

PETER ROENNFELDT

IF YOU ARE
THIRSTY
YOU CAN BE
SPIRIT-FILLED

BE EMPOWERED FOR LIFE AND WITNESS



"If You Are Thirsty, You Can Be Spirit-filled is refreshing, empowering and transformational. Peter brings clarity to the role of the Holy Spirit and what it means to live a Spirit-filled life. In a time when people are crying out for Living Water, this book speaks powerfully to our church."—Alina and Martin van Rensburg, young adult ministry leaders, Brisbane, Australia

"Finally, a practical book that unpacks the dynamic of the Holy Spirit for our lives and the God-centred journey we all dream of. Peter Roennfeldt provides a rich mix of theological depth and practical application for the most under-capitalised engine room of our faith—a life filled with the Spirit of God."—Dr Nick Kross, youth specialist, South Pacific Discipleship Ministry Team, Sydney

"Until recently I've not placed much emphasis on Holy Spirit baptism and Paul's command that all believers baptised by immersion 'need to be continually filled by the Holy Spirit' (Ephesians 5:18, as in the original). During my own personal revival in experiencing the Spirit's daily filling, Peter Roennfeldt sent me his book, in which he applies the biblical narrative for Spirit baptism and daily filling to our great need—individually and as a church."—Terry Johnson, pastor and denominational leader, Sydney, Australia

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WATER: A PRIORITY

It was a struggle for families to survive on the heavily forested blocks of land allocated to Australian World War II ex-servicemen. There were no amenities, houses or sheds, let alone fences or clearings for growing fruit trees or vegetables or grazing livestock.

During most of my childhood and early teen years, my dad leased McLeod's farm—a small property in the southwest of Western Australia. We used this farm as a base to work the war-service blocks allocated to him, fencing and clearing the land by hand.

Australia is the world's driest inhabited continent, and we were very conscious of the importance of water. We humans need lots of water and can only survive a short time without it. Water is essential for life.

My childhood pre-dates concerns about global warming and climate change, but we knew the devastation of drought and ravaging bushfires. Consequently, when a property was being considered for farming, the question of adequate water for home and cattle was a priority. Were there streams or rivers on the property? And did they flow all year? Was there underground water? What was the condition of the dams, wells, water tanks, windmills and pumps? Would there be an adequate supply of water to survive without rain if there was drought?

There were a number of streams on McLeod's farm. A stony creek bed crossed Caves Road to the east, which was then fed from a spring on the hillside below our house. Another stream flowed from near the dam on the hill opposite, another from the tea-trees behind the dairy, and another stream flowed from the swamps at the back of McLeod's house. When it rained, the flow of each stream increased substantially.

The streams were all different. Some tumbled over rocks and others moved quietly among the rushes, some were brackish from the swamps they passed through and others were crystal clear. However, the various streams on the farm converged and flowed along a valley, on the edge of what we called "the long paddock"—ultimately flowing into the Margaret River.

In this book, we will explore the streams of the Holy Spirit's presence in our

lives. When these converge, the Spirit quenches our deepest spiritual thirst, revitalising our lives and empowering our witness for Jesus.

The Holy Spirit quenches our deepest spiritual thirst, revitalising our lives and empowering our witness for Jesus.

If you are thirsty

Physical thirst signals dehydration. Having endured the extreme temperatures and physical exertion of walking through the wilderness and along the rugged paths of Galilee, Judea and Samaria, Jesus understood thirst. He also identified with the social and spiritual thirst of those He met along the way—their desperate longing for love, care, compassion, healing, peace and justice.

Today, *thirst* has become urban slang for excessive attention-seeking.¹ Used like this, thirst conveys the idea of acting in a manner that “encroaches on boundaries and intrudes on others’ space, jostling self-respect and good taste out of the way.”² In her *New York Times* essay, Carina Chocano observed that this type of thirst is “a condition that exists on a very wide spectrum.” She noted, “The guy who eagerly favourites your every social [media] post is thirsty. The co-worker who’s always fishing for the boss’s praise is thirsty. The brand that tries very hard to be cool is thirsty.”³ You can probably think of other examples—politicians, athletes and entertainment stars. Many are thirsty.

But whether someone is thirsty for healing, wholeness, goodness and love, or for attention, praise, success and material gain, the only water that can truly quench this thirst is *living water*.

The Spirit quenches thirst

Jesus first spoke of living water with a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, 50 kilometres (about 30 miles) north of Jerusalem. Jesus’ disciples had gone into town to buy food, while He had stayed by the well. It was midday and the sun was high in the sky when the woman came to draw water. She was shocked when Jesus asked her for a drink, for Jews and Samaritans did not

speaking—and being a woman was another social barrier.

