

# Accessing the Water of Life

## By: Dallas Willard

Dallas Willard:

Well thank you very much; it is a real pleasure to be here. I always look forward to the chances I have to swing by Biola University, and ah always feels like home. That was a wonderful worship service we just had and I was thrilled to see how you were lifting your hearts to the lord and worshiping him.

Well this morning I want to talk to you about accessing the water of life. Accessing the water of life. Actually what I want to talk to you about is unsatisfied desire.

Unsatisfied desire, Have any of you ever experienced that? I would imagine that by this time you've had some experience with it. I had some myself by your age. And Jesus in the 4th chapter of John, it's a very familiar passage, and I think you must surely know the verse by heart. Ah but Jesus is dealing with a woman who had had a pretty tough life. And um, he wants to introduce her to something that will set her free from the failures of her life. And uh, so he has a little dialogue you'll remember, talking about water. He asked her for a drink. It's kind of shocking to her that he would do that, and so they get in a discussion about water, and drinks and so on. She actually had come out at the hot part of the day probably to avoid having to deal with other people who knew her history and uh so, Jesus says to her "Give me some water, and to drink" and that initiates the discussion. And Jesus says, "Well you know theirs's a different kind of water than this. Theirs's a kind of water that if you drink out of you will never thirst again, and the 14th verse in the 4th chapter of John if you just look at it. He makes this stunning statement

that who so ever drinks of the water for that I shall give shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give will be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life, and of course the woman is in a kind of process of figuring out what's going on here and she's still thinking H2O and so she quite naturally says "How can this be" you know, "boy, give me some of this water so I don't have to come out here way outside of town to the well and carry water in. and Ah so Jesus leads her into a deeper understanding of who he is and of who God is and oh how he can be made available to anyone who will simple take Jesus as their savior. And that will cure the problem of thirst. They're so many thirsty people. I yet to understand that when Jesus speaks to first her, he is speaking of unsatisfied desire. Thirst is unsatisfied desire. And what he's saying is that the desires which govern human life will no longer do that will no longer control will no longer ruin, no more make people unhappy and make them make other people unhappy, because they didn't get what they wanted, and nearly all the troubles that you can locate in this world between human beings are caused by unsatisfied desire.

An unsatisfied desire is for example the root of most anger. It is at the root of resentment, at the root of envy. That's a terrible problem, and when Jesus comes into our lives he brings something that is so fulfilling that he can say those words that's every time I read em I'm kinda shocked by them. "You'll never thirst again"; "You'll never thirst again". you desires will be taken care of, not necessarily by getting what you want because that's a part of the problem is to get to get you to where you don't have to have what you want, and ah unsatisfied desire sits there and it, it can go for years, and we suddenly hear of someone, a Christian perhaps, who has fallen apart and we think, "wow wonder how that happened". That's always a case of a bomb that has been ticking way for years; and the most dangerous thing that you can have is a nurtured satis unsatisfied

desire that sits there in your life and just keeps ticking away. It had to be dealt with. It's distracting, there's another story of Jesus in Luke, is it 12th chapter, you remember he's teaching in a place and a man out of the blue says "master tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." that's typical of how a desire that is dominating someone will just set aside everything that is going on. Jesus probably was not disusing justice and family matters at that point, but that's what on this guy's mind. "Uh master, would you solve my problem?" and that's the way unsatisfied desire works; it just sits there and works, it distorts everything, the things we should be thinking about we can't think about, the business we should be taking care of we can't really pay attention to it. This even shows up in our nursery rhymes and other simple places, you know the one that goes "Pussy cat, Pussy cat, where had you been?" you ever hear that one? They teach that at Biola

[Laughter]

"Pussy cat, Pussy cat, where had you been? I've been to London to see the great queen, Pussy cat, Pussy cat, what saw you their? I saw a wee mouse under her chair." You go to see the queen but what's on your mouse when your mind is a mouse when your mouse is a mind.

[Laughter]

So that's what you see, that's the way the mind works. Now what Jesus is saying here is there is a satisfaction that is so deep that it can free us from unsatisfied desire and that satisfaction comes from being involved in his life, in what he's doing, and allowing him to take our life into his. So you, I have to ask that question of myself. Has my thirst been satisfied? Am I being harassed and driven by thirst, by thirst for applause, thirst for money, thirst for love, thirst for security, thirst for health? Success? Romance? Are those things governing my life? You know Christians don't understand I think the depths at which the New Testament writing especially takes desire very seriously as a problem. Now of course, some other religions take it more seriously. Buddhism so of you will know I'm sure, ah takes it to be the fundamental problem of human life. Ah Christianity does not take desire itself to be sinful, or wrong, it is a fundamental problem of Human life when it begins to control us, and we put that the satisfaction of our desires in the place of God. Getting our way, doing what we want, having the things that we prize, and we become then the captives of our desires. Now Jesus comes to us and he offers us his cross and his resurrection. You're one of the reasons why we've lost so much of a good teaching about desire and language like death to self and uh the meaning of taking up the cross in daily life is because it was interpreted in sometimes, not too far in the past, purely negatively. Jesus never brings us the cross without bringing us the resurrection. He never says just don't pursue your desires, he says, Replace those with my desires and replace your life with my life. So now we need to think about how can we access the water of life in such a way that we will never thirst again? Well I don't know, maybe we ought to hesitate a moment, it would be an honest question wouldn't it. Would I really like to never thirst again? Would I really like to be in that position where for example as Paul says, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am there with be content." Now that you had to answer that individually, you see and we can so caught in who our desires that it

