



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: Jn. 2:1-11

1. Turning Water into Wine: Inaugural Event in Jesus' Public Ministry – by placing the story at the beginning of Jesus' ministry it's given added importance – a vivid enactment of the gift he offers: transforming power & extravagant abundance – *"I have come that you may have life, & life abundantly."* (Jn. 10:10)
 - a. *"The **extravagance** of Jesus' act, the **superabundance** of the wine, suggests the **unlimited** gifts that Jesus makes available. Jesus' ministry begins with an extraordinary act of grace, a glimpse of the 'greater things' to come (1:50)...The story invites the reader to see what the disciples see, that in the abundance and graciousness of Jesus' gift, one catches a glimpse of the identity and character of God."* (Gail O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, p. 461)
 - b. *"Jesus calls his followers, not to a dour, lifeless, miserable existence that squashes human potential, but to a rich, full, joyful life, one overflowing with meaningful activities under the personal favor and blessing of God and in continual fellowship with his people."* (ESV Study Bible – Note on John 10:10)
 - c. *"This particular miracle signifies that there is a **transforming power with Jesus.**"* (Leon Morris, *NICNT: John*, p. 172)
 - d. *"By performing this miracle, Jesus clearly shows one of his divine attributes...**divine power**..."* (Matt Carter & Josh Wredberg, *Christ-Centered Exposition: John*, 71)
2. A Wedding at Cana (Jn. 2:1-2) – Cana is located in the despised region of Galilee – an insignificant place like Nazareth, from which nothing good can be expected (1:46) & yet it is from here that the revelation of Jesus' glory begins (2:11)
3. The Problem (Jn. 2:3-5) – Pattern of 3 R's
 - a. Request: Jesus' mother to Jesus: "They don't have any wine, *please do something* (implied)" (2:3)
 - b. Rebuke: Jesus to his mother: "What has this to do with me, woman. My hour has not yet come." (2:4)
 - c. Response: Jesus' mother to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you." (2:5)
4. The Solution (Jn. 2:3b-8)
 - a. Not initiated by man (vv. 3b-5)

