

How to Quench Your Spiritual Thirst

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October 5, 2025

Longing for Revival

John 7:37-39

Have you ever been really thirsty? Maybe you've taken a long hike or a bike ride and forgotten to take water or ran out of water hours before. Or maybe you've been out working in the yard, doing landscaping or moving furniture. Or maybe you're just lying on the beach and you suddenly experience intense thirst. Can you remember any time in your life when you were really, really thirsty? Well, multiply that feeling of thirst by 10,000 and you'd still be light years away from what a Salvadoran fisherman named Jose Salvador Alvarenga experienced.

[SLIDE #1] IMAGE: Jose Salvador Alvarenga

Jose was a fisherman, and on November 17th, 2012, he set out from a fishing village in Mexico for a planned 30 hours of deep-sea fishing. He hoped to catch sharks and marlin and sailfish. He chose as a sailing companion a guy he didn't know, who was very inexperienced. So, Jose set out from the coast of Mexico in a 23-foot boat. He was caught in a terrible storm which ended up damaging his boat's motor and all the other electronics on the boat. Jose's boat had no sail, no oars, no anchor, no running lights. It began drifting in the Pacific currents, further and further and further out to sea. Jose drifted in this boat in the Pacific not for a week or a month, but for 14 months until he finally came near to one of

the Marshall Islands more than 6,000 miles from where he started. His inexperienced companion sadly ended up dying four months into this journey. But José, who had a really strong Christian faith, hung on. He survived by catching fish, turtles, jellyfish, and seabirds with his bare hands. He drank rainwater in little plastic containers that he used to catch the water. But for most of the time, sailing for 14 months, he experienced the most intense thirst you could imagine. His body was regularly screaming for water. And when he landed in the Marshall Islands, he was immediately hospitalized for severe dehydration.

Now, thirst is not just a physical issue. It's also a spiritual issue, as we will learn today. We've been doing a series on the Holy Spirit as we look forward to a Holy Spirit conference that Vineyard is going to be hosting at our Westerville campus on October 24-26. Today, we're going to consider this one simple question. How do you quench your spiritual thirst? We are going to be considering just three verses this morning from the Gospel of John. Here's what we read in John 7:37-39:

[SLIDE #2] 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. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom

those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Now the feast or the Jewish holiday that John is referring to here is the holiday called the Feast of Tabernacles, or the Feast of Booths, which, in Hebrew, is known as Sukkot. It was one of the three great pilgrimage festivals in the Jewish calendar, along with Passover and Pentecost. These pilgrimage festivals required Jewish men, wherever they lived, to travel up to Jerusalem for a feast. We'll consider this holiday of Sukkot or Booths in just a moment. But first, let's put this statement in John chapter 7 in the larger context of John chapters 5 through 10.

In each of these chapters, John chapters 5 through 10, John writes about what Jesus did on a particular Jewish holiday. John is trying to tell us in the plainest terms that

OUTLINE: Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, is the fulfillment of the Hebrew Bible, including the fulfillment of what the Jewish holidays were all about. People ask, “How should I understand the Old Testament with all these Jewish rituals and Jewish holidays and sacrifices and weird stories?” Jesus actually explains to us how to understand the Old Testament. After Jesus rose from the dead, we read a story of him walking alongside two of his disciples on a road to a town called

Emmaus. In the middle of talking with them, Jesus leads the best Bible study in history. Here's what we read in Luke 24:44:

[SLIDE #3] He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

In other words, every part of the Old Testament, the Torah - the first five books of the Old Testament - the prophets – all of the history and prophetic books - and the writings – Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and so on – all point to Jesus. And in John 5:39, Jesus says, the very same thing to some Pharisees,

[SLIDE #4] You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me

The key to unlocking the Old Testament scriptures is to look for Jesus in every text. There is an old nursery rhyme that says this,

[SLIDE #5] The new is in the old concealed, the old is by the new revealed.

In other words, the New Testament is hidden in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is revealed by the New Testament. A similar nursery rhyme says, "The new is in the old contained. The old is by the new explained." If you want to understand the Old Testament, you need the New Testament as an explanatory key.

Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer said that in the same way that a mother goes to the cradle to look for her baby, Christians ought to go to the Old Testament looking for Jesus., The idea is that the whole Old Testament is a giant sign pointing ahead to Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. Or better yet, the Old Testament is a thousand little signs all flashing, "Jesus is the Messiah," - the one who God picked to fix this messed up world that we live in and to restore it in the way that God designed the world to work.

