

Thirst

DEVOS
1: ARE YOU THIRSTY?

In The Zone

Ready, set ... wait a moment! Do you even realize what you're getting yourself into? Are you really ready for what God has to teach you through this series? Just like warming up before you run a race, this first section in each of these lessons will be your pre-race stretches. It's a challenge to get you focused and ready to discover the truth God has for you.

Is this Bible time or devotional time something you've done before or is it a new thing for you? Either way, this is a great way to start. Take a few moments right now to tell God, "I'm here ... please help me focus my thoughts, my desire, my heart on You. Show me what you want me to learn."

The Big Question

"I can't get no ... satisfaction." Little did the Rolling Stones know how true those words of their song lyrics were back in 1965. The words "satisfaction guaranteed" are music to our ears when cashiers ring up our purchase. We want to be assured that we will be completely happy and content with whatever we buy. But what about your life? Can't get no satisfaction...or can you?

The word, *satisfy*, means, "to fulfill desires, expectations, needs or demands; full contentment." (dictionary.com) Do you think it's possible to truly be satisfied with anything? Why or why not?

How satisfied are you with these aspects of life below?
Give each area a number from 1 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied).

Family ___ Friends ___ Future ___ Yourself ___ God ___ Church ___



The Big Answer

In the letter of **John chapter 7**, we find out Jesus has returned to Jerusalem via a stealth entry into the country because of plots to kill him. He could hear people on the street debating if He was a liar, a lunatic, or Lord. Of course, he had already claimed he was Lord. Read **John 7:32-39** to see what Jesus' response was to this whole scene.

You entered the story halfway way through a seven-day feast (now that's a party). Jesus shows up, stands up (take note that Rabbis usually sat) and begins talking. In a loud voice he gives the answer, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

Drink what? Living water, the kind that would flow inside a person – continual satisfaction for the one who believes in Jesus as their Lord. The reaction was mixed for sure. Some accepted and many actually deserted Jesus (**7:60-71**). A hard way to find out who was in, and who would bail. They did ask the question though, and Jesus gave them a straight up answer.

In The Race

Now it's your turn. Jesus gave the call, and people either accepted or rejected. Are you truly thirsty? If you know that Jesus is the only One who can satisfy that thirst in life, what would stop you from going to Him? What keeps you from following Him completely? Do you think if Jesus completely and totally satisfied your thirst that you'd never go back to trying to find satisfaction in other things? Write down a prayer or thoughts you have when you think about these questions.



In The Zone

Okay, someone gives you orders or asks you to do something for them. Do you do it? It probably depends on who is telling you to do it and what they are telling you to do.

God, the ultimate authority, gives us commands to obey, but He doesn't force us to obey those things ... He could turn us into robots that don't have a choice and can only take orders, but He loves us incredibly and wants the best for us so He gives us a choice to follow Him and give Him the authority over our lives.

Do a little "soul searching" now ... are there some things you find it hard to obey God in? Are there areas in your life you find it hard to give over to Him? Ask Him to search your heart and help you give those things over to the One who loves you completely and ridiculously.

The Big Question

When you're really thirsty, there is nothing that beats a cold drink to sip away on or guzzle. You know, the one where you feel your body relax as the drink goes down. When you're that thirsty, it's a no brainer...you get something to drink. It's like the old Sprite tag line used to say, "*Obey Your Thirst*".

Where do you go when you're dying of thirst or super hungry? Your little sister's plastic food from her toy kitchen? Doubt it. You look for what has something to fill you and quench your thirst...the fridge! Put the following drinks and foods in order of what you would find the most satisfying to the least satisfying:

DRINKS: Coke, orange juice, water, PowerAde, hot chocolate

FOODS: A slice of pizza, granola bar, strawberries, soup, marshmallows

So, where do you go when you are thirsty for something real in your life? Or hungry for answers to the questions of life swimming in your heart and mind?



The Big Answer

Crowds upon crowds of people were flocking to Jesus. So many in fact that He went up mountainside and sat – He didn't stand this time. People wanted answers. Where do I go when I die? What does it take to get to heaven? Will I make the cut? They were thirsty for something real because they lived in a world of slavery and dead end jobs. The only standard they knew of for getting to heaven was an exhausting list of rules and rituals laid out by religious leaders. Everything was about how you behaved.

Jesus, though, focused on the heart. He didn't rhyme off a list of rules or behaviours. He focused on the heart, mind and will of the people. Because how a person lives and behaves is a reflection of who they are on the inside. Check it out for yourself, and read what Jesus told them in **Matthew 5:3-7**.

