

## Knowing One Another

Jonathan K. Dodson | Isaiah 12 | January 15, 2017

*We're continuing our reflection on Isaiah 12 in order to be a people that know God, one another, and make him known.* This week we're considering what it means to know one another, or live together. To do that, our passage shows we need to: 1) know *where* to live 2) know *how* to live there 3) and *why* we can live this way.

### Where to Live

Knowing where to live requires more than a glance at online properties. Before we moved to Austin, we flew down a couple times to check out properties, inspect houses. We checked out the neighborhoods, proximity of schools and grocery stores. But there was one thing we were looking to be close to—downtown, the center of the city, the heart of the culture. In a similar way, to know one another, to have life and joy in our relationships, we need to be close to something. [Isaiah](#) says, “[With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation](#)” (12:3-4). A well was an important feature in the ancient world. It provided life, irrigated crops, kept livestock alive, sustained travelers. It defined habitats. People would settle down close to wells because their lives depended on it. [You chose to live next to a well because, well, if you didn't you chose not to live.](#) [Isaiah](#) saying, joyful people, grateful people, content people, ***live next to the wells of salvation***. What does that mean? Salvation is a word often associate with a religious experience, of a point-in-time encounter with Jesus in which one is rescued from sin, death, hell. And while it is true, the word salvation means more than that. It means help, rescue, deliverance from things that *threaten* you. Israel saw God rescue them from slavery to the Egyptians, from starvation in the wilderness, from slaughter from the Philistines. [Isaiah](#) is saying there is a source, a well that will *always* provide life, rescue. [Are you living next to the well or are you looking for life somewhere else?](#) One place we tend to look for life is in **critique**. Our age is the age of criticism: cultural criticism, literary criticism, film criticism, self-criticism. We are all critics. And to be a critic you have to take a certain posture. At some level you have to privilege your view over others. You dismantle another view because you are convinced your view is better. We critique *performances*. My wife and I saw *LaLa Land* last night and afterwards we critiqued and praised Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone. Why is Emma Stone so mesmerizing? Is it her authenticity, beauty? We critique *ourselves*. How did I come across in that conversation? Did they think I was arrogant, humble, attractive/unattractive, knew my stuff? We critique *Bible*. Someone offers Scripture to help you, to rescue you, and you respond by saying, but what does it mean in context (avoiding help)? This [[New Yorker cartoon](#)] captures the absurdity of our culture of criticism. *These smug pilots have lost touch with regular passengers like us. Who thinks I should fly the plane? We think we can fly the plane better than the pilot.* If it's reached a level of absurdity, why do we continue to do it? Because we think it *saves* us. Rescues us from being wrong, inferior, needy. Because we've built our lives next to the well of being right, better, self-sufficient. [But what would happen if you really got into the pilot's seat? You'd freak out, crash the plane.](#) We need a better pilot, a greater well, rescue us from the prison of critique. And if we follow [Isaiah's divinely sanctioned](#) thinking, we discover the source: “[When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains](#) (same

word) in the midst of the valleys. Surrounded by foreign enemies, facing poverty, veering away from God, caught in the culture of critique, here comes salvation. Where the land is barren, he will open a river; where there is a valley, he releases a fountain, where there is thirst, he brings satisfaction. But the condition is that we climb down the ladder of critique, admit we're thirsty and needy, and he'll open a *fountain of life*. The chapter depicts a verdant forest, a glen, populated by all kinds of trees and bodies of water, lush with satisfaction and peace. *That* is where you are meant to live, irrigated by the peace and presence of God, next to the wells of salvation.