So when we read the stories in the Old Testament, we should say,

- Jesus is Adam, only he's the new Adam, obeying God where the first Adam failed.
- Jesus is righteous Abel, killed by his brother
- Jesus is Noah's ark who will rescue us from God's judgment.
- Jesus is Melchizedek, a king and a priest
- Jesus is the beloved only son of Abraham offered up as a sacrifice to God.
- Jesus is the ram caught in the thicket

- Jesus is Joseph, betrayed by his brothers, falsely accused, and yet exalted to the right hand of the king
- Jesus is the Passover lamb.
- Jesus is Aaron's rod.
- Jesus is the manna in the wilderness, the rock that gave water, and the atonement cover on the ark of the covenant.
- Jesus is the Day of Atonement and the scapegoat on the day of Atonement.
- Jesus is the great high priest.
- Jesus is the tabernacle where we meet God.
- Jesus is David, a shepherd king who is after God's own heart
- Jesus is the preacher of good news in Isaiah, and the Isaiah 53 suffering servant.

From John chapter 5 to John chapter 10, John tells us over and over again that

OUTLINE: Jesus is the fulfillment of the Jewish festivals.

So in John chapter 5, we read about Jesus healing on the Sabbath, and John is telling us that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath who gives the life and restoration that Sabbath promised.

In John chapter 6, the holiday is now the Passover. And Jesus uses that holiday to communicate that he is the true bread of life. He is the manna that God supplied in the wilderness, and he is the Passover Lamb whose blood was shed

to save us from the angel of death. In John chapters 7 through 9, we read about the Feast of Tabernacles, what is called in Hebrew Sukkot. In John chapter 10, we have another Jewish holiday. It's called in English the Feast of Dedication. Jews call that holiday Hanukkah, and it points to Jesus as the consecrated one. He is the Son of God offering his life for the sins of the world.

Again, here in John chapter 7, 8, and 9, the holiday, as I said, is the Feast of Tabernacles. It is Sukkot. And

OUTLINE: Jesus is the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles,

what the feast of Sukkot is all about.. What is the Feast of Sukkot? What was it designed to do in the Old Testament?

Well, first of all, Sukkot, or Tabernacles, was a commemoration of the wilderness wanderings. You see, what God commanded in the Old Testament is that for seven days, Jews should live in a temporary booths that they build on the flat roofs of their houses or out in their backyards, a temporary booth that is open to the sky because as Leviticus 23:43 points out, God wants you to dwell in booths

[SLIDE #6] “... so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in temporary shelters when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”

The booths, the Sukkot, reminds us of our dependence on God's protection in all of the years of their wilderness wanderings. The notion is this God wants to bring his people into a place of dependence on him. For seven days, he says, "I want you to give up the security of living in a permanent house. I want you to give up the comfort of sleeping in your own bed. And I want you to live in a place where you are vulnerable. You're exposed to the skies, all the elements, the uncertainty of life." And this holiday of Tabernacles reminds us that our ultimate security is only found in God.

You see, it's really hard for us in the modern world to exercise faith, real faith, because for most of us, especially in America, we have so many layers of protection and provision shielding us from the uncertainties of life. We have insurance and bank accounts and investments, and IRAs, and 401Ks. And if all of that goes away, many of us can turn to our family or to the government, to social insurance programs.

It becomes harder and harder with the more layers of security we have to pray with an honest heart, "give us this day our daily bread." Daily bread? I mean, my goodness. Within a half a mile of my home, we have like four major grocery stores. We don't need to pray for daily bread. We've got supermarkets filled with aisles of bread. So Sukkot, in part, was designed to teach people dependence upon God, that once a year, people would put themselves at risk. They would

make themselves vulnerable. We would remember that we live and we succeed only because of God's grace.

Let me pause for a moment and ask you. Do you know this lesson at the core of your being? Do you know that the only reason why your body works is because of the grace of God? Do you know God's grace is the only reason why your heart continues to beat? God's grace is the only reason you continue to breathe?

Why you eat every day? Why you survive when you drive in a car on the highway? Why your life works at all? The reason you retain your job, or experience love, or go on living, is simply because of the grace of God. Do you know that if God were to withdraw his hand, you and I would stop living? Well. let's read the text again. In John 7, verses 37-39, the apostle John writes this.

