



Water from the Well

A Guided Silent Retreat in John 4

by Jill Austin

You are invited to join us at Jacob's well and be part of a divine encounter between a Samaritan woman and Jesus.

Journey with us and experience a place of spiritual transformation as you enter the real presence of God, just as you are.

Open your heart and your spirit and let him give you a drink of living water.



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Welcome Beloved of God

Dear Beloved,

Today is a gift you have given yourself. God extends an invitation to us and he waits for us to respond. James 4:8a says, “*Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.*” He is calling you into deeper communion with him. Throughout the Bible Jesus models his need to draw away and spend time with the Father. This is your day to join him in silence and I know that the Lord will bless your obedience.

Solitude and silence is a time to refocus on Jesus and grow in your relationship with him. Ruth Haley Barton says in her book, *Introduction to Solitude and Silence*, “It is in silence that we habitually release our own agendas and our need to control and become more willing and able to give ourselves to God’s loving initiative. Silence deepens the experience of solitude. Remember, the purpose of solitude and silence is just to be with God.” It is a journey. Richard Rohr said, “A good journey begins with knowing where we are and being willing to go somewhere else.”

In your time of silence, you will be guided by the questions and led by the Holy Spirit. It is a time to open your heart to his leading as you mine the scriptures for its treasures. In his sermon about Jesus’ meeting with the Samaritan woman, John Piper says “It reveals woeful truth about ourselves and the wonderful truth about Jesus. And the wonderful truth that it reveals about Jesus gives hope to us in our woeful condition.”

You will be encouraged to “water your heart with the Word of God, nurture it with prayer, root out the seeds of sin, and develop a deeper relationship with the Lord.”¹ Someone said, “God is the one who decides where we harbor sin and erect strongholds in our hearts. We don’t want to give Satan a foothold or a place to hide. It is your knowledge of God’s heart and his Word that will protect you from falling into sin and allowing other voices to speak into your life.”

My prayer for you today is:

- that you will be able to ask yourself the question: Am I spiritually thirsty? And then identify the areas of thirst you are experiencing and how to satisfy that soul-thirst
- that you will be able to put yourself into the story of meeting Jesus at the well and allowing him to minister to you right where you are
- that you find hope and grace for this season of your life and identify God’s plans for you
- that you receive the living water Jesus offers through his Word and power of the Holy Spirit, and your soul-thirst is satisfied

Let the Lord take you on a journey today. The deep work of God doesn’t happen on the go. It happens when we are still. Psalm 46:10 says, “*Be still and know that I am God.*”

¹ Ditchfield, Christin, Tract: *A Heart Like a Garden*, March 1, 2004, Out of Print.

Preparing Your Heart for Silence

Silence is a place to meet God fully outside the demands and noise of everyday life. It provides an opportunity for intimacy with God where we can hear his voice. It inclines our heart to be more like his. It is a means by which we open ourselves to God and experience his transforming presence. It is where our soul can find rest in the Father's arms. It contributes to a more mature and full spiritual life.

Here are a few suggestions as you begin your time of silence:

- As you begin, relinquish your cell phone. It links you to the world and may be a distraction.
- Find a comfortable place and take a few deep breaths. Become aware of what is happening in your body. Are you holding any stress in your body? Are there thoughts swirling around in your head? If so, just go with them and be aware of what is happening. During your retreat, if those thoughts continue to interrupt your time with the Lord, write them down and return to being present with him.
- If you are having difficulty quieting yourself, take a walk. Be aware of your surroundings. Sometimes God uses spaces, benches, nature, statues to speak to you.
- If your retreat space has external noise or distractions, simply accept where you are today. God may use a distraction, or whatever is causing the distraction, as a teachable moment.
- Don't be surprised as you enter your time of silence if you fall asleep while trying to pray through things or have trouble concentrating.
- Perhaps you become disillusioned because nothing seems to be happening or you can't hear his voice. Simply wait.
- Part of the discipline of silence is to process emotions and thoughts with God versus talking to someone else about them. This can be a challenge for some of us who are verbal processors and may require a little extra time.
- It is okay to rest and nap. Physical restoration may be part of God's plan for you. Be mindful not to use it as a means of escape from hearing the Lord.
- Be aware of forcing something rather than being drawn into his presence. Wait on him.
- When you have quieted yourself, ask the Lord to come and begin your time in prayer. It can be a time of speaking to the Lord or just being quiet and presenting yourself to him.
- When the time of silence has come to an end, close your time with a prayer of gratitude for God's presence with you today and ask the Holy Spirit to seal in what the Lord has done in your heart.



