

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.  
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!**

**questions**

Read **John 2:1-11**.

1. Summarize this story into ten main actions. Write a short phrase beside the verse divisions that captures what happened. The first one is done for you.

<b>2: 1-2</b> Jesus and disciples went to a wedding	<b>2:3</b> ( <i>the problem</i> ) wine ran out	<b>2:3-4</b> Jesus' mother informs Jesus Jesus replies
<b>2:5</b> Jesus' mother tell servants to do what Jesus tells them to do	<b>2:6-7</b> Jesus says fill stone jars with water	<b>2:8</b> Jesus says take some to the master of banquet
<b>2:9-10</b> Master says this was better than the wine served first	<b>2:11</b> 1st of Jesus' miraculous signs	<b>2:11</b> Jesus revealed his glory
<b>2:11</b> Jesus' disciples put their faith in him		

2. How does Jesus attending and entering into the festivities of a wedding enhance the meaning of **John 1:14**?

Jesus (God) not only became human really lived with us, participating in life just as we do. God understands our life and what we face not just because he created us, but also because he became one of us and actually lived with us and among us, experiencing life just as we do. He truly understands! He knows what we face and he knows how to solve our problems.

♥ Do you think Jesus is personally interested in the personal concerns and significant events of your life? Why or why not? If so, what difference does his interest make? **Good question to discuss**

**Wedding at Cana in Galilee** – A wedding in Jesus' day was a festive, community celebration. The ceremony usually took place late in the evening after a feast – on Wednesday if the girl was a virgin and Thursday if she was a widow. Then there was a procession to the home of the groom – a joyous, noisy parade, with an open house and entertainment that went on for a least a week. Refreshments were provided for all the guests. Of these, wine was very important. Failing to provide adequately for the guests would be a social disgrace. In the closely-knit village culture of Palestine, such an error would never be forgotten and would haunt the newly married couple all their lives. Running out of wine was not merely an embarrassing situation; it was a dishonoring crisis for the host.

3. What was Mary's reaction to the problem of the wine running out and why do you think she took this action (2:3)?

Some may think Mary went to Jesus because she wanted him to perform a miracle, but that is unlikely since Jesus had not performed any miracles yet and Mary would not have known that he could. It's important to note that she did not order Jesus to do something or tell him **what** to do. She just informed him of the problem, probably because she was confident that he would and could do something. Since Joseph, Mary husband, is not mentioned in the Gospels, we assume he probably had passed away. Mary was probably used to relying on Jesus as the oldest son.

♥ What can we learn from Mary's example?

Take our problems to Jesus instead of getting upset or trying to fix everything ourselves

4. Consider Jesus' reply in **2:4**. Do you think Jesus is upset with his mother? Why or why not?

We may be confused by Jesus' answer to his mother. First, it seems abrupt. Some Bible translations add the word "Dear" in front of woman, but in the original text, Jesus just says, "Woman . . ." We have to be careful we don't interpret this in light of our culture. Even though Jesus addressed his mother as "Woman", this was not a harsh reply. He used the same word (Woman) when he addressed his mother from the cross (19:26) as well with Mary Magdalene at the tomb (20:15).

Secondly, Jesus seems hesitant to act, almost as if he didn't want to help out. Again, however, if we consider the context and the culture, we get a clue as to why Jesus answered this way. Jesus had just begun his ministry and up until this time he had been living in his mother's home. His reply to his mother may be a quiet announcement that Mary's role in Jesus' life has changed and he is not under her authority. No longer will he do what his mother asks, just because she is his mother. While he still honors her, he has his own mission now. Mary cannot exercise maternal authority in Jesus' messianic work. (See question 5 for further details).

♥ Imagine Jesus saying the words of **2:4** in three different ways: 1) stern and serious; 2) smiling with a twinkle in his eye; 3) lovingly with a tender look. Does considering these three scenarios change, in any way, the impact of Jesus' words for you? What can you learn from this exercise?