- a. "...events are always in divine hands, not human, Jesus seems to say." (Matt Carter & Josh Wredberg, *Christ-Centered Exposition: John, 71*)
- a. Jesus' mother has no privileged claim on him
- a. "Verse 4 points to a broader theological context, that is, his **freedom from all human control. Not even his mother has a privileged claim on him.**" (Gail O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, p. 458)
- b. "The explicit identification of Jesus' mother...[is] followed by Jesus' failure to acknowledge her as 'Mother'...Instead of mother, Jesus addresses her as [woman]...This isn't necessarily...harsh...[It's] Jesus normal address for women in the Gospels... [What's] startling [is] its addressee, Jesus' mother. 'Mother' is precisely what Jesus does not call her...[This] distances Jesus from his biological mother & **rejects any claims...[based on] her family relationship** to him...It places her on equal footing with the Samaritan woman & Mary of Magdala, [etc.]." (David Beck, *Discipleship Paradigm...in 4th Gospel*, p. 56)
- c. "Jesus clearly makes the 'not yet' status of 'his hour' the basis of his response distancing him from his mother & calling into question the significance of their biological relationship. **Jesus' rebuke signals the need for his mother to redefine her understanding of his identity**...[since he's] defining his role exclusively in terms of his Father's sovereignty, with no place for human familial obligations." (David Beck, *Discipleship Paradigm...in 4th Gospel*, p. 57)
- b. My hour has not yet come
- a. "**It is hard to see what a reference to the hour of Jesus' departure could mean as a reply to Mary's appeal for help. After all, she did not in fact have to wait that long before Jesus acted. The reference here is not to the hour of Jesus' departure but to the hour of the beginning, of the breakthrough of the revelation of his glory on earth and in the flesh, and it is therefore arbitrary, in my opinion, to speak of vs. 11 as an anticipation of Jesus' future exaltation. All that is at issue here is that Jesus cannot seize this hour, that is, this beginning, beforehand — even if his own mother urges him to do so.**" (Herman Ridderbos, *A Theological Commentary: The Gospel of John*, 89)
- c. Do whatever he tells you
- a. "Do whatever he tells you' [points to] Mary's unconditional confidence in Jesus to resolve the situation...and his full authority." (Gail O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, p. 458)
- b. "She has not been dissuaded from her initial position that Jesus can do something about the lack of wine (v. 3), but **in light of Jesus' words in v. 4 she cedes the initiative for acting to Jesus.** She continues to trust in Jesus' ability to act, but will not curtail his freedom." (Gail O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, p. 458)
- c. "Even more surprising than Jesus' address is his **mother's response** to it. She responds in a paradigmatic way....**She not only accepts [Jesus'] revelation of his unique identity & the reevaluation of her relationship to him it implies, [but, also] she bears witness to the efficacy of his words & challenges others to heed what he says (2:5)...**She accepts his word, believes its power, prior to & without the benefit of any 'sign,' & bears witness of it to someone else." (David Beck, *Discipleship Paradigm...*, p. 57)
- d. "Jesus' mother's response is not a complete comprehension of Jesus...role & significance....Nor is it a power-move....forcing Jesus' hand...to perform an act he doesn't want to do. Her response...of faith & witness, even without full comprehension. Its wonder lies in what immediately precedes...Jesus' jarring rebuke...Her response leaves to him the option to act, & the nature of the action is fully in Jesus' control. Her directions to the servants do not anticipate Jesus' action, since [they]...do not oblige Jesus to speak & does not determine what he may say." [David Beck, *Discipleship Paradigm...in 4th Gospel*, p. 58]
- b. Is initiated by God (vv. 6-8; 5:19)
- a. Only one voice had authority in Jesus' ear
- a. "...[W]hat comes sharply to the fore...at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, is **his awareness that his life was subject to a certain calling that he had to fulfill at God's direction.**" (Herman Ridderbos, *A Theological Commentary: The Gospel of John*, 90)
- b. "When someone approaches [Jesus] with a request to act or heal (2:3; 4:47; 11:30) **he first distances himself from the petitioner** (2:4; 4:48; 11:4-5), showing that **he acts only...at his Father's bidding.**" (Marianne Meye Thompson, *Signs & Faith in the Fourth Gospel*, p. 103)
- c. "**Jesus' actions will be governed by the hour set by God, not by anyone else's time and will.**" (Gail O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, p. 458)
- b. Jesus turns water into wine
- a. Six stone jars
- a. "Stone jars were used especially for ritual purposes. The capacity of these jars was very considerable: a metre² is almost 40 liters, so the six jars altogether would hold 480 to 720 liters. These jars had been placed there in accordance with the Jewish rules of purification, ...for rinsing the hands before and after every meal...**only their enormous capacity [is] significant.**" (Herman Ridderbos, *A Theological Commentary: The Gospel of John*, 90)
- b. "Misunderstanding...arises from finding symbolism in the wrong place. Expecting...symbolism, scholars supposed...the '6 stone water jars...' must indicate that Jesus is replacing a religion of mere outward rites. But...**the important point about the jars is their number & capacity, which enable Jesus to provide a huge amount of wine...far in excess of the need...This case suggests the superabundance of God's provision in the messianic age** (cf. 10:10)...The jars 'for the Jewish rites of purification'...merely ... explains how so much water could be...readily available for Jesus to transform into wine." (R. Bauckham, *Gospel...*, pp. 180-1)
- b. Extravagance on display
- a. "Everything about v. 6 is overdrawn [exaggerated]...the jars to the amount of narrative space...devoted to the description. The narrative technique mirrors the size of the jars in order to **emphasize the extravagance of the miracle.**" (Gail O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, p. 458)
- c. Abundance is available through Jesus
- a. "...the reader is shown the superabundance of gifts available through Jesus (1:16)." (Gail O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, p. 459)

b. “[John]...brings us face-to-face with the miracle itself, which manifests itself first in the authority with which Jesus tells the servants to fill the jars. And only when that instruction has been strictly (“to the brim”) complied with does **his command** (“**now draw some out**”) **become the announcement of the “hour” of the fulfillment**, in which **people can draw from the abundance as much as they want** (cf. Is. 12:3).” (Herman Ridderbos, *A Theological Commentary: The Gospel of John*, 90)

d. A symmetry of abundance (Gen. 3:1)

