



**Excerpt from "The People's Thirst at the Feast of Tabernacles" by Cyndi Parker, Ph.D.**

The timing of Jesus' proclamation is significant. Pilgrims go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles to remember God's provisions for their forefathers in the wilderness. They also look towards the future and to the next agricultural cycle when the people need God to provide the early rains again for another viable harvest. The community feasts and rejoices over the harvest even as they crave the early rains for the next year.

Within this context, on the last day of the feast, when the people start to focus their attention on their immediate need for the next season's early rains, Jesus gets up to teach (John 7:37).

Jesus' initial statement, "If anyone is thirsty ..." would have resonated with people on multiple levels.

**So, who in Jesus' audience was thirsty? Physically, the whole community is thirsty.** The dry season is almost over, the cisterns are drying up, fields have been baked dry by the sun, and the people need rain for the viability of the next agricultural season.

Also, the people were engaged in the water ceremony, in which the dual significance of water—their dependence on God for physical rain for life and spiritual provision—was at the forefront of their thoughts.

Jesus claims that all who are thirsty and believe in Him will be satisfied with the best kind of water. **He puts himself in the position of God, the supplier of living water.**

The feast drew the people's attention to their need for rain and for spiritual refreshment from the living waters of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus says that belief in who He is will provide such water. Just as living water is refreshing and ever-flowing, Jesus affirms that the needs of the people will not just be moderately satiated (as with cistern water) but will be provided for in abundance and in the most satisfying way (as with living water). Jesus turns the Old Testament references exemplifying God's provision in terms of living water onto himself by taking the symbolism of water from the Feast of Tabernacles and equating it to the living water He will provide for the people.

*In His Dust:* Talmidim \_\_\_\_\_ . *Acts 4:13 ... (although) they were uneducated and untrained, they began to recognize them as having \_\_\_\_\_ .*

*Memory Verse #40: John 7:38* From His innermost being will \_\_\_\_\_ rivers of \_\_\_\_\_ .

## **Lesson notes & questions:**

### **Lesson Reflections (review before Apply nights):**

- What is at least one new thing I learned about loving God or my neighbor?
- Which topics would I like to know more about or need clarification?
- How does the Holy Spirit want me to apply the lesson's Scripture to my discipleship?

## **APPLY!**

- Share any "Lesson Reflections" with the group. Recite this lesson's Memory and In His Dust verses; discuss what they mean to you.
- **The unbelief of Jesus' Brothers/Feast of Tabernacles John 7:1-13**
  - Why do Jesus's half-siblings want him to go to Jerusalem?
  - Do you ever bargain with God like Jesus's siblings do, asking him to show himself as God to get something you want?
- **Jesus' Authority is from God John 7:14-24**
  - Why do the people begin to hate Jesus?
  - Why does Jesus expose sin?
  - How can the way we deal with sin either distort or clarify the gospel?
- **The people debate - John 7:25-36**
  - How is it possible for someone to know a lot of information about Scripture and still not understand it?
  - Why do the religious leaders hate Jesus and want to kill Him?
  - In what ways does self-righteousness deceive us? Why is this deception so dangerous?
  - Using the above two questions, is there anything you need to confess and repent of in your life?
- **Mayim Chayim - John 7:37-39 / Isaiah 55:1**
  - If you were previously unfamiliar with the cultural background of the Jewish feast and the significance of the time of year it occurs (see the article on page 1), how did this context help your understanding of "mayim chayim," / "living water?"
  - How does Jesus use Isaiah 55:1 to invite the people to come and drink? What specifically was He inviting them to believe and do?
  - What is the significance of verse 39?
  - Time permitting, **read all of Isaiah 55** (13 verses).
- **What do you want to remember and apply from this lesson?**
- **Spend the last five minutes in prayer pairs.**
  - Seek His will for our church, our community, and our society.
  - Praise for answered prayers, growth, and how God is working in your life.