Introduction to the First Meditation

Water from the Well

A Little History

Jesus' public ministry centered mainly in Galilee and Jerusalem. Early in his ministry, he decided to cross through Samaria, a land that divided Galilee in the far north from Jerusalem and Judea in the south. The Jews typically avoided traveling through Samaria as Samaritans were considered outcasts. Some Jews regarded Samaritans as foreigners or mixed breeds, and were often hostile to them. Animosity reigned between the Samaritans and the Jews for over 400 years. Many Jews avoided contact with them because they were considered unclean, heretics, and enemies.

As this chapter opens, we see Jesus leaving Judea with His disciples and journeying to Galilee. He travels through Samaria and stops at a well outside the city of Sychar to rest and quench his thirst. It is interesting to note in the scripture, Jesus *had* to go through Samaria.

Notice:

- He sent all of his disciples to buy food from the Samaritans.
- He remained alone and conspicuous at the well at noon.
- He was not afraid to ask the woman for a drink.

Quiet yourself in God's presence and read the Scripture on the next page, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal his truth about the Scripture to you. If this is a new practice for you, don't fret. You will be fine. The questions will help you navigate the Scripture passage.

First Meditation

A life-changing encounter with Jesus

John 4:1-15 (ESV)

³ He left Judea and departed again for Galilee. ⁴ And he had to pass through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there; so, Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷ A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that You, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ **but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.** ¹⁵ **The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.**" ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

Begin by writing any thoughts or questions that come to mind as you are reading the scripture. Record them in your journal and reflect on them now or at the end of the First Meditation.

Then engage with the following questions. The questions are here to guide you, but feel free to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. You may want to just spend time asking the Holy Spirit to bring revelation to you regarding the Scripture as it relates to you personally. Ask him what is he saying to you?

First Meditation

1. Knowing what you know about the relationship between Jews and Samaritans, what emotions might the Samaritan woman be experiencing as she approaches the well, seeing a suspicious stranger, and probably recognizing him to be a Jew?
 - Reflect on her response.
 - How are you drawn into the encounter?
 - Reflect on the emotions that arise in you. What is happening in your heart?

2. How do you see Jesus engaging her and what traits/characteristics does he exhibit in this encounter?
 - As a reflection, how are you exhibiting some of those traits/characteristics, such as approachability and acceptance of others?
 - What traits does this encounter help you identify in yourself that you would like to use or change in your interaction with others?

3. As you witness the encounter, what do you see happening in the heart of the Samaritan woman? What was her response to his request? How valuable do you think the Samaritan woman was to Jesus?
 - Now spend some time reflecting on how valuable *you* are to God.
 - What is he saying to your heart?
 - Spend time sharing with him about what's in your heart and how you need a drink of the living water he gives.

First Meditation

4. What about the Samaritan woman resonates with your own life? How are you like her? How do you differ from her?
 - After reflecting on these questions, take some time to examine your own feelings and how this encounter impacts you spiritually?
 - Open your Bible and go to Galatians 5:22-23. Highlight the fruits of the Spirit that reflect the character of God. Reflect on them for a few moments and ask the Lord to identify a fruit(s) that he wants you to focus on.
 - What consistent fruit of the Spirit do you want to exhibit that will prompt an opportunity for others to want to emulate you and provide you with an opportunity for divine teaching?

