

LifeGroup Notes - Leader's

John 2:1-12

When we think of Jesus and the miracles that he did, what typically comes to mind is healing blind or crippled people, or maybe raising Lazarus from the dead. Yet Jesus' first miracle was changing water to wine at a wedding reception! Which begs the question: why start with that kind of miracle and what does it mean anyway? Though there are many layers to this first miracle believers throughout history have largely agreed that by changing water to wine Jesus was signalling "**behold the old has gone, the new has come!**" **God was up to something brand new!**

Prayer

Before diving into this study take a moment together and pray. Thank God for all the "new" works of grace he has done--and will continue to do--in your life, family, group, church and community.

Warming Up

1. Pick one of the following:
 - a. My favourite place to celebrate in Kingston is ... ?
 - b. What is one way you celebrate a special occasion like a Birthday or Christmas?
 - c. Over the years has your attitude towards alcohol changed?

Richard Foster writes, "*We can simply and joyfully celebrate the goodness of God in us and in those around us. Celebration is made possible as the common ventures of life are redeemed.*"

St. Augustine has said, "*The Christian should be an alleluia from head to foot.*"⁸

2. Many Christian writers and commentators agree that celebration is a "spiritual discipline," a way we can grow in God's grace. Have you ever heard this before? Does this make sense to you?

Context

Read John 2:1-12. Remember the Bible wasn't written in post-modern 21st century Canada.

Weddings were an even bigger deal in Jesus' day than they are today (imagine that)! Nowadays couples often fall in love on their own but back then it was a family decision. Everyone

⁸ Richard Foster, 'Understanding Celebration,' <https://renovare.org/articles/understanding-celebration>.

was involved and everyone needed to be satisfied. Parents had to agree with the courtship. The ceremony was quite elaborate. When the special day finally came the bride would get ready in her house and her attendants would position themselves outside the home to await the coming of the groom. The groom would come from an unknown place at an unknown time. Eventually someone would see him and yell, "Behold, the bridegroom comes!" Everyone would rush out to join him as he came to pick up his bride! As the procession neared the door of the house someone would yell, "Behold, the bridegroom is here!" The wedding party entered the house, picked up the bride and carried her to the groom's house celebrating all the way. Once they got to the groom's house, the doors were shut and the couple went into a back room to consummate the marriage. When they came out, the party began, and it often lasted seven days. It's important to note that marriages at this time were very public ceremonies that had two key components. What happened in the back room affirmed the bride's purity, and the grandeur of the party affirmed the groom's fidelity and ability to provide for her. Everything had to go well. The groom and his family were responsible to demonstrate their ability to provide and care for the girl who had just consummated her marriage to this man. To fail to host a good party wasn't just embarrassing, it was illegal.⁹

3. How did Sunday's sermon impact you? Any aha moments? Questions? See how much you can remember together.
4. Why do you think Mary was concerned about the lack of wine?

Leader's Note

Given Mary's involvement in the wine debacle, it's very likely that she was somehow part of the wedding party. Also, some commentators throughout the centuries believed that Mary had seen Jesus do other more private miracles before this his first public miracle. But as others point out, that need not be the case. The fact is, Mary knew Jesus was the Christ. And at this point in his life Jesus has been gathering disciples (Jn 1:35-51), in fact he's brought them with him to the wedding. In other words Jesus has begun laying the foundation for launching his public ministry. Mary knew this and was simply encouraging him to keep working along those lines. It's also possible that Mary didn't necessarily have a miracle in mind. That given her role in the wedding party, she was simply saying to Jesus, help! Do something!

5. [Next Level] For the curious or nerdy in your group to do some more digging you could...
 - a. Find a map of the area from the time period.
 - b. Read Leviticus 11:32-35.
 - c. Explain and discuss the apologetic points below.