Jesus ignored her reaction and went straight to the point, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water” (John 4:10, NIV).

The woman missed the magnitude of Jesus’ offer, pointing out that He didn’t have anything to draw water with and dismissing the idea that His water could be better than that from the well of their ancestor Jacob. He responded to her scepticism by telling her, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13, 14, NIV).

Jesus saw the thirst of this broken woman and offered to quench it. When introducing His apostles to the crowds on the Galilean hills a few months later, He said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matthew 5:6, NIV). And, when visiting in Jerusalem later in His ministry, it became clear that the Spirit was the living water who could quench her thirst (see John 7:37–39).

The Spirit revitalises life

In recent years, Australia has experienced widespread drought. Farmers have suffered terribly, their livelihoods stripped from them. We’ve seen millions of square kilometres of the country burn in devastating bushfires, with enormous loss of lives, homes, infrastructure, livestock and wildlife. Footage of koalas begging for water, blackened forests and heavy choking smoke blanketing the country and cities was broadcast around the globe and led to an outpouring of support.

When rain falls, it is always a cause for celebration. While it is still coming down in torrents, kids—and adults too—are out splashing in the rain, and watching wild birds and animals negotiating the swollen streams and rushing waters. In the towns and cities, people open their doors and windows, neighbours connect with each other and communities come alive.

In the same way, the showers of the Spirit refresh, rejuvenate and renew life—revitalising us, our families, friends, colleagues and communities. And while rain can be unreliable, the Spirit’s presence can be counted on.

The Spirit empowers witness

The second time Jesus spoke of living water was in Jerusalem's temple courts about six months before His crucifixion. He was again speaking to thirsty people.

On the final day of the festival of *Sukkot*—also called the Feast of Shelters or Tabernacles—crowds gathered at the temple to watch the ceremonies. Jesus stood up in the midst of the people and shouted: “Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart’” (John 7:37, 38).

John explains that the living water Jesus invited the people to drink was the Spirit, who would quench the thirst of believers. The Spirit would then flow from their hearts into their homes, workplaces and neighbourhoods as He empowered their witness to the resurrected Jesus (see John 7:39; Acts 1:4–8).

But who or what is this Spirit?

Many people have questions about the Holy Spirit. Is the Spirit a person? Is the Spirit divine—co-equal with Jesus and the Father? How did Jesus relate to the Spirit? What does it mean to be baptised by the Spirit? What is the relationship between the baptism of the Spirit and empowerment for life and witness? How does the metaphor of rain relate to the mission of the church? What must I do to experience a daily filling of the Spirit, and what can I expect to happen if I am filled? What difference will it make to my relationship with God and others? What will it look like? What will my family, friends and colleagues see? This book explores these questions and many more.

Unfortunately, the Spirit is neglected by many—often resisted and rejected. Some fear being caught up in excessive behaviour, or even being tricked or trapped by evil spirits. We will examine some of these concerns.

It is my prayer that as you read this book you will be refreshed by the Spirit's thirst-quenching presence, bask in His fellowship, witness His love for you, your family and community, and be empowered for sharing by His baptism.

Getting started

At the end of each chapter in this book, there are questions with key Bible verses to read that will point you to an empowered life. You could start a social media group with friends to explore your discoveries or plan a regular small group catch-up for discussion and application. Having read the key scriptures and the chapter from this book—and after reflecting on your relationship with the Spirit—you might also use the *Discovery Bible Reading* questions as a frame for discussion (see Appendix A):

1. What was new?
2. What surprised us?
3. What do we not understand?
4. What would we obey or apply to our lives?
5. What will we share with another person this week—and with whom?

If you are thirsty, you can be Spirit-filled.

EMPOWERED

1. How do you feel about your current relationship with the Spirit?
2. What are your hopes and expectations for revitalisation and empowerment?

CHAPTER 1

IF YOU ARE THIRSTY

On the last day, the climax of the festival [of Shelters], Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, “*Anyone who is thirsty* may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.’ (When he said “living water,” he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory) (John 7:37–39, emphasis added).

It was a sensational announcement, His most important. The crowds knew it, as did the temple authorities, priests and Pharisees, leaving them bitterly divided.

Some were sure He was “the Prophet”—the one expected before the promised Messiah’s arrival. Others were just as certain that He was the Messiah, but still others were doubtful. “He can’t be!” they concluded. “Will the Messiah come from Galilee?” . . . So the crowd was divided about him” (John 7:40–43).

Some wanted Him arrested. Temple guards were sent by priests and Pharisees to bring Him in. They returned empty-handed, reporting, “We have never heard anyone speak like this!” (John 7:46).