[SLIDE #7] 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. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Now, John speaks about the last and greatest day of the feast. And this last and greatest day of the feast is probably the seventh day of Sukkot, which is the

culmination of Sukkot, or it could be, and there's some debate among the commentators, an eighth day. Following Sukkot, there was a solemn assembly. It was treated as a kind of holy convocation. Now these debates whether the last and greatest day was the 7th or the 8th day are not really relevant for understanding what John is getting at. We're talking about the finale of Sukkot.

There is a reason that Jesus shouted in a loud voice on the last and greatest day of the feast. ” If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.” The Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkot teaches us about our need for spiritual water. You see, there was an ancient ceremony that was performed on Sukkot. If we go back into the Rabbinic sources, we find out that on each day of Sukkot, a priest would carry a golden vessel down from the temple to the pool of Siloam in Jerusalem and there he would fetch a pitcher of water. He would then walk back with this pitcher of water to the temple and enter through the gate called the Water Gate. As the priest entered through this gate, there would be a trumpet blast announcing the priest's arrival. Then, when the priest came into the temple, he would take the water and pour it out on the base of the altar alongside of the daily offering. This event, watching the pouring out of the water by the altar, was accompanied by music. The crowds would begin to dance, and there was a festive atmosphere. The Talmud says,

[SLIDE #8] “He who has not seen the rejoicing at the place of the water drawing, has never seen rejoicing in his life.”

This was a blowout party every day for seven days as the priest poured out the water at the base of the altar.

Now, this ritual of the pouring out of water had symbolic functions. First of all, this was a time of year when the rains generally had stopped. In Israel, there were long periods of drought over the summer months. And so this ritual reminded the people to pray for water - the time for prayers for rain usually began around Sukkot. The ritual reminded people that God was the one who provided in the wilderness, especially water, and that they were dependent on God's blessing. It recalled that God was the source of living water.

So, Jesus seizes this moment where water is being poured out and everybody is celebrating and singing and dancing, and he cries out in a loud voice, **“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.”** He follows that with **“whoever believes in me, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”** What kind of thirst is Jesus referring to when he says, “if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink?” Well, Jesus is clearly speaking about spiritual thirst. He's not talking about physical thirst. When he says, “come to me and drink,” he's talking about spiritual thirst.

OUTLINE: Jesus is the one who quenches our spiritual thirst.

Let me explain what I mean by spiritual thirst. Back in the 17th century, there was a French scientist and mathematician who had a powerful experience of God one night when he was alone in his room. This scientist and mathematician's name was Blaise Pascal. A few years later, after this experience, and right before he died, he jotted down his thoughts in a book that was published after his death. The book was called Pensees, in French, which means “Thoughts.” And in that book, Pascal said,

[SLIDE #9] “There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator. This [man] tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.

What creates a spiritual thirst inside of each of us?

OUTLINE: There is a God-shaped hole inside of each of us.

The great St. Augustine said something really similar over 1200 years before Pascal. Augustine, in his opening line of his famous Confessions, wrote this:

[SLIDE #9] "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, And our heart is restless until it rests in you."

And finally, 400 years before Pascal, the great St. Thomas Aquinas wrote,

[SLIDE #10] "In this life, no one can satisfy his longing, nor can any creature satisfy Man's desire."

Only God satisfies. He infinitely exceeds all other pleasures. That is why we can find ultimate satisfaction in nothing but God. There is a God-shaped hole in every human soul. This hole is infinitely large, and so it can only be filled by an infinite God. But let's be honest - every one of us

OUTLINE: We try to fill the God-shaped hole in our souls with little marbles from this creation.

It's like we come to the Grand Canyon and we say, "I can fill this hole up. I've got a bag of marbles." So we toss them in one at a time. Plink, plink, plink. And we continually deceive ourselves into thinking that these little marbles from creation can fill this infinite hole in our soul that is designed to be filled by our Creator.

What do I mean by “these little marbles that we draw from creation?” Well, think about what we try to fill this void inside of us with. Instead of turning to Christ, we say, “I’m going to pour all of my energy into climbing the corporate ladder, because by doing that, I will achieve lasting joy. I’ll find identity in my work.” We take this little marble and throw it in the Grand Canyon - plink. Ecclesiastes 2:11 says this:

[SLIDE #11] Then I considered all that my hands had done, and the toil I expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind.