Leaders Note: Apologetic Question

Richard Bauckham brought two other factors into play in reading this story historically. The first relates to the stone water jars themselves, about which much has been written in scholarship in recent years. There are several things to note. First, the importance of stone vessels is that they are not subject to the impurity laws in Lev 11.32-35 which demand that clay

⁹ Adam Dixon, *Gospel of John - Nobody Understands Jesus*, (cru.com), pg. 6.

vessels which become unclean must be smashed. So though they are much more expensive to make in the first place, in the long term they are more economic because they can be used repeatedly, even if they come into contact with things which are ceremonially unclean. So their presence indicates either that we are in a priestly household, or at least a household concerned with purity. Second, these very large vessels are very difficult to make, since they must be carved from a single piece of stone. A quarry and workshop producing stone vessels was recently discovered not far from Cana in lower Galilee. But the technology to produce large vessels needed the kind of lathes that were used by the Romans in making stone columns—so these large stone vessels indicate quite a specific time period of the Roman occupation of Judea and Samaria. Thus John’s mention of them is pointing to a particular and limited historical period. See the following link:

<https://www.psephizo.com/biblical-studies/what-is-the-meaning-of-the-six-stone-jars-at-the-wedding-in-cana/>

6. On Sunday Paul taught, “In Christ the old has gone, the new has come, and keeps coming!” Read 2 Cor 5:17-18. How does this miracle show that with Jesus the new has come?
 - a. **Leader’s Notes:** In John 2 the new wine was put into old ceremonial stone vessels. How was this wonderful new wine also disruptive and potentially frustrating?
 - b. The vessels that were used for *old* ceremonial rituals held *new* wine. The wine represents our joy of a *new* relationship with Jesus.
 - c. Highlight for your group that Jesus does the same in our life! Jesus comes brings *new* life through the Spirit in these bodies that used to be stuck in old systems and rhythms of sin.
7. Reread v.11.
 - a. How does this miracle “reveal Jesus’ glory?”
 - b. Read Col 1:15-20. How is Jesus authority over nature evident in John 2?
 - c. Why is it significant that Jesus created aged wine? How does this point to the truth of Jesus’ nature in Col 1:19?

Application

8. Verse 11 tells us the disciples believed as a result of seeing Jesus’ sign. The word “sign” indicates that what Jesus did was more than a miracle and that, like a road sign, it pointed the disciples toward the character and role of Jesus. What does this first miracle (*sign*) teach us in 2020 about the character and role of Jesus? Why is this significant to us?
9. In what areas of life might we need to remember that “In Christ the old has gone, the new has come?” Why do we often default to “the old?”
10. Look back at the quotes on celebration. How does John 2 and 2 Cor. 5 help us celebrate as Christians? What should we be celebrating?

11. It is important to remember that Jesus did not go out of his way to perform this sign. His glory was revealed in every day, family and life-on-life occasions.
- a. Have you ever thought about sharing Jesus' love at a family occasion like a wedding? What about a holiday dinner? Summer vacation? In study groups? What happened?
 - b. Why do we often avoid pointing people to Jesus' glory in everyday, life-on-life circumstances?

Pointing people to Jesus' glory in everyday, life-on-life circumstances is called "missional living." Missional living is not complicated! Look what Cru.com says:

*If God has forgiven you and entered your life, two of your primary jobs on earth are: (1) Love God and our neighbors (Matthew 22:37-39); (2) Tell people about Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20).*¹⁰

- c. How have you been doing with living missionally in everyday, life-on-life circumstances just like Jesus models in John 2?

Prayer

Read v.7. The wine was "filled to the brim." On Sunday Paul taught us that there was enough wine for 3800-4600 glasses!! Paul highlighted that, like the wine, God's grace and love for us is super-abundant and overflowing! "There's more than enough grace to cover all our sins, for all of our life, and for the healing of everyone." Spend time in prayer thanking God for his endless grace and unconditional love.

¹⁰ 'Living Missionally - 5 Things,' <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/leadership-training/sending-your-team/5thingsintro.html>.