Setting the stage

Before going to Jerusalem, Jesus had been in Galilee, well out of reach of the Jewish leaders who were plotting to kill Him (see John 7:1). His own brothers ridiculed Him: “Leave here and go to Judea, where your followers can see your miracles! You can’t become famous if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, show yourself to the world!” (John 7:4, 5). Jesus would go to Jerusalem—but it wasn’t to increase His popularity by performing miracles. He had other plans, in accordance with His Father’s agenda.

His brothers left for Jerusalem and, a short time later, Jesus also set out on the week-long journey, travelling “secretly, staying out of public view” (John 7:10). In Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders were determined to track Him down and “there was a lot of grumbling about him among the crowds.” Some considered Him “a good man,” but others said, “He’s nothing but a fraud” (see John 7:11–13). Quietly and unobtrusively moving among them, Jesus no doubt heard it all.

“Then, midway through the festival” (John 7:14), the scene changed. Jesus stepped out. The apostle John simply records, “Jesus went up to the Temple and began to teach” (John 7:14). Why the dramatic shift? Why at this time? He could not have chosen a more public forum and He was obviously ready for confrontation. What was He doing? Where was this leading?

Water-drawing and water-pouring

During the final days of the Sukkot festival, with Jesus speaking publicly and the Jewish authorities seemingly unable or unwilling to stop Him, the question on the lips of many of the locals was, “Could our leaders possibly believe that he is the Messiah?” (John 7:26).

Jesus fuelled the tensions over His identity. When teaching in the temple area, He called out in the hearing of the priests and people, “Yes, you know me, and you know where I come from. But I’m not here on my own. The one who sent me is true, and you don’t know him. But I know him because I come from him, and he sent me to you” (John 7:28, 29).

Early each morning during Sukkot, as a reminder of past deliverance and as a promise of refreshment to come, priests descended the steep steps to the pool of Siloam to draw water, then carried it up to the temple altar.¹ In the 8th century BC, in the days of King Hezekiah, the Assyrian armies attacked Israel to the north and threatened Jerusalem. To safe-guard the city in preparation for the siege, a 533-metre-long tunnel (about a third of a mile) was dug to bring water from the Gihon Spring in the Kedron Valley into this pool within the city walls (see 2 Kings 20:20).

Following the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in the 6th century BC, Nehemiah returned to rebuild the city. At that time, “the wall of the pool of Siloam near the king’s garden” (Nehemiah 3:15) was also

repaired. As the city's only well, the pool of Siloam held profound messianic meaning, reminding the nation of their dependence on God as their well of salvation.

Now, holding high a golden vessel with Kedron water from the pool of Siloam, the priests led the worshipping multitudes up the steep Herodian Street steps to the altar of sacrifice. There, with the pilgrims singing the Hallel psalms (Psalms 113–118) and dancing in joyful celebration, the vessel of water from the well of salvation together with temple wine were poured as an offering into basins on the altar. Through conduits and pipes, the water and wine then flowed from the altar back into the Kedron Valley and toward the Dead Sea.

Every aspect of the ceremony—the water-drawing at the pool, the water-pouring at the altar of sacrifice, and the water flowing down the deep ravines of the Kedron Valley through the Judean wilderness to the Dead Sea—had deep prophetic, messianic and emotional significance to the people.

A river of life

Had not the prophet Ezekiel written of their deliverance, using this very setting with his vision of the river of healing? He saw “a stream flowing east from beneath the door of the temple and passing to the right of the altar.” And out to the eastern side of the temple walls, he saw “the water flowing out through the south side of the east gateway.” Each time he was told to cross the Kedron valley, the water was deeper, until “the river was too deep to cross without swimming” (see Ezekiel 47:1–5).

Then, to his amazement, Ezekiel saw trees growing on the banks and was told:

This river flows east through the desert into the valley of the Dead Sea. The waters of this stream will make the salty waters of the Dead Sea fresh and pure. There will be swarms of living things wherever the water of this river flows (Ezekiel 47:8, 9).

He saw the Dead Sea teeming with fish, and fishermen with their nets along the shores. “Fruit trees of all kinds” (Ezekiel 47:12) flourished on the riverbanks, in what had been the most forbidding desert wilderness, and he was told:

There will always be fruit on their branches. There will be a new crop every month, for they are watered by the river flowing from the Temple. The fruit will be for food and the leaves for healing (Ezekiel 47:12).²

Pointing to the refreshing that the Messiah would bring, this vision was the hope of Israel.