5. Take some time to sit with verses 10-14 in John 4:
 - Examine your heart. What are you thirsting for? Friendship? Acceptance? Community? Forgiveness? Healing? Boldness? Economic security?
 - How is your thirst inviting you to open more deeply to God?
 - What five things does he say about the water he gives? How do you relate to each one of them?
 - What do you believe the living water to be? Are you ready to open your heart and receive his gift of living water or have you already received it? What effect has it had on your life? (See John 7:37-39)
 - If you have not received the gift, ask him for it now.

6. The Samaritan woman asks for this water, so she won't be thirsty or have to come to the well to draw water anymore. She doesn't know who he is until he leads her out of darkness.
 - How does this journey out of darkness begin? What is he offering to the woman?
 - How does she open her heart to receive this life-giving water?
 - Reflect on where, in your life, you are still in darkness. You might want to read John 9:5. What is he revealing to you today in this passage?
 - Reflect on how you can share the gift of living water with others.



Introduction to the Second Meditation

Water from the Well

Today you have given yourself the gift of solitude. Practicing the discipline of solitude is a way of developing an awareness of the need to be still before God and becoming attentive to the voice of God, his Word, and the moving of the Holy Spirit within you. Henri Nouwen says, “Solitude is the furnace in which transformation takes place. It reveals that it is from this transformed or converted self that real ministry flows.”²

Nouwen goes on to say “The God who speaks in the silence of our hearts is the God who seeks to make us whole and to guide us in the paths of righteousness. God draws near to those who seek, wait, and pray. Silence is the discipline by which the inner fire of God is tended and kept alive. Silence guards the fire within.”³

I hope you had a wonderful time with the Lord during your first time of silence. The First Meditation led us to the well of living water and now we will see what the Giver of that water offers the Samaritan woman and ultimately us.

The Second Meditation opens as the woman’s encounter continues at the well, and Jesus leads her to an awareness of a spiritual reality she is not fully aware of until he opens her eyes and opens her heart. There is ‘water’ that forever sustains and satisfies our spiritual life (not our physical life) so that we are never spiritually thirsty again.

² Nouwen, Henri, *The Way of the Heart: Connecting with God through Prayer, Wisdom, and Silence*, p. 10

³ Nouwen, Henri, *The Way of the Heart: Connecting with God through Prayer, Wisdom, and Silence*, p. 45

Second Meditation

The Woman opens her Heart to Receive Life-Giving Water

Quiet yourself once again as you sit in God's presence and then read the Scripture below. Let the Holy Spirit continue to speak to you through it and journal your reflections, thoughts, and questions.

John 4:16-26

*¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." ¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." ¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." ²⁶ **Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."***

Second Meditation

1. When Jesus confronts her with the truth, she attempts to redirect his attention from herself to the subject of religion, but Jesus refuses to be distracted and gets to the heart of the matter.
 - What was happening in her heart during the confrontation?
 - Reflect on how you respond when Jesus confronts you.

2. She came to Jesus just as she was. He uncovered her sin and her heart opened to receive life-giving water and she trusted Jesus with her story. In what ways are you building a relationship of trust with him?
 - Reflect on the ways you are able to open your heart to the Lord.
 - What hinders you and why?
 - Ask him to help you be more open.
 - Spend some time opening your heart to Jesus about the sin in your life. Ask the Lord, *“Help me see myself as you see me, Lord. Reveal my sins and my gifts that I might serve you.”*
 - Billy Graham once said the Scriptures identify over 200 sins. I invite you to go to Galatians.5:19-21 and let the Holy Spirit identify the sin you hold in your heart. You might also want to go to Proverbs 8:13 to learn how he hates the sin of pride and arrogance in us.
 - Once you have identified your sin(s):
 - Can you surrender/confess your sins to the Lord? (1 John 1:9)
 - Pray Psalm 51 that is found on page 15.
 - Repent (Luke 5:32; Acts 17:30; Romans 2:4).
 - Ask him for forgiveness (1 John 1:9; Psalm 86:5).
 - Spend a few moments with the Lord. Now receive your forgiveness (Matthew 6:12, 14-15).