becomes a dear little idle in our heart, and certainly I know in my life and I suspect its true in you that you need to look in there and see if there is a little idle. And it might be in all honesty as you look at that little idle you might want to say, "I really don't want to give that up, I'd rather keep that." So we have to face that question, would we like to never thirst again? Or would we feel like we've gone brain dead or something if we gave up the things that we have set our hearts on. The water of life won't overwhelm us. The water that Jesus gives is something that we have to take. It's not going to force itself on you, and if you or I would like to never thirst again that's something that we have to say, we have to say to the Lord "yes I'd I would like to never thirst again". See we can come to a good worship service or we can have a good devotional time and it feels so wonderful, but has it really dealt with these deeper issues of what our hearts are set upon.

So now let's use a passage from Paul. Colossians 3, to think about how you access the water of Life. Here's how you access the water of life. Okay Colossians 3:1 "If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God." That's something to do isn't it? If ye then risen with Christ, that means there is a new life that's flowing in you, there's a new set of desires. It's not just the same old ordinary human stuff. "If ye then risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of the father. Set your affections or your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." the purely human, the purely natural you can do that, but if you have received resurrection life you now have the option of investing yourself in things that are above, things that are of the spirit. God is Spirit, His kingdom is Spiritual. The Holy Spirit is of course spiritual. You have in you a spirit and it's been brought to life through regeneration's you have placed your faith in Jesus. Now,

what Paul is saying is, you have this option you can now set your mind. See Paul knew, as he says in Romans 8 that, "they that are according to the flesh do mind the things of the flesh and they that are according to the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit." It's where you put your mind. So, can we say just as clearly as possible that when we're thinking about accessing the water of life it is primarily an issue of where we chose to put our minds?

The mind is the freedom of the human being. All of your other freedoms come out of that. Your choice of where to put your mind, and that's what Paul is talking about, place your affections place your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. Now, how does that work? I want to be practical as I can this morning and in order to do it in a little length of time I just share with you a couple of things that I do. Uh, to place my mind on things about. For example when I wake up in the morning I will immediately turn to the Lord's Prayer. Now I began to meditate on that, "Our father who art in Heaven" is that things above or not? Right? It is, isn't it, things above. "Our father Who art un Heaven, Hollowed be thy name" Now I don't just say the words I let my mind dwell in that "Thy Kingdom come" and now I'm thinking about what that means for me the whole day. See I'm committing myself to him. As I go through the Lord's Prayer I'm acknowledging that I can't run my life. I'm acknowledging that he has to run my life, and I'm inviting him in as I dwell on the things that are mentioned in the Lord's Prayer, I Meditatively work through that. Often I will do that before I get out of bed. Now, that might be dangerous for some of you, because I know some people have a problem staying awake if they don't get out of bed, but for whatever reason I don't really have that problem, and so I can, and then I will usually get out of bed in the process of working through the Lord's Prayer. What am I doing, I'm accessing the water of life. I'm accessing it, and so I will work through "Thy kingdom

come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven" I'm thinking about what I have to do that day. I'm thinking about my family, I'm thinking about all the things I'm involved with and I'm bringing the kingdom of God, my supplication, into that. Alternatively, my heart is being lifted with joy because of the reality that I am entering into. If you do that you will change. Remember on the Mount of transfiguration, Jesus's face begins to glow, and his clothing became as white as lightning, and that's because, and the Luke version, I think it is, it says "as he prayed." You see as you pray, you enter in to the stream of life. There is a river whose streams make glade the city of God. You know that Psalm, Psalm 46. And you are entering into that river. Now that river is flowing all the time that's what Jesus is talking about. He's talking about the life of God in this universe. That your you're entered into by your faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ brings it to you, you put your confidence in him and then given strength and given guidance by the Holy Spirit you learn how to access that. I will usually work through the 23rd psalm as well as the Lord's Prayer. And I will do that probably in 10 minutes while I am getting up and dressing and getting ready to go, and now then I don't leave that. I carry it with me and I renew it as I go along. Another thing that you can learn to do is instead of asking a blessing and then eating keep asking the blessing while you eat. Try it. Especially if you like what you are eating.