For the pilgrims in the temple courts, the water-pouring ceremony at the altar of sacrifice also reminded them of Moses striking the rock for water in the desert (see Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:8–11; 1 Corinthians 10:1–4). This rock also represented Christ—the One who would give life.

The festival of Sukkot took place at the end of the hot, dry summer months, after the last crops had been gathered. With the countryside parched, thirsting for the early rains expected at any time, refreshing rain and water from “the wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12:3, NIV) were a central feature of this festival. It was a ceremony of rich prophetic significance, pointing to the hope of all Israel, the coming of the Messiah and His Spirit, to bring life, refreshment and healing.

Camped out in rough shelters made of branches and exposed to the elements, reminiscent of their wilderness years, the pilgrims recounted stories of God’s protection and their deliverance from Egyptian slavery. They bemoaned their current fate, enslaved under Rome and burdened by corrupt religious authorities. They were thirsty for freedom, autonomy and salvation.

And now, on the last and greatest day of the feast, the attention of the crowd was on the priests holding high the golden vessels of water and wine to pour them out at the altar of sacrifice. It was a moment of high drama. Trumpets blew and hearts rejoiced.

Then, in the midst of the ceremony, Jesus stood up. At His baptism, John the Baptist had announced, “He is the one who baptises with the Holy Spirit” (John 1:33)—and now, He shouted to the crowds:

“Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart’” (John 7:37, 38).

Jesus is the well of salvation

Standing close to the altar, Jesus' invitation—"Anyone who is thirsty may come to me!"—was His most significant announcement. His meaning was unmistakable. Jesus was announcing, *I am the well of your salvation, your source of life. I am the Anointed One, the Messiah.* He was declaring, *I am the source of living water.*

He was the One foreshadowed by the water-pouring ceremony. He was the One spoken of in the prophecies recited that day—the Lord of salvation and Giver of the Holy Spirit (see Jeremiah 17:13; Ezekiel 36:24–27).

Jesus' invitation—"Anyone who is thirsty may come to me!"—was His most significant announcement.

What He had shared privately with His apostles at Caesarea Philippi a few weeks before (see Matthew 16:21), He now announced for all to hear. The reaction was immediate. The crowd was stunned. "When the crowds heard him say this, some of them declared, 'Surely this man is the Prophet we've been expecting.' Others said, 'He is the Messiah'" (John 7:40, 41).

The Holy Spirit is the living water

Quoting the prophets, Jesus promised that "rivers of living water" would flow from the hearts of those who believed Him (see John 7:38). The water and wine poured out at the altar formed but a trickle into the Kedron and eventually was just a drop in the Dead Sea. The literal water poured out did little to refresh the land. But Jesus reinterpreted the prophecies, declaring that from the hearts of believing disciples rivers of living water would flow to refresh others—their families, friends, colleagues and communities. In this book, these are referred to as a person's *relational streams*.

The apostle John explained that when speaking of living water, Jesus "was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him." Then, to clarify further, John wrote, "But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory" (John 7:39).

When speaking of living water, Jesus "was speaking of the Spirit."

Why did John write that “the Spirit had not yet been given”? Who is this Spirit, and why is He like living water? We will explore the person and role of the Holy Spirit in the next chapter.

EMPOWERED

Read John 7:1–9:41.

1. Imagine listening to the reactions on the Temple Mount, or visiting families gathered in booths around the city that evening. What is your experience as you hear:

- The agitated, angry arguments among priests and Pharisees?
- The buzz of discussion and excitement of pilgrims? Jesus’ outburst confirmed to some that He was crazy. Who else would shout loud enough to stop the thousands of singing, praying and dancing pilgrims in the temple courts? But might He be the Messiah?
- What do you hear as you listen in on the embarrassment or disbelief of His brothers? They had made it clear that they had no confidence in Him, but what now?

2. Reflect on how Jesus gave new meaning to Ezekiel’s prophecy of the river of healing (see Ezekiel 47:1–12) and the water-drawing and water-pouring celebrations of the Feast of Shelters (see John 7:37–39):

Prophetic symbols	Fulfilment of prophecy for all people
Siloam, the city’s well	Jesus, the well of salvation
Water from the well	The living water of the Holy Spirit
Pouring out the water	Jesus poured out in sacrifice
Water flowing into the Kedron and out through the wilderness	The Spirit flowing from believers into the lives of others
Healing of Israel’s deserts and the Dead Sea	All people hearing the words of life through the witness of believers

What further implications do you see in how Jesus reinterpreted Ezekiel's prophecy?

3. What are you thirsty for? What is the deepest desire of your heart? How do you feel about the Holy Spirit being living water—for you, in your circumstances?

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