This is just to point out that we have the words of Jesus, but not his body language and so we have to be careful how we interpret anything he says. We need to look at the context carefully for clues as to what he meant or the manner in which he said it. It also helps to study and know the culture that Jesus lived in so that we can interpret what is said and done in the light of 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish culture.

5. How does Jesus' statements in **John 5:19, 20, 30** help explain his reply in **2:4**?

. . .the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. . . the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. . . I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

Jesus was beginning his ministry under the authority and purpose of his heavenly Father who sent him. He will begin his miracles at God's appointed time, for the purpose that people might believe he is the Son of God and might have life through his name. Jesus must now follow the course that God the Father has for him.

Why did he go ahead and perform the miracle after he told his mother that his time had not come? Because he then sensed from God and the Holy Spirit that it was time to act. Father God, through the power of the Holy Spirit (John 3:34) showed Jesus what to do and how to do it. The time had come for him to act, but not because his mother asked him. Rather, because his Father showed him.

6. How can Mary's actions and words in **2:3** and **2:5** serve as a model for praying about our problems?

**First**, we take our problems to Jesus, no matter how big or small. We tell him about it. This shows our confidence in his strength and ability.

**Second**, we don't order him to do something or tell him what to do. We simply tell him the problem expecting he will take appropriate action, doing the right thing at the right time. (We all have a tendency to use prayer to dictate to God.) In prayer, we lay our need before him, and then trust him to respond as he wills.

**Third**, Mary's request was followed by the intention to obey whatever Jesus said to do. In this case, she told the servants to obey, but her willingness to obey for herself is clear. We can't bring our problems to God and ask him to work in them if we are not willing to then do what he tells us to do. We may be part of God' solution! God will ask us to do what we can do and then he will do what only he can do!

7. John tells us that the changing of water into wine was the first of many miraculous signs that Jesus performed. What were two tangible results of this sign in 2:11?

Jesus revealed his glory which means he demonstrated that he was God by showing his power over creations and material things. He proves that as Creator of all things (John 1:3), he, of course has power over all things. On commentator described Jesus' power over creation and material things this way: *The modest water saw its God and blushed!*

Because of this miracle, Jesus' disciples put their faith in him, believed and trusted him. This may have been the whole purpose of the miracle! His had just called his disciples to follow him and now he demonstrates his power to them. Not everyone at the wedding even knew a miracle had happened. When Jesus asks us to follow him, he will show us that he worthy of being followed.

*Jesus revealed his glory* – The *glory* of God is the sum of his majesty, power, beauty, goodness and splendor. When God's glory is revealed, we get a glimpse of who God really is. In this miraculous sign, Jesus revealed (gave us a glimpse) of his glory as the Son of God. By changing water into wine, he shows his mastery over creation and the material universe. Jesus reveals his glory so that we might believe; and, believing allows us to see more of his glory. Jesus allowed his disciples to see his glory so that they would put their faith in him. He does the same for us.

♥ When have you gotten a glimpse of Jesus' glory (majesty, power, beauty, goodness and splendor)? What was your reaction? **Good question to discuss.**

♥ What miracle has Jesus done in your life that has increased your faith in him? **Good question to discuss.**

8. **Problems are opportunities for God to act.** Choose two characters from this story (*Mary, Jesus, disciples, guests, servants, master of the banquet, the bridegroom*) and explain what they personally would have missed if the problem of the wine running out had not occurred.

Have several share.

The point is that we see problems and hard times in a negative light. We don't often see them as opportunities for God to act and show his power and love. God works through our problems and we receive and become what we could not have been or had if it wasn't for the problem in the first place. Also, when God works through our problems and shows his glory, power and love, it becomes a witness to others around us who may not know God. God working in our lives attracts others to Him.

♥ What problem in your life has been an opportunity for God to act?