[Laughter]

So instead of saying you know "bless it" and forgetting about God while you gobble. See keep thinking about God while you eat. Think about food; think about spiritual food as well as good food and ah that you eat. You like the food. Well, put that spiritual food and take Christ in. See, these are things you learn to do to access the water of life. Now that's all placing the mind, but

you have to carry it over into action, and if you go on in Colossians 3 you'll see after mentioning the resurrection life, placing your mind he says "Mortify therefor your members which are upon the earth:" mortify Kill em all. Ah if you go ahead and look at that he will, you will see that it mentions fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence I love the old version you know? Evil Concupiscence, doesn't that sound impressive and you not tempted that you might like that

[Laughter]

Evil concupiscence Good night, let's don't have any of that, right? And then he mentions covetousness which is idolatry, see, let those things drop off. What does he mean when he says "they're on the earth"? He means those are things you can do within it without any help from God, let them drop off, let them drop off. Invite God into your life in everything you are doing, and that is another primary way now that we access the water of life which enables us to never to thirst again, is we make sure that the things that are not godly that we can just do in our own natural abilities are not nourished. That we don't allow our desires to rest on them and to direct our lives into fulfilling them. Um, Mortifies a pretty serious word is. Mortify means to kill off. It's the idea of letting it die. In the passage, in Romans 8, that I quoted from a moment ago, Paul goes on to say in verse 13. "if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live." right, see here, it's a matter of moving from one area of life where you draw your strength from natural desire and they govern your life and then when they're crossed your angry and cross and moving over to the things in which God is involved with and you can trust him with

and allow him to move and grow with his life in you and be confident that what is good will be brought to pass in your life.

See the involvement of God in your action, is a way of drinking of the river of God, it's a way of drinking the water of life which removes thirst from you. We need to go just a little farther though, not just the negative things, but also to talk about some of the positive things. For example when you are tempted to do something that is wrong, remember that is an opportunity to trust the sufficiency of God. Do you know we don't have to do things that are wrong in order to survive? Now folks, that's a big lesson, because people normally assume that in order to survive the time will come when you have to do when what you know to be wrong, and the world is full of that. And ah I don't know what your experience of that is, but if you just go through your ordinary way through the world, you will find many occasions for example; when people will assume that you will lie, and when you face that, see that's an opportunity for you to get down and take another dip out of that water, because if you have the faith and the courage to not do what is wrong, trust in God then you will have the experience of seeing God move in your life. So temptation actually an occasion simply to know God better. To know the reality of God in what we are doing, but even beyond that you know. We all ought to be doing things which are impossible for us to do on our own, and the mark of the presence of the Spirit in one's life is that they are accomplishing things which are humanly impossible, and that's another way that we access the water of life is by seeing what is good to be done, maybe anything from witnessing to someone to deciding you are really going to make a contribution to some problem that you're working on and whatever field of studies or practice you're involved in and trusting God to enable you to accomplish something which you know in your heart you cannot do. That

is the occasion again, not just resisting temptation, but stepping out in faith to do what is humanly impossible, and that's another way that we access the water of life which sets us free from thirst, and become the kind of person who is liberated from the domination of desire and its failure. Now, you know, most people go through their lives more or less defeated by this because they have not heard that they don't have to have their way about anything. There isn't a single thing that they have to have their way about. They can surrender their whole life to God, and because they have never heard that they often go through life angry, disappointed, hurting others because they're hurt, really mad at God, full of un-forgiveness, and what I'm saying to you this morning is when Jesus comes to us and says that those who drink from the water he shall give shall never thirst again. What he is actually saying is we can be free from every bit of that.

At one point in my ordinary courses and lectures at the university in ethics, I will say to the class, don't try to be happy, find something in life better to do than to be happy. And this is like throwing cold water in the faces of the students. A few years ago I had a young lady come up almost breathless and she said "You mean I don't have to be happy?" and actually I think she was somewhat relieved, and we should be relieved. We don't have to be happy, there's something much better than being happy and that is being filled with the life of Jesus Christ. Seeing the life of God move through us as we move through his world, and if we really have faith in the risen Jesus Christ and in his risen kingdom then we are prepared to take the steps, and my challenge for you this morning is, that those who drink of the water that Jesus shall give will never thirst again, never be under the domination of unsatisfied desire and will be liberated into the fullness of life, the resurrected life of Jesus that's in this world today.

Willard: 5015

Shall we stand and be dismissed or is there something else to do?

Let's stand for a benediction.

[Everyone standing]

Heavenly father we thank you that you sent your son Jesus into this world and that you said those who follow me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life, and we pray that today this word, "Never thirst again", "Never thirst again", but have a well of water in ourselves, will mean concretely what you understood it to mean and that we will be set free into the glorious life of sons and daughters of God. In Jesus name we pray it. Amen.