a. “At the wedding in Cana...Jesus serves wine in abundance to ‘help man’s joy’...[This miracle] blends with Jesus’ mission to defeat ‘the lie’ (8:44). Why wine...? Why perform this first sign at a wedding...? Why lavish [a] choice beverage on the celebrates in such amounts & in such excess?...To build a case against ‘the lie’? In the Garden of Eden, deprivation & lack were said [by the Serpent] to be the hallmark of the divine economy. God [Satan suggested was depriving them by] saying ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’ (Gen. 3:1). Through this onslaught [Satan’s accusation], God lost his good name. **If we place this sign & the 600 liters of choice wine in the context of ‘the lie’ what was the message? Is Jesus a person who provides or one who deprives? Does he give, or does he withhold? Is the divine economy one of lack or one of plenitude? Does...the wedding in [Cana] suggest a person capable of saying, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’? (Gen. 3:1)...Everything in John...contributes to refuting ‘the lie’ (8:44; 12:31). To this end, the Gospel constructs a symmetry of abundance...to disprove the proposition that God’s economy is one of lack & deprivation (Gen. 3:1). Giving in abundance reveals God’s glory (2:11).” (Sigve K. Tonstad, *God of Sense & Traditions of Non-Sense*, pp.)**

c. Beginning new eras with God (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18a; Jer. 31:12; Hos. 14:7)

a. “...John 2:1-11 can be read as more than the first act in Jesus’ ministry. It also stands as the **fulfillment of OT... hopes, as the inaugural act of God’s promised salvation**.” (Gail O’Day, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, p. 459)

b. “The motif of **abundance of wine often occurs in prophecy as characteristic for the glory of the coming kingdom of God** (Is. 25:6; Am. 9:13, 14; Jer. 31:12; Gn. 49:11)...[I]n Jesus’ own preaching, ‘**new wine**’ is the **symbol of the time of salvation that has come and is still to come** (Mk. 2:22; Lk. 22:18, 30).” (Herman Ridderbos, *A Theological Commentary: The Gospel of John*, 91)

5. The Reactions (Jn. 2:9-11)

a. The head waiter/Steward – tried to ‘make sense’ of the miracle by reshaping it (2:9-10) to fit his former categories – [Jan: “he’s matured”]

a. “The steward is **perplexed** by the sudden appearance of the quality wine. He summons the bridegroom, the host of the party, because he assumes that the wine can be **explained by conventional reasoning**...but this miracle cannot be explained by an irregularity in etiquette. Rational explanations miss the mark.” (Gail O’Day, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, p. 460)

b. The disciples – allowed their categories to be reshaped & so they believed in Jesus (2:11) as the revealer of God

a. “The disciples, by contrast, see in the miraculous abundance of good wine a sign of God’s presence among them. **They recognize the revelation of God** in the prodigious flow of wine, **and they recognize Jesus as the one who brought God to them**. The miracle of the wine shatters the boundaries of their conventional world, and the disciples **are willing to entertain the possibility that this boundary breaking marks the inbreaking of God**.” (Gail O’Day, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, pp. 460-1)

c. John calls it the ‘first’ sign

a. “This sign at Cana is identified as the ‘**first**’ because it begins Jesus’ self-revelation...The Greek word for ‘first’ in 2:11 (*arche*) means ‘**beginning**’, rather than simply ‘**the first in sequence**’ (*prote*).” (Gail O’Day, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, p. 460)

b. Cana’s wedding is Jesus’ first sign (2:11) “This beginning...presents us with a paradox. Weddings usually occur at the conclusion of [folk] stories, as the final expression of the story’s...‘happy ending.’...**The paradox** of John’s story **is** the fact that, in archetypal terms, **the Gospel begins with an episode associated with happy endings**...There’s a reason for this....John portrays **Jesus** as the one who **introduces the things reserved for the ‘last day’ into the now of history**; he raises the dead [Lazarus] and pronounces judgment, actions expected from God at the very end of time...By starting his gospel with a ‘happy ending,’ John expresses through narrative form...a theological claim; that **the end has arrived now, in the person of Jesus**.” (Mark WG. Stibbe, *John’s Gospel*, 67) **Note**: Even the Bible’s Grand Narrative *ends* with the Marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7, 9)

6. Application

a. Jesus’ transforming power & abundance is available to everyone (Psa. 34:8) – invitation & challenged to try for yourself – will you **draw from** his power & abundance?

a. To the insignificant (**Cana**) – place, job, family, intellectually, physically, elderly, etc.

b. To those God corrects/adjusts or asks to take up a new role in relation to Jesus (**Mary**) – keep trusting & being confident in him

c. To those who serve (**Servants**)

- d. To those who are socially devastated (**Groom**) – either before or afterwards he has the power to change you & to turn your situation around
- b. Jesus continues to ambush people today with his abundance
- c. New Beginnings can still happen