To put it straight, the message in **verse 6** is, 'Blessed are those who have a spiritual appetite and get filled up with Jesus'. There are standards, for sure. Without them, Christianity would be just another group of opinions. The difference is, the fill Jesus gives doesn't dry up, end, or leave you worse off. In fact, it is so filling you want to get others in on the gig. It's that good.

In The Race

There are options galore out there claiming they will fill you up. Some healthy, many destructive. Sadly, there are enough people out there who like Jesus for the 'get rid of my guilt fix' they can get out of it. Here's the real deal though. Jesus says, "... many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? ...then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.'" **Matthew 7:22-23**

What about you? Do you find that you are trying to satisfy your thirst with little "sips" of Jesus or long, filling drinks? Pray and ask God to help you know what it means to really "hunger and thirst" for Him. Throughout the day, keep your eyes open for times that you are thirsty for something real ... wanting attention from that special person, desiring to be the best at a certain sport or activity, looking for escape from your home life, or many other situations ... and look to see how you are satisfying that thirst.



In The Zone

Do you really realize how amazing the human body - your body - is? Your body is thirsty, so it sends out a signal to tell you to take a drink. And that's just one of thousands of things that keep you physically functioning throughout the day.

Take a look at your hands, move your arms, crease your eyebrows, bend your knees ... God tells us that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (**Psalm 139**) and He knows us completely inside and out. Even if you don't feel very "wonderfully made", you can take some time to ask God to help you see His amazing design in the way He made you. Pray that He will help you see that He created you for a purpose and He loves you.

The Big Question

Stumbled upon the craziest news reports recently on CNN and FOX NEWS. Seems like there was a battle to see who could come up with the most bizarre discovery of Jesus in modern times. CNN's ground breaking story? A couple noticed thought the circular direction of the hair on their cat looked amazingly like the face of Jesus. Not to be outdone, FOX NEWS broke the earth shattering story of a Missouri woman's divine find of Jesus on the cross in, of all things, her bag of Cheetos. I kid you not.

Why do you think people are so caught up in finding these shapes and images of Jesus?

Jesus in a Cheeto? Seriously? If Jesus really wanted to show Himself, odds are He'd find something other than junk food to appear in. How about you? Is there a point in your life or has there been a time where you would love God to show up and give you a sign or simply fix things?



The Big Answer

Because we live in a world where we physically see things and touch things, it seems a little crazy to trust in a God who we can't see or touch. This can be even tougher when things aren't going right for us ... we don't understand why difficult things are happening in our lives. We have that thirst, that longing for unconditional love, purpose and to belong. Even though this world is full of pollution, war, crime and greed, we all still dream about what the world could be like ... what we could be like if God would just show up, snap His fingers and fix everything.

In the story of Job, not only did he have it all but he knew who God was and believed. Would it be a surprise to any of us if we found out after losing his livestock, his servants, his wealth and even his children that maybe, just maybe, Job cried out to God and asked Him to come and fix everything?

The people around Job who should have been his support wound up being another challenge. Check out **Job 2:9**. Even his wife looks at him like he was a nut - " 'Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die.' Job's reply? "You are talking like a foolish woman; shall we accept good from God and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said." Job's three buddies also "comforted" him by suggesting that this all happened because of something wrong Job had done. Just to give perspective, do you think Job would have felt better if he found a Jesus' sculpted Cheeto in his lunch?

So, how do we navigate through these times when we're thirsting for answers and wanting to see God show up and fix things? Here are some thoughts: First, remember the Truth ... God's promises. Be reminded that if God says it, He does it. Second, live out that faith, not on the rollercoaster of your emotions, but trusting that God is working out His plan for our good, even when we don't totally understand it.

In The Race

Troubles, issues, stress, and frustration don't mean God doesn't exist, it just means we have troubles, issues, stress, and frustration. Look up **John 16:33** and find out what Jesus assures us when we go through these tough times. God has more amazing promises for us in His word, and we have seen that we can trust Him. Look up the following verses, even write them out on sticky notes to put up as physical reminders of God's love and promises to you: **Hebrews 13:5, Romans 8:28, 37-39, 2 Timothy 1:7 and Philipians 1:6**.



Thirst

DEVOS
4: DRY AND DUSTY

In The Zone

Distractions ... it's hard not to get caught by those diversions. We are so programmed to multi-task that it's quite a discipline to simply zone in on one thing. You may be able to do many things at the same time, but does each of those things get your full attention?