*Miraculous Sign* – A *sign* is something that points beyond itself by teaching a spiritual truth. A *sign* discloses something that was hidden before. Each of the *miraculous signs* in the Gospel of John have great spiritual significance. For John, the author, the miracle itself was less important than what the *miracle revealed about Jesus' character, identity and mission.*

9. Discuss with your group the **spiritual significance** of the following details from this story.

As we see in the book of Revelation, the Apostle John (who wrote this Gospel) is a symbolic writer. He tells the story, but he is also revealing a deeper truth that is illustrated in the story. We will see this pattern all through this Gospel. There is a reason why John chose just 7 miracles out of the hundreds that Jesus performed. He chose each one because the story demonstrates what he wants to tell us about Jesus and his ministry. Each of the details in this story of changing water to wine, reveal a deeper truth.

*Why is it significant that:*

- Jesus' wine *replaces* the wine that has run out?

Jesus' work for the world and his work in our lives doesn't upgrade or improve the old, inferior self or ways. When Jesus acts in any situation, he totally replaces the old with the new. Jesus was going to replace the old religious practices of the Jewish people with new ones. This whole miracle is a sign that the old is out and the new was coming. The wine that has been served is exhausted and Jesus' new wine is replacing it.

- Jesus chose to turn the Jewish ceremonial water into wine for a wedding feast? (Consider **John 1:17** in your answer.)

The law (the way the Jews worshipped and related to God) was given through Moses; grace and truth (a new and better way to worship and relate to God) came through Jesus Christ. The ceremonial water is symbolic of the whole religious system of the Jews. Jesus took that water and changed it into new wine; a new way to approach God and worship him had come.

- Jesus' wine is superior to the wine first served?

The new thing that Jesus was ushering in was far superior to the old way of relating to God. We know from Hebrews and other New Testament books that Jesus would become the final sacrifice for sin. No longer would the Jews or anyone else have to offer animals as a sacrifice that only temporarily covered their sins. John the Baptist declared, "Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

The new wine of the kingdom brought by Jesus contrasts with the old wine of Judaism. Jesus changes the wine of Judaism into the wine of Christianity.

- Jesus made more than 120 gallons of wine (about 2400 servings), more than the family could use in months?

Whatever Jesus does for us is not only better than the old, he always provides in abundance. In John 10 Jesus says, "I have come that you might have life and have it to the full (abundantly)! Jesus never does anything half way. God's blessings are always overly generous!

- Jesus came as a guest to the wedding but actually provided as if he were a host?

We talk of "inviting Jesus into our hearts" like we own our heart (and our lives) and we invite him in as a guest. How ironic! He created us and he owns us and we belong to him. As our relationship deepens with Jesus, there comes a point of transition where he becomes the Host in our lives, providing everything we need and we are his guests, dependent on him for everything.

- Jesus performed his first miraculous sign at a wedding feast?

Not only is a wedding a special time in almost every culture, but the image of the wedding feast in Scripture has great significance. The kingdom of God is often seen as being invited to a wedding feast. Also, the intimate relation between God (Yahweh) and Israel is portrayed through the image of the marriage covenant (Hosea 2:7). Isaiah prophesies about the new covenant God will make with his people by saying, "As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you (Is. 62:5). Also, the consummation of all of history will be celebrated in the marriage of the Lamb to his Bride at the wedding feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9). Believers are the Bride of Christ and Jesus is our Bridegroom. It is very fitting that Jesus performs his first miracle and reveals his glory at a wedding.

10. Jesus entering a situation always causes change. According to **2 Corinthians 5:17**, what change does Jesus cause in our lives that corresponds to his changing water into wine?

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (NIV)

What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun! (NLT)

Water into wine; sinners into saints! Jesus makes us new persons that are way better than the old person. Our new nature replaces our old nature.

- ♥ In what areas of your life do you need Jesus to change *water* into *wine*?
- ♥ How is the miracle of changing dirty water into wedding wine personally significant to you?

