7. Read John 7:40-53. The crowd is divided. Where has following Jesus cost you agreement with people around you, and how do you stay faithful without becoming bitter or proud about it?

Leader Insights:

Jesus' invitation created a division among the people. Some recognized that He was the promised Messiah, while others questioned, rejected, or opposed Him.

Even the religious leaders were divided in their response.

Nicodemus challenged the leaders by reminding them that their own law required a person to be heard before being judged.

Following Jesus has never guaranteed that everyone will agree with us. Sometimes our commitment to Jesus creates tension with family members, friends, coworkers, or the broader culture.

But there is an important distinction between standing firm in our faith and developing an attitude of superiority toward those who disagree with us.

Jesus calls us to truth and grace. We can remain convinced about what we believe while still treating people with humility, patience, and love.

Consider discussing:

- Have you ever experienced tension with someone because of your faith or Christian convictions?
- Why can disagreements about faith sometimes become personal?
- What does it look like to stand firm in our convictions while still showing the love of Jesus?
- How can we avoid becoming judgmental or bitter toward people who don't share our beliefs?

Leader Reminder: Encourage honest discussion without turning this into a conversation about winning arguments or criticizing people outside the church. Our goal is to reflect Jesus in both what we believe and how we treat others.

Key Takeaway: Faithfulness to Jesus may cost us agreement with others, but it should never cost us our love for them.

8. Who around you is thirsty right now? How can you bless them?

Leader Insights:

Jesus' invitation is personal, but the living water He gives isn't meant to stop with us.

In John 7:38, Jesus describes rivers of living water flowing from within those who believe in Him. John explains that Jesus was speaking about the Holy Spirit.

The picture is not simply of receiving something from God but of becoming someone through whom God's life and blessing can reach others.

There are people all around us who are spiritually thirsty. Some may be searching for meaning, struggling with disappointment, carrying grief, feeling lonely, or wondering whether God really cares about them.

We may not be able to solve their problems, but we can demonstrate the love of Jesus through our presence, encouragement, prayer, compassion, and practical acts of kindness.

Consider discussing:

- Who in your family, workplace, neighbourhood, or circle of friends might be spiritually thirsty?
- What might their thirst look like?
- How can we help someone discover Jesus without making them feel like a project?
- Is there one practical way you could encourage or bless someone this week?

Leader Challenge: Encourage everyone to identify one person they can intentionally bless this week. It could be a conversation, an invitation for coffee, a note of encouragement, an offer to pray, or simply taking time to listen.

Key Takeaway: We receive living water from Jesus, and through the Holy Spirit, our lives can become a source of blessing to others.

9. Read Jeremiah 2:13. Broken cisterns are cisterns that cannot hold water. We often look for worldly substitutes that promise refreshment but leave us thirsty again. What is one broken cistern in your life, something you keep returning to for refreshment that never actually satisfies? What could you replace it with?

Leader Insights:

Jeremiah describes two tragic choices God's people had made:

1. They had abandoned God, the spring of living water.
2. They had dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that could not hold water.

A spring provides fresh, continually flowing water. A cistern is a container that collects and stores water. If the cistern is broken, it cannot retain what it collects.

The spiritual picture is powerful. God is the source of life, yet we often turn away from Him and try to find satisfaction through things that cannot ultimately satisfy.

Our broken cisterns might include:

- Approval: Constantly needing affirmation and acceptance from others.
- Achievement: Believing our worth comes from success, productivity, or accomplishments.
- Entertainment: Using endless distractions to avoid difficult emotions or spiritual emptiness.
- Control: Believing we will finally have peace when everything goes according to our plans.
- Possessions: Looking to money, shopping, or material things to provide security and happiness.
- Relationships: Expecting another person to meet needs that only God can ultimately satisfy.

These things aren't necessarily bad in themselves. The problem comes when we expect them to provide what only God can give.

Consider discussing:

- Why are broken cisterns sometimes easier to turn to than God?
- What makes a worldly substitute so appealing, even when we know it won't satisfy?
- What is one practical step you could take to stop returning to a broken cistern?
- What would it look like to intentionally replace that habit with a deeper dependence on Jesus?

Leader Reminder: This question invites vulnerability. Don't pressure anyone to disclose something they aren't comfortable sharing. Encourage people to identify patterns honestly and focus on the invitation to return to Jesus rather than becoming overwhelmed by guilt.

Key Takeaway: We will keep experiencing spiritual thirst if we continually seek satisfaction from things that cannot sustain us. Jesus invites us to return to the true source.

Closing Challenge: Come to Jesus and Drink

The central invitation of this week's message is remarkably simple:

Come to Jesus and drink.

Jesus didn't stand up during Sukkot and tell the people to try harder, become more religious, or find a better spiritual routine. He invited them to come to Him.

That same invitation is available to us today.

As we close, consider three questions:

1. Where am I thirsty? Where am I experiencing spiritual dryness, disappointment, or an unmet longing?
2. Where am I drinking? Am I drawing life from Jesus, or am I returning to broken cisterns that cannot satisfy?
3. Where can the water flow? Who might God want to bless through my life this week?

A final encouragement for LifeGroup leaders:

Our LifeGroups should be places where people don't simply gather to discuss spiritual ideas but encourage one another to experience the life of Jesus.

We want to be people who are continually coming to Jesus, receiving from His Spirit, and allowing His love to flow through us to others.

This is what it means to follow Jesus together.

- This LifeGroup Leader Discussion Guide has been generated by ChatGPT AI and formatted by Jeff Austen.