Here's your challenge: get rid of any distractions around you and focus on what God has for you in this lesson. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, resist the urge to check your phone, your computer or your ipod ... set those things aside as you simply set this time aside to focus on what God has for you. God tells us to, "*Be still and know that I am God.*" (**Psalm 46:10**) Give it a go.

The Big Question

How cool would it be to have a 'Get Out of Jail' free card like in the game Monopoly for the garbage times in our lives? Gonna be straight up – I'd love it. The reality is that dry and dusty times come often throughout our lives. Being a Christian doesn't change that. There are dry, dusty and garbage times even in our relationship with Jesus. What does dry and dusty... even garbage look like in your life? How does a Christian find themselves dry, dusty, and in the midst of junk?

Picture yourself in a dry and dusty place ... probably in a desert with tumbleweeds rolling across your path and the sun mercilessly beating down. Your mouth is so dry you can't even lick your lips. Your throat is sore from being completely parched. Can you feel the extreme thirst?

While you don't usually find yourself out in a desert dying of thirst, excessive thirst is fairly common. It is often the body's reaction to fluid lost in exercise or eating salty foods. Thirst is usually the body's signal to replace water loss. Extreme thirst is accompanied by other symptoms like blurred vision and fatigue. The "well, duh" response is simply to drink water.

When you are dying of thirst and you can't explain it, it's obvious you need help. At what point do you finally give in and get a drink when you are physically thirsty?

- A. When I start to feel the thirst
- B. When my throat is dry
- C. When get a headache from dehydration
- D. After I faint from a lack of water



At what point do you finally give in and get a drink when you are spiritually thirsty?

- A. When I start to notice the need
- B. When I don't talk about God
- C. When my thoughts are far from Him
- D. When I go spiritually unconscious

The Big Answer

Okay then, why all the talk about dehydration? The Bible often uses words such as “thirst” to take something we understand physically and give us a way to understand His truth spiritually. For example, just like you and I can have a dry mouth and need some water, our soul can be dry spiritually and the thirst needs to be quenched. The best way to quench your thirst physically is to drink. The best way to quench your soul's thirst is to draw from an uncontaminated well.

Read **Psalm 63:1-8** and **Psalm 143:6**. God prompted King David to write both of these psalms, and David was often called a man after God's own heart. Yet this great man had times when he was in a dry and dusty place in his life. But he had “tasted” and knew that God was the only One who could replenish the fluids in his soul. How did he do that? David cried out to God, he hung on to the promises God had made and he trusted the One who had provided that thirst quencher in his life.

In The Race

Where are you at on the spiritual thirst-o-meter? Are you thinking you need to go deeper in what you know about God and your relationship with Him? What needs to happen in your life? Write out some thoughts or a prayer to God, like King David did, telling Him where you are at on the dry and dusty trail and how you need Him.



In The Zone

Sometimes a glass of liquid can look good on the outside, but when you taste it ... gross, it's like water with a rotten-egg smell or milk that's gone sour. Our lives can be like that, looking good on the outside but with a sour taste or a stinky smell. What makes it stink? We can call it bad choices, misguided decisions, devious tendencies or messed up behavior, but the bottom line is ... sin, the things we do that disobey God.

We all sin, and what we need to do with that sin is go to God about it – with a heart that's sorry and wants to make it right. God will forgive you of that and remember it no more. However, if we make excuses for our sin and never deal with it, those things continue to be the rotten smell in our lives.

Reflect for a time now to ask God to help you see what toxic stuff you are stirring into the liquid of your life and confess it to Him (it's like telling on yourself to God). Ask Him to forgive you, take it away and invite Him to fill that part of you with more of Him.

The Big Question

Bottled water is big business - huge actually. Purchases of bottled water have doubled and its price is about 100 times the cost of the same amount of water coming out of your kitchen tap. Like it or not, bottled water is here to stay. The crazy thing is that bottled water quenches our thirst for a short time until we need more. In the end it costs a fortune and lasts for a moment.

The thirst for lasting life never seems to end. 'The Fountain of Youth' was a spring that Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon went looking for in Florida in 1513. People said anyone who drank from the fountain would have his or her youth restored. Did he find it? Nope. Then there is the Quest for the Holy Grail, said to be the chalice (really fancy cup) Jesus and his disciples drank from. Legend has it anyone who drank from it would be granted extraordinary long life. Anyone find it? I suppose that all depends on how much you believe Monty Python's version of events.

