



John (So That You Might Believe) (Week 2/12) Water Into Wine

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect Who are you praying for that they would recognise Jesus and believe in him

Warm-Up

1. What is the best wedding that you have ever been to? What role did hospitality play?
2. When you are hosting a party, do you aim for “precision catering” or “over catering”? Which do you fear more: *not having food leftover* or *having too much food leftover*?

Read John 2:1-4

3. What surprises you when you first read through the account of the wedding at Cana in Galilee?
4. Who was at this wedding? Did Jesus, his mother, or the disciples appear to have any official role?
5. What is the problematic situation? *Why was running out of wine at a wedding at this time such a big deal?*
6. Who does Mary go to? What does she say? *Why do you think Mary went to Jesus?*
7. Does Mary dictate what she expects Jesus to do? Is this instructive for our own prayer lives?
8. How does Jesus respond in a *threefold* way? Why is addressing Mary as ‘woman’ significant?
9. What are the ways in the Gospels that we witness people trying to shape Jesus’ agenda and timeline, be provocation, coercion, temptation, pressure, or persecution? Who does Jesus long to please?
10. Why is it such good news for us that Jesus would not be provoked, co-opted, tempted, pressured, or pressed away from his ultimate mission? Do you ever feel pushed from following God’s leading?
11. What does Jesus mean by “my hour has not yet come”? Where else does Jesus refer to his ‘hour’?
12. What was Jesus’ *ultimate* hour? How would he be glorified on the cross and through his resurrection?

Read John 2:5-12

13. What does Mary tell the servants to do? What are the quiet examples of obedience in this event?
14. Do you ever find it difficult to *obey* God when you don’t understand everything? How is it more important to base our confidence on who God is rather than what we can understand?
15. What were the jars used for? Why is it significant that Jesus deliberately chose these? *What happens?*
16. What were the limits of the sacrificial and purification system? *What need did they point to?*
17. How might Jesus be pointing to what he will do for us on the cross to ultimately wash us clean?
18. How might this sign point us to the future that awaits all who trust in Jesus? (cf. Revelation 21:1-4)
19. How does the abundance of the wine point to the type of future that awaits all who trust in Jesus?
20. How do the disciples respond? How should this also strengthen our belief, too?

Apply How can you sip God’s joy now in anticipation of the future which he prepared for us in Christ?

Pray Gracious God, thank you that you have revealed your glory to us in your Son. Please help us to recognise and believe in him. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.



GOING DEEPER

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Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Front Line this Week

How have you seen God at work on your frontline? You might like to pray for eyes to see how he is at work through situations, through people, and through you.

For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* “Jesus Gets the Party Started” by Matt Pope:
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/jesus-gets-the-party-started/#sermons>
- *Listen (sermon):* “The Feast” by Tim Keller:
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/the-feast/>
- *Listen (sermon):* “Miracles” by John Stott:
https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=51170

Series Resources

- *Read:* “John: An Expositional Commentary” by R C Sproul.
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Don Carson.
- *Read:* “The Message of John” by Bruce Milne. 
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Leon Morris.
- *Read:* “John for Everyone: Part 1” by Tom Wright. 
- *Read:* “Can We Trust the Gospels?” by Peter Williams. 
- *Watch:* “John” by the Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-john/>
- *Previous Series* from St Bart’s (including Children’s Resources):
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/jesus-is>
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/i-am>
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/truth-glory>

 Available to borrow from the St Bart’s Library (Toowoomba): stbarts.com.au/library

JOHN (SO THAT YOU MIGHT BELIEVE)

*Week 2/12 “Water into Wine”
by the Rev'd Adam Lowe (08/02/2026)*

물이 포도주로 변하다 | Piu wël ëë kë yë Piukeabiëi
水变酒 | தண்ணீர் திராட்சை ரசமாயிற்று

Bible Passage: John 2:1-12

*Gracious God, thank you that you have revealed your glory to us in your Son.
Please help us to recognise and believe in him. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

Depending on your upbringing and your cultural background, most people will find themselves in one of two camps when it comes to catering. / PRECISION-CATERING or OVER-CATERING

The PRECISION-CATERING Crew's goal is to ensure there is precisely enough food to feed everyone coming along. No more, no less. You neither want *too little* nor *too much*. You want sufficient food but you do not want any waste! *If that's you, when you get that right — you'll feel chuffed, and when you get it wrong, you'll feel a bit of regret!*

The second camp, the OVER-CATERING Crew's goal is not just that there would just be enough but that there would be an abundance of food. *When the party is done and there's still food left, you know you've got it right!* / That was my grandmother. Even when there were only four of us for lunch, *she'd have enough bolognese to feed forty!* If all the food was gone, I'm sure she wouldn't look at the empty plates and empty table and think, 'hurrah!'. *I absolutely nailed the catering estimates, but she'd be thinking, agh, if there was none left, people must have gone away hungry!* / How incredibly embarrassing.