3. It doesn't matter the shame of your past or your present circumstances. Jesus will forgive you if you trust him, confess and turn from your sin, and embrace him as your only hope. (Luke 5:32)
 - Reflect on this life-giving water and his forgiveness. How might this change your heart and walk with the Lord?
 - Ponder how you can share Jesus, his forgiveness of sin, and his love with others. Who does he bring to mind?

Second Meditation

4. Then Jesus tells her “*an hour is coming, and it is now, when true worshipers will worship in spirit and in truth.*”
 - Reflect on what Jesus means by this statement.
 - Spend some time evaluating your heart in relationship to your worship and your relationship with God.
 - Ask yourself what percentage of each day/week do you allocate to worship? What types of worship do you engage in?
 - What revelation did you uncover? What would you like to change?

5. The woman tells him she knows Messiah is coming but is unaware that he is the Christ.
 - How does he respond to her? What was the focus of his entire encounter with her at the well? What did he reveal to her about himself?
 - Do you know Messiah, the Christ? If not, do you want to know him today?
 - Pray the sinner’s prayer and ask Jesus to come into your heart: *Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for your forgiveness. I believe you died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite you to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow you as my Lord and Savior.*
 - If you prayed that prayer, welcome to the family of God.

6. Reflect on the valuable truths and insights you learned from the woman at the well today. How might they impact your life going forward? And, what will you take with you?
 - Reflect how can you share the gift of life-giving water with others? Where are places of relationship in your life?
 - Reflect on the places in your life where your joy wells up like a spring of living water. Identify those places in your life and nourish them.
 - Reflect on the areas of your life where you are still thirsty. Why?
 - How can you receive the life-giving water Jesus gives?
 - What do you want him to do for you?
 - Spend some time resting in his Divine embrace and allow the Holy Spirit to speak directly to your heart. What does he say to you?
 - What are you taking home with you from your encounter today? Perhaps you might like to write out a prayer to him.

Second Meditation

A Contrite Sinner's Prayer for Forgiveness.

- ¹ *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions.*
- ² *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!*
- ³ *For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.*
- ⁴ *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your
judgment.*
- ⁵ *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive
me.*
- ⁶ *Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom
in the secret heart.*
- ⁷ *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter
than snow.*
- ⁸ *Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.*
- ⁹ *Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.*
- ¹⁰ *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*
- ¹¹ *Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from
me.*
- ¹² *Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.*
- ¹³ *Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.*
- ¹⁴ *Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.*
- ¹⁵ *O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.*
- ¹⁶ *For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.*
- ¹⁷ *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise.*