Even famous, successful people want to find the purpose in life. Shia LeBeouf, an actor, said, "*Sometimes I feel I'm living a meaningless life, and I get frightened.*" (Parade, June 14, 2009) Do you mean to say that all that money, success and fame does not make a person satisfied with life? LeBeouf went on to say, "*Acting is instinctual. The good actors are all screwed up. They're all in pain. It's a profession of bottom-feeders and heartbroken people ... Why did the love of my life and I break-up? Man, I have no idea. What was that all about? I have no answers to anything. None. Why am I an alcoholic? I haven't a... clue! What is life about? I don't know.*"

Life is a quest. A quest for unconditional love, purpose and belonging. What have you discovered in your search for life? Fill in the blanks in the following sentence with as many things that come to mind about our search for satisfaction in life: If only I (*insert phrase here*), then I'd be happy.



The Big Answer

Showing up at the well, Jesus sat down and grabbed a drink of cool, fresh water. Moments later, a Samaritan woman arrives to draw water for herself. A natural conversation about 'thirst' starts up and it's obvious Jesus is talking about eternal life while the woman is focused only on quenching her thirst for the moment (**John 4:14-15**).

Jesus offered something no one and nothing else could produce. Life that lasts forever. Flip a few pages over to **John 10:10**. He opens the door wide, invites you and I to have life...real life. The thief (aka the devil) has one purpose, and that is to mess us up so much that life isn't worth living. Jesus, he loves you, he believes in you, and came so that you "may have life, and have it to the fullest".

You can search for the Fountain of Youth, Quest for the Holy Grail, or be more famous than you dreamed. None of it lasts. The only spring that quenches our thirst for love, purpose and belonging comes through a life-long relationship with Jesus. Just ask the Samaritan woman.

In The Race

Here's your challenge. During the day or during this week, take some time to ask your friends, your parents, your teachers, your grandparents the following question: *What would make you feel completely satisfied with life?* The answers will help you see what people are thirsting for.



In The Zone

How safe do you feel with God? Do you really believe He has the best in mind for you? Read the following verses out loud (yes, out loud ... come on, you can do it) and really listen to what it's telling us.

"God is our strong refuge; He is truly our helper in times of trouble. For this reason we do not fear when the earth shakes, and the mountains tumble into the depths of the sea, when its waves crash and foam, and the mountains shake before the surging sea." (Psalm 46:1-3)

Now read it again, maybe even again, and replace the words "our" and "we" with "my" and "I" to let it sink in that God is truly your safe place.

The Big Question

There's a quote that says, "I used to have an open mind, but my brains kept falling out." Oh how true that can be some days. Advertisers want you and your cash, so a 24/7 barrage of ads and promos litter everything from phones to Facebook. It's mind numbing. With so many messages, in the thousands actually, bombarding you and your friends each day, how can you get the real message of hope across to the people you care about?

If you were in your friends' shoes, would you want someone to give you a chance for hope? How would you want someone to share the truth about Jesus unconditional love with you?



The Big Answer

Kutless pumped out a great song a while back titled '*Strong Tower*'. Check out these lyrics from the chorus:

You are my strong tower
Shelter over me
Beautiful and mighty
Everlasting King
You are my strong tower
Fortress when I'm weak
Your name is true and holy
And Your face is all I seek

What I love about this tune is its truth. Jesus provides a cover of shelter knowing storms and cold times in life are coming. He is an impenetrable fortress when I have no strength and life is bombarding me.

Jesus says, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow will flow from within him." (**John 7:37-38**). Arriving at this last devotional I want to ask you two questions:

First one is *for* you. Given everything you have read or heard - I would dishonour you if I didn't ask - have you taken the opportunity to quench your thirst for real life and invited Jesus to become your Lord and Saviour? It's not a question of whether you attend church, whether you pray, whether you've grown up in a Christian home, but have you ever truly made this important decision for yourself? You can do this on your own or talk to a youth leader or someone you know who loves Jesus and would help you figure this out.

Second one is *about* you. Knowing how refreshing the gift of life is that Jesus offers, are you helping those around you to draw from the same well and discover the real, lasting thirst quencher - Jesus? It's been said that sharing the message of the God's love and forgiveness is like one beggar telling another beggar where to find food. Or, in context of our lessons, one dehydrated person telling another dehydrated person where to find water. Who are you going to tell?

In The Race

Here's a good illustration for you. Take two drinking glasses of the same size out of the cupboard and fill one up with water. Now find a bunch of pennies, marbles, rocks, and things like that to fill up the other glass as much as possible. Start pouring the water from the first glass into the second one. How much water fit in there with all the other items?

God wants to fill us with the only thing that satisfies our thirst - Him. If we try to fill our lives with other things, or we try to fill ourselves partly with God and partly with that "stuff", we will keep finding that longing is still there. Make room for the real and true thirst quencher in your life.