That's a tiny glimpse of how it would have felt running out of wine at a wedding in the ancient world.

- / We don't actually know a lot about Jewish weddings in the first century, when Jesus lived and when John wrote his Gospel.
- But what we do know is that the celebration could extend for up to a week! If you think weddings are a big deal now, they were a *bigger deal then!* We might think receptions can be elaborate and long nowadays, but imagine a week!
- And in a culture in which hospitality was deeply baked into the way that society operated, to run out of wine would not only have been a failing of your responsibility as a host. But it would have been shameful. Even scandalous!

- You weren't just breaking a social contract, as serious as that was, but maybe even a legal one.
- Marriage contracts could include guarantees for the provision of hospitality.
- And some commentators note that running out of wine at a wedding could even expose the couple's family to a potential lawsuit or a financial consequence within a community.
- So when Mary says to Jesus: they have no more wine: this is a BIG deal.

Maybe it seems strange, that after John's glorious cosmic-scale opening, that the very first of Jesus' signs — in John — is Jesus *turning water into wine*.

- But this isn't simply a *party trick* or a *divine catering backup plan*, to avert a scandal and relieve a bit of social pressure on the wedding family. /
- This is a glimpse of the glory of Jesus. //
- See, what's truly amazing about this wedding in Cana — the surprising twist — / is that it doesn't go down in history as the wedding with insufficient wine. Not even just the day where the abundance of the best wine was saved for last. *But the day when Jesus did his first sign, revealed his glory, and the disciples believed in him.* //
- Jesus turned water into wine. //
- And as John invites us to believe in Jesus, *remember that's the goal of John writing*: this sign points us to three things:
- **Jesus' Hour Had Not Yet Come,**
God Was Doing Something New, and
The Groom Has Arrived.

JESUS' HOUR HAD NOT YET COME | VERSES 1-4

아직 이르지 않은 예수의 때 | Yēcu ää kēnē thää dë Beën | 耶稣的时刻尚未到来 | මූයෝසඩින් බෙගල මූණුම බරවිලලෙ

The first thing this sign points to is that: **JESUS' HOUR HAD NOT YET COME.** Verse 1 of Ch. 2.

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "**My hour has not yet come.**"

There's a slew of slightly surprising things about this interaction!

- *It's surprising that they run out of wine given all we know about the social expectations.*
It's surprising that Mary goes straight to Jesus when she knows that the wine has run dry.
And Jesus' two-part response to Mary, only to be followed by the miracle, is a bit surprising, too.
- It's a good reminder, that whatever you think about Jesus — *whether you're a believer or not*, that not only is it good to pay attention to the details contained in the Gospels, but also a warning that we shouldn't try to neatly contain Jesus.
- If you pay attention to Jesus, then you're almost certainly going to be surprised, too. //

I *really* love that when Mary learns about the lack of wine, that she doesn't only **go to Jesus**, but I love **the WAY that she goes to Jesus**.

- She simply states the situation: "They have no more wine."

- This isn't just an FYI—some sort of sideline gossip on the reception proceedings. Clearly, Jesus' mother *has an expectation that he would do something about it.* We know that by HOW Jesus responds. He queries WHY this involves him.
- *Women, why do you involve me?/*
- He's not part of the wedding party or an immediate family member. He's not the host nor does he have an official role. He's simply there as a guest. Along with the disciples. And with his mum. //
- Maybe when people come to you with problems, you've been tempted to say at times, great, thanks for alerting me to this situation, that the toilet paper has run out, but what are you going to do about it? Why are you telling me about this? Don't just come to me with a problem, come to me with a solution! /
- But can you see what Mary is doing? She isn't going with a solution. She's recognised WHO is this solution!
- As she goes to Jesus, she doesn't DICTATE how he should handle it. She simply knows WHO is the one to handle it. /
- I need to be reminded over-and-over again to be less pre-occupied on dictating to God on how he should precisely handle things, and more focused in simply bringing my concerns based on a confidence on WHO he is rather than my longing for a particular outcome. /