Psalm 51

Notes



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Activity

Water from the Well Waterdrop

A Remembrance of Your Time with God

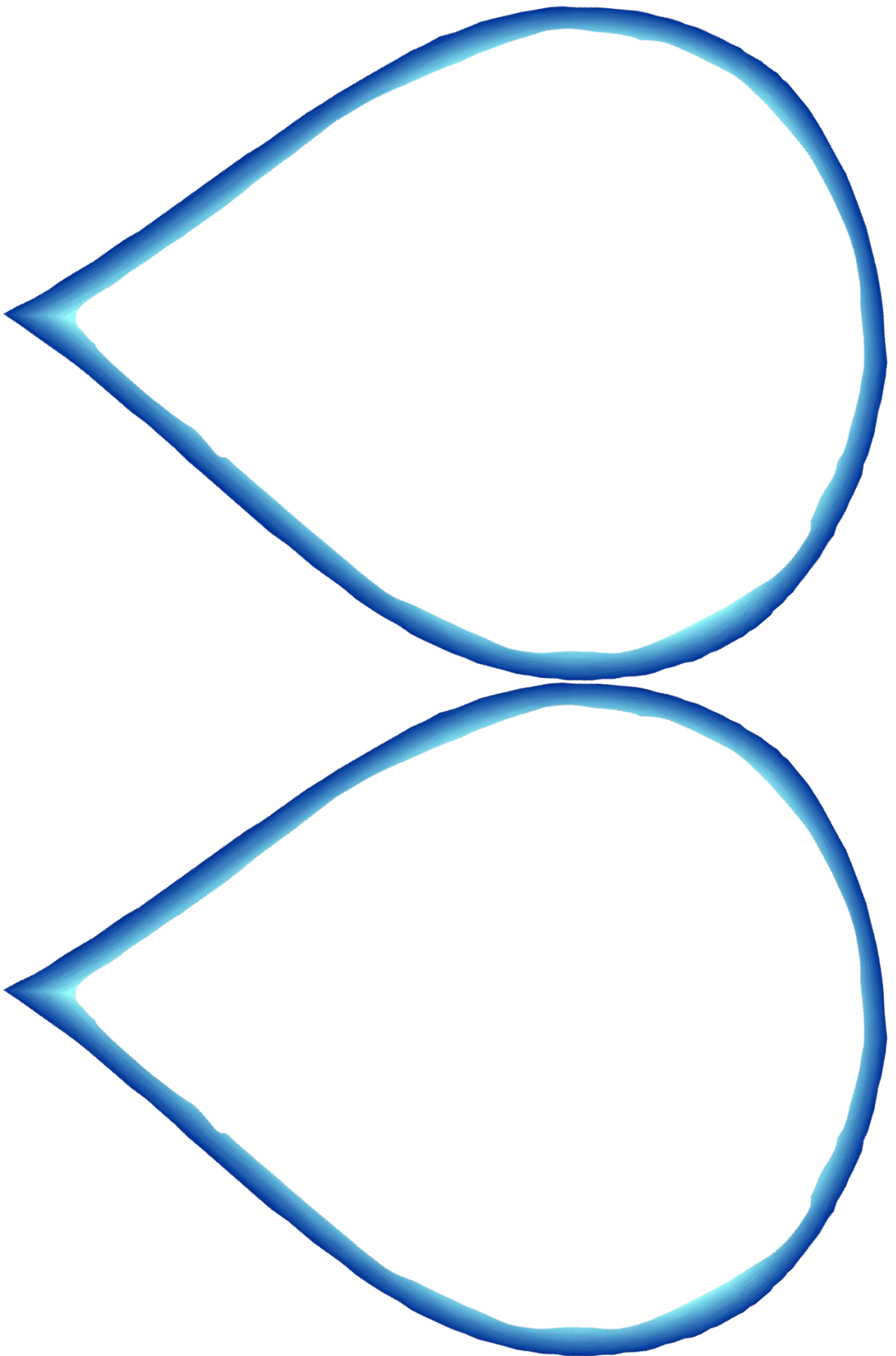
It is always fun to participate in a take-away activity. We invite you to create a *Stone of Remembrance* of your time with the Lord.

We have provided a pattern and an example of a *Living Water Drop*. Please write on it what you want to remember about your time with Jesus today. Perhaps a few words or phrases that will help you remember how Jesus gave you living water.

- Words of comfort, encouragement, affirmation, revelation, Scripture
- An invitation from him for more times of intimacy
- Ways he showed his love for you today
- Ways he wants to challenge you as you embrace and grow in your relationship with him
- Ways he moved you forward in hope
- You may want to write a short prayer asking the Lord to make it so

Decorate it any way you desire. You might hang it up in a spot you frequent during the day. It is also small enough to fit in most Bibles and journals, so you can reflect on it from time to time.