### How to Live

Gorgeous. So how do we live in the glen of God's new creation, beside the wells of salvation? By **living next to one another**. When Isaiah says, "**With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation**" the "you" moves from singular in verse one to *plural*. Living next to the well means living *next to one another*. The water is so good, so life-giving, you build a community, a village, a city around the fountain. And in 41, the fountain is opened so that, "**they may see and know, may consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it**" (41:17-20). The culture of critique isolates and idolizes the individual, but the fountain of Christ unites and satisfies the community. So what does living next to one another look like? He gives several imperatives, not exhaustive but a good start. Live together joyfully, gratefully, prayerfully, and publically. With **joy** draw water from the wells of salvation. Ever have a day where you just feel off, a little down, struggling to find joy? This week I had a couple of those days. I prayed, I meditated, I analyzed, and I sought to trust God's promises but continued to feel the funk. I tried to draw joy from the well, but I needed help. So I reached out to a couple people. As I explained what I was going through, they drew water for me. They gave me perspective on my emotion (to not let it define how I was seeing things) but they also believed in the better fountain with me. My fight club partner listened to my description of Isaiah 41, and he went there with me. He dipped his bucket into the Fountain, tasted, and essentially told me, "Yeah, this is really, really good. I need it too. Other people need. We should keep drinking it. There's nothing like it." How do we live together? By joyfully drawing water from the well of salvation. And sometimes you need someone else to draw the water and taste the joy for you, to remind you that Christ satisfies more than emotion, more than critique, more than any other place we could live. That's what City Groups and Fight Clubs are for. Are you drawing life-giving water to distribute to others, are you asking for help to draw joy from Jesus? Next, we're told to **call upon his name**. This is a euphemism for **prayer**, communion and intercession with God. Prayer is the direct route to joy. It's the rope that leads straight to Christ. But getting it down the well can be difficult. Pulling it up can be hard. We're easily distracted from prayer and during prayer. So find ways to help you focus. Walk and pray, journal, pray out loud, pray together. In the morning, in the evening, at the drop of a hat. Why? Because prayer is the direct route to joy, and most powerful way to point others to Christ. It's saying I'm not the answer but I know who is. When we collectively call upon the Lord, we remind one another who truly satisfies, who is the pilot, who changes the hearts of men. *Draw water together by calling on the name of the Lord.* Prayerfulness is a sign you're living next to the fountain, in the real world of God's glorious glen. A third way to live together is to "**make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted**" to live **publically** (4). Israel collectively observed

festivals and holy days to remember and declare God's exodus rescue and provision in the wilderness. They recounted ways, and wrote songs, of God's help in their lives. The Psalms are an anthology of God's deeds, some are put to music. These weren't one and done testimonies. I was a mess and God cleaned me up. There are much more honest. They are public testimonies of God's present-tense grace. When we are living prayerfully, what God is doing catches our eye. We discover his grace, his presence, his truth, how living next to the wells of salvation makes a difference. Living publically is talking about these. People need to hear up to date testimonies of God's grace, love, power, truth. How is Jesus making a difference *today*? That's what people want to know, and that's how God wants us to live, publically, with present tense testimonies of his, love, grace and truth. It's encouraging and attractive and God deserves it. I shared an up to date testimony of how God worked through a couple friends to point me to a better joy when facing discouragement. What has God done for you? Normalize it. Talk about God's deeds to others. Tell them the difference of Jesus, how he comforted you in a Sunday gathering, conversation with a friend, insight from Scripture. Don't clamor for a place in the culture of critique; declare how God is your help and your salvation.

### Why to Live

Finally, why should we live this way? Where do we get the power to live joyfully, prayerfully, publically *together*? I'd like to close by pointing to two reasons. First, consider what Jesus said to someone at a well: "[The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life](#)" (Jn 4:14). The spring is the word for fountain. Jesus isn't saying live next to the fountain; now he's saying, *let the fountain live in you*. How? "[Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'](#)" [Now this he said about the Spirit](#)" (Jn 7:38-9). How do we get the power to escape the prison of critique, to enjoy the presence of God? ***Through the Spirit, the well isn't next to you; it's placed inside you.*** The Spirit lives in every Christian generating joy, prompting prayer, promoting public faith. That inclination isn't from your reason; it's from your Fountain. The word "welling up" means to leap out. The Spirit is in us, wanting to leap forward, to spill out in life-giving joy, prayer, and testimony to the deeds of God. All we need to do is yield to him, to drink from him. Will you draw from the fountain? Or will you remain stuck in the culture of critique? Will you follow the Spirit's promptings to point one another to Christ, pray on the spot, proclaim his deeds, exalt his name?! Now in confession, in worship, in prayer? Church, let's dip into the Spirit. Don't poison the well with narcissistic criticism; let the life of Jesus' Spirit bubble up, overflow, touch those around you. Life together will be different. Life together will be better. Life in the city will be marked by the life of the Spirit. ***The second reason we should live together in this way is because it's how we'll live forever.*** The waters of the Spirit well up to eternal life. This remarkable quality of spiritual life will merge with the physically renewing water of God's glorious glen such that [the earth shall be so full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea](#)" (Isa 11:9), and the waters always cover the sea. A day is coming when the fountain will go global, and all who are in Christ will forever enjoy the satisfying presence of God. Let's show the world that is, what the world to come will be like by knowing God, knowing one another, and make him known.