Eventually, all the titles fade. Eventually, we end up leaving our jobs or retiring or being fired from our jobs, and all the promotions in the world never heal our soul.

So we find another marble in the bag. Romance. My spouse will complete me. You complete me. We chase after “the one” who will fill us, believing that some other human being can satisfy this God-shaped hole. Jesus said to the woman at the well who had been through five romantic relationships and now was on her sixth, **“Everyone who drinks this water (the water of falling in love) will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst.”**
Plink..

Maybe money. Maybe if I get enough money, if I get the right financial advisor and my bank account gets big enough, that will give me peace. That will give me a sense of control. But money can never bring us peace. Ecclesiastes 5:10 says,

Whoever loves money never has enough. Whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This, too, is meaningless.

Well, how about religion? I know what you're saying, "Rich, I need religion. So I will devote myself to church activities. Every night, I will go from one meeting to the next and serve in church like crazy and fill my life with religious busyness.

But all of this doing for God begins to be a substitute for simply being with God and experiencing God. Lots of religious people are a million miles away from God.

Let's consider one obvious thing that has become a substitute for God for millions of Americans – politics. How many people are looking to politics or a politician for ultimate meaning and purpose in life? How many people – even those of us who say we are followers of Christ – believe that "if only the right person or political party gets into power, everything will be ok?" The results of elections begin to feel like Judgment Day – a matter of salvation or destruction. Political identity has become the primary lens through which all of life is viewed. The whole way another person is viewed is based on how they voted. Friends have split up, families have split up, and more and more churches have split up all because of the counterfeit

salvation offered by politics. Way more people in America now say that they could not marry someone who voted differently than them, than say they could not marry someone who had a different religion than them. What you think about politics for many people is more important than what you think about God.

Let me ask you a personal question. What do you fill the God-shaped hole in your soul with? What do you do, in other words, when you're bored? Well, binge watch TV, stream music, scroll and scroll and scroll and scroll for hours. Some of us turn to our favorite numbing substance like food or alcohol or weed or shopping online or pornography. Even obsessive exercise can be a coping mechanism where we just seek some sort of comfort or something to escape our boredom. Jeremiah chapter 2:13 says this:

[SLIDE #12] “My people have committed two sins:

They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

Jesus says something so simple and yet so profound concerning how you and I can find ultimate satisfaction in life and fill the God-shaped hole in our soul. He says,

“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”

Jesus asks us, “Are you spiritually thirsty?” Any person who is self-aware in the least would answer emphatically, “Yes, I am thirsty.” Jesus then says, “Here’s how you will quench your throat:

1. **OUTLINE: “Believe in me!”**

Do you believe that I am enough? That you don’t need me AND a huge bank account...me AND tons of religious activity...me AND a new romance? Believe that I am enough!

2. Secondly, if you believe that Jesus is enough, Jesus says,

OUTLINE: “Come to me.”

Don’t just have ideas in your head about me, but turn to me, open your heart to me, look to me, draw new to me.

3. And third,

OUTLINE: “Drink in my Spirit.”

Jesus is not just a person in history. He is alive! You can relate to him right now! Open your heart and ask him to fill the Grand Canyon-sized hole in your soul.

If you do those three things:

- Believe in Jesus
- Come to Jesus
- And drink in the Spirit of Jesus

Jesus says, “rivers of living water will flow from within you.” Not stagnant water, but outflowing, fresh, pure, refreshing water that is the life-giving, thirst-quenching Spirit of God.

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John 7:37-39

- I. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Hebrew Bible
- II. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Jewish festivals
 - A. Passover
 - B. Sabbath
 - C. Feast of Dedication
- III. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles
- IV. Jesus is the one who quenches spiritual thirst
 - A. There is a God-shaped hole in each of us
 - B. We try to fill the God-shaped hole with little marbles from creation
 - C. Jesus says he will satisfy our thirst if we:
 - 1) Believe in him
 - 2) Come to him
 - 3) Drink in his Spirit

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John 7:37-39

I. Jesus is the fulfillment of the _____

II. Jesus is the fulfillment of the _____

A. Passover

B. Sabbath

C. Feast of Dedication

III. Jesus is the fulfillment of the _____

IV. Jesus is the one who _____

A. There is a _____ in each of us

B. We try to fill the God-shaped hole _____

C. Jesus says he will satisfy our thirst if we:

1. _____ in him

2. _____ to him

3. _____ his Spirit