As Jesus responds, “*why do you involve me?*”, I can kind of imagine Mary thinking:

- I think you know WHY. And actually, I think you know what I know. /
- She has recognised something about him. *But there's also something she hasn't understood.* /
- Note the second part of Jesus' response, the backend of verse 4: “*my hour has not yet come.*”
- Jesus isn't saying, Mary, *it's only 2PM so it's not time for that. Or I'm not in the mood right now.* He's saying that the **decisive moment and culmination of my mission** *has not yet arrived.*
- The trajectory of that “hour” is on repeat throughout John. It's like a crescendo building!
- My hour has not yet come. *Here in chapter 2.*
His hour had not yet come. *In chapter 7 (v.30).* / His hour had not yet come. *In chapter 8.*
- It's only when he arrives in Jerusalem, in chapter 12 as the passover celebrations begin, that Jesus says: *The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.* /
- In the most upside down of ways—*his death will be the ultimate demonstration of his glory!*
- It's why he prays just before his crucifixion:
“*Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.*” //
- That's what Jesus has on his mind, when Mary tells him that they are out of wine. /
- Perhaps Mary thinks that this wedding is Jesus' time to shine.
- But Jesus is telling her that the the ultimate hour of his glorification, the ultimate moment when the purpose of his coming—of going to the cross, is not yet. /

- He wants her to understand that. And he wants us to see that, too.
- The **ultimate reason** that we can have life when we believe in his name, is not because of miraculous things he does, but because he's laid his life down for us. //

When we hear Jesus addressing his mother as 'woman' it can catch us a bit off guard.

- It can sound a bit rude, blunt, or disrespectful to our ears.
But that's not necessarily the case. But it is strange.
- It's strange not because of the title of 'woman' itself. *But WHO Jesus is speaking to.*
At first glance it's an odd choice, *because 'woman' strips out the family connection they share.*
- / But can you see what Jesus is showing us?
That he will not be moved to action by anyone except for his Father.
- Not by his disciples nor by his enemies. Not by his fans nor by his family.
- When they try to test him, *Jesus won't be provoked.*
When they try to take him as King, *Jesus won't be co-opted.*
When the enemy tries to entice him, *Jesus won't be tempted.*
When people demand a sign, *he won't be pressured.*
When the disciples long for him to act, *he won't be pressed.*
- (If you ever feel like you're going to buckle or capitulate as a Christian, we need to look to the strength of Jesus.)
- In the face of provocation, coercion, temptation, pressure, and persecution, it's only — and ultimately his Father's will *and timing* — he seeks to please.

GOD IS DOING SOMETHING NEW | VERSES 5-8

하나님이 하시는 새 일 | Nħiälic ää Lööi kë Jöt | 上帝正在做一件新事 | കടവും പുതിയാക ഓൺതൈരുക്കണമെന്നും ചെയ്യുന്നും

That is Jesus' *resolve* for us. This is not *the hour*. But it is a moment straining *towards that hour*.

As *he turns the water into wine* — he shows us that **GOD IS DOING SOMETHING NEW**. Verse 5:

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Nearby - stood - six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." /

Despite Jesus questioning Mary why she comes to him. /

Despite Jesus telling her that his hour has not yet come. /

- I love that she still turns to the servants and says, *verse 5*, "do whatever he tells you".
- And they do! / Six stone water jars. *Jesus tells them to fill them. And so they fill them to the brim!*
- It must have seemed bizarre. / But not only do they fill those jars *to the brim*(!), but *then* when Jesus tells them to draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet, once again—they follow the instructions and obey.
- I can resist obeying God even when I know who he is and why he asks!
But here these servants are, likely with no *or little* clue who Jesus is, AND they follow him!

- So often we're willing to obey only to the degree to which we understand. But God is not dependent on our understanding, and he is capable of more than we can conceive. /
- If I get a jug of water here, and pour it out — what do you expect to happen? Nothing! Of course not, I'm not Jesus. / Jesus could have turned the water wine without any interaction from anyone else. But that's not what he did. /
- In fact, sign-after-sign throughout John's Gospel, Jesus employs others in what he does.
- The servants fill the jars.
The disciples distribute the bread.
The blind man goes and washes.
The mourners unbind Lazarus.
- Jesus doesn't need them in order to do what he does, *and this isn't a method to force God's hand into a miracle*, but he's provoking them to respond in belief.