Planning a Retreat

For an individual retreat:

- Set a timeframe for your retreat—it could be hours, a full day or a weekend...or more!
- Choose a location that you enjoy and offers some sense of quiet—could be your home, a friend's home, church setting, park or a retreat center.
- Set your cell phone and computer aside for the day. Use a printed Bible. It is helpful to let your loved ones and work associates know that you will be having a personal retreat so that they don't contact you unless it is an emergency.
- Plan your menu in advance. Shop for and prepare your food the day before.
- Pray over your retreat the week before. There is occasional spiritual warfare before a planned retreat time!
- Order or buy retreat materials ahead of time. For suggested resources, see below.

For facilitating a group retreat:

- Select a location. If it is a home, identify how much space inside and outside you have. It is generally helpful to plan for on one or two people at the most occupying living space and one person in a bedroom. Because of the solitary nature of a retreat, people tend not to sit next to each other or occupy close personal space. Also, make sure to take weather (heat or cold) into consideration for outdoor space. If it is a park or public space, it is helpful to contact the managing office regarding gardening schedules or other events occurring on the property.
- Pray about who to invite (or if it is within your church, speak with the appropriate person on how to put a notice in the church bulletin). During the week before the retreat, commit each person to prayer.
- It is helpful to send an invitation with time and location details 2-4 months out. Two weeks before the retreat send out an email to include agenda and logistical information.
- If you are charging for the retreat, specify who to pay and where to send payment (or the participants can bring payment to the retreat.)
- Select a menu. You may want to serve continental breakfast foods as people gather for 30 minutes before the retreat. You can have *Lunch with Jesus* and continue the silence. You can order meals from a local deli or restaurant, choose a menu that is easy to prepare ahead of time. Or have participants bring their own. Have a refrigerator available. Consider providing coffee, tea, water. As the facilitator, you don't want to be distracted in the kitchen preparing food when you could be welcoming participants and launching their time of silence.
- Purchase retreat supplies and prepare for the Activity:
 - Print the Water Drop pattern on white card stock for best results and cut it out
 - Assemble colored pencils, pens, and/ or markers, stickers, or other decorations
 - Hole punch and scissors
 - Yarn, ribbon, or twine to hang up the water drop

- See example of water drop on page 19.
- Encourage participants to bring a journal, printed Bible and wear a watch. This will help prevent distractions from electronic devices such as a phone or tablet.
- Suggest participants wear comfortable clothes. If the retreat location includes outdoor space, participants may want to bring a light sweater/jacket, chair, towel and hat.
- When you gather, take a few moments before entering into silence to welcome the participants. You may also want to have each person introduce themselves. It is also helpful at that time to offer logistical information about the venue and the time meal(s) will be available. Then you won't have to interrupt silence during the retreat.
- At the conclusion of the retreat, you may want to gather the participants back for a short time of sharing. Often there are universal themes that emerge during this sharing that bless the entire group.
- Have the ladies fill out an evaluation sheet to assist you in your next retreat.



About NEWIM

The Network of Evangelical Women in Ministry is a non-profit, non-denominational organization that strengthens Christian women who minister to others through networking, equipping and encouraging them in their walk with God.

Foundational Verse

"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding, and we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light." Colossians 1:9-12 (NIV)

Silent Retreats

All of NEWIM's contemplative retreats are for the explicit purpose of giving women time to be **with the Lord and deepening our love for him**. So instead of fellowship times, there are hours dedicated to silence and solitude for contemplating the goodness of his character, pondering the mysteries of his love, and pursuing those spiritual activities that draw us closer to him.

The Springs Retreat (held in Arizona and California)

The Springs Retreat is flexible. It is intended to be a private retreat with various options so you can design your own retreat. When we spend time with the Lord, we come to know his love more deeply and find his love is all we really need. Register and join us in the fall and spring each year. Specific information is available on our website: www.newim.org

Pastors' Wives Retreats

The Pastors' Wives two-night retreat is designed to give a small group of pastors' wives the opportunity to come away for a weekend of rest, fellowship, renewal, worship, encouragement, beauty, wonder and the lavish love of Jesus. There is no cost to the women.

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