Note, verse 6, that the *six stone jars* that Jesus instructed the servants to use were the type *used by the Jews for ceremonial washing*. / This is deliberate.

- Jews could become unclean for all sorts of reasons including just everyday life.
- They had to wash their hands, *cups, and utensils, over-and-over again*.
Not for hygiene, but in order to maintain a ritual cleanliness.
- And at a celebration like this, spanning a number of days, with a variety of people, sharing table with others, a lot of water would have been needed for this purpose.

- That's why these jars would have been there. That's the water, turned into wine. //
- But can you see what Jesus is doing? What he's pointing us to? /
- All of their efforts to be clean, could never ever address the problem of their hearts.
All that the ritual cleaning could do, was to express a desire to be God's people, and anticipate a future when God would truly make them holy.
- They could wash away dirt — but not sin.
They could deal with defilement — but not guilt.
They could rinse their hands — but not renew their hearts.
They could long to be holy — but never become holy.

But Jesus was doing something new. He was fulfilling what the water only pointed to. /

- He was paving a way for us to be clean from the inside out. / *For when his hour had come, he would take wine and say, this cup is the new covenant in my blood.*
- Just as Jesus took the water and turned it into wine to be poured out, on the cross, his life would be poured out that we might know the abundance of his grace.
- In Cana there was probably about 500 litres of the best wine in those jars.
And through his death there is such an abundance of grace, that there is sufficient for every person to drink from his cup.
- God is doing something new,
and it all centres on Jesus.

THE GROOM HAS ARRIVED | VERSES 9-12

신랑이 오셨다 | Rān Thiék eē Bén | 新郎已到 | மணவாளன் வந்துவிட்டார்

THE GROOM HAS ARRIVED. From verse 9...

The master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.”

This whole situation has been transformed from *disaster* to *delight*!

- From *no wine* to the *best wine* — in abundance — imaginable! /
- Note that when the master of banquet tastes *the water that had been turned in wine*, he's not only perplexed by how good this is, and where it could have possibly come from, but that the choicest wine has been saved to last.
- The common practice was to serve the finer wine first, *when people could appreciate it most*, and then the cheaper wine after, *perhaps when their senses had been dulled*!
- But that's not how Jesus works.
The sign of turning water into wine doesn't only point to his saving work, but also of the future joy — of what is coming — for all who trust in him.
- Of a wedding that is yet to come.

Whenever we go to a wedding as a family, or whenever I've been to a wedding and show photos of it, you can just about guarantee that our youngest will have a litany of relational questions. Of who's who. She wants to understand who got married, who were their parents, and what is the relationship of everyone involved. *She might even include a reflection or two on what she would want her wedding to be like (long in the distant future)*.

But here's Jesus. He's not only *not* married, he knows that he won't. YET he is a groom.
THE groom. He has a wedding to think about. In fact, it's part of God's great purpose for his Son. /

- Time-and-time again throughout the Bible, the ultimate consummation of all things, is pictured as a wedding: a wedding between Jesus and his people. / Revelation 21:19:

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

- It's no wonder that the first sign is a wedding, *because that's where God's people are headed.* //
- Whenever I hear people say, don't worry “the best is yet to come” part of me always wonders, part of my is sometimes a bit cynical and thinks: well how do you really know that? Are you just trying to positively will into existence? In most circumstances we don't know what is ahead.
- But in God's plans, for those who believe in him, we do know that the best IS yet to come. Not because of us. But because of what Jesus has guaranteed for us!

- When Jesus and the disciples copped criticism for feasting rather than fasting, Jesus didn't say to the pharisees and religious folk don't be such party-poopers, he said: *How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? ... BUT the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.* (cf. Mark 2:19-20)
- Jesus didn't only know that he was the bridegroom of God's people, but he also knew that *that* had a costly road ahead. That he was willing to walk, *for us.* //

I've had the great privilege of celebrating many weddings here over the past twelve years. In fact many of them, took place right on this very spot. And one of the joys of witnessing the beginning of those marriages, didn't begin on the day of the wedding, but in the weeks and the months in the lead up to that point.

- The wedding at Cana doesn't just point us to who Jesus is, but what is waiting for us when we believe in him. /
- We can look back full of gratitude for what Jesus has done for us. AND we can look forward with great joy in what Jesus has prepared for us. // *Verse 11...*

What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Don't just be impressed like the master of the banquet was.
Believe in Jesus like the disciples did.