11. Read **John 2:12-24**. Does the scene described enhance your concept of Jesus or distract from it? Why? Some people are uncomfortable with an "angry" Jesus or they perceive that Jesus went into a rage and "lost his temper." In Ephesians we are told that in our anger we are not to sin. In other words, we are told not to sin by letting our anger gain control over us. Anger, however, is an appropriate response when an injustice or wrong is done. Jesus gets angry when God is not honored and when people are being hurt. Righteous anger compels us to take action and right the wrong.

- ♥ Why were sheep and cattle being sold and money being exchanged in the Jewish temple? (**Numbers 28:16-25**) **Passover was a time that people offered God animal sacrifices; especially the sacrificial lamb.**

*Passover* is an annual festival celebrated each spring that retells the story of Israel's departure from Egypt during the time of Moses. The night before the exodus from Egypt, Israelite families were spared when the angel of death "passed over" the homes that had been marked by the sacrifice of a lamb (**Exodus 12**). Over the centuries Passover had become a pilgrimage festival in which Jewish families were expected to travel to Jerusalem and participate in sacrifice, a symbolic meal, and reflective study of Israel's salvation as a nation.

12. Look closely at **2:13-17** and state whether you think Jesus was upset because there were unjust profits made off the people by the selling of sacrificial animals and the exchanging of currency **OR** was he upset because these activities were being done in the temple itself? Explain your reasons.

There is no right answer here, but this text seems to indicate that Jesus was most upset about the inappropriate activity that was going on in his Father's house, which was supposed to be a house of prayer. Animals had to be sold and money exchanged for all the pilgrims that traveled to Jerusalem. Jesus takes exception to where this activity was going on. This activity did not honor God and it prevented people from worshipping and praying. It could have been done outside the temple. This activity was probably happening in the Court of the Gentiles (see temple box below). This was the only place in the temple that a Gentile had to pray because they were not allowed in the inner parts of the temple.

- ♥ How does **2:17** explain why Jesus did what he did? Later, the disciples remember the prophetic words from Psalms – zeal for your house has consumed me; the insults of those who insult you (God) fall on me. Jesus was protecting God's honor and showing love for God's temple, the place where God met with his people.
- ♥ Have you ever had righteous indignation over a cause or crisis to the point where you were overwhelmed with the desire to act? What action did you take?
- ♥ If Jesus were to arrive in your church or place of worship, would he build a whip out of pew rope or would he praise God for what is happening there?

The *temple* was the hub of Jewish life in the first century. It served as the center for government, law, religious life and taxation. It set the moral, religious and political tone of the country. *It was considered most sacred because it was where heaven and earth met and where Jews could come into God's presence.* The temple proper was surrounded by several courts. The innermost court was open only to Jewish men, the next admitted Jewish men and women, and the outermost court admitted Gentiles as well as Jews. The **Court of the Gentiles** was huge, about 500 by 300 yards. The Jewish temple dazzled visitors and it was a point of great religious and national pride.

13. Why would Jesus say "temple" in **2:19** instead of "body"? How does Jesus' body function as a "temple"? (You may want to consider **John 1:18** in your answer.)

Jesus uses a word play on his critics that they totally don't get. He is also prophesying or foretelling his own death and resurrection. The box above indicates how important and sacred the temple was to the Jews, for various reasons. Jesus' body is a temple in that he is the place where "heaven and earth meet." He came from heaven to live among us. It is also through his death and resurrection that we can come into God's presence. He was the perfect sacrifice that allows us to go into the holiest place, the very throne room of God. We are now seated with him in the heavens at the right hand of the Father. The temple was a place of prayer and we now pray to the Father in Jesus' name. Jesus came to show us who Father God is. In Jesus, we meet God.

♥ How does your body function as a temple (**1 Corinthians 6:19**)? What are your standards of holiness for your "temple"?

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? We are a temple because God lives in us.

♥ Read **2:24-25**. What is it that Jesus knows about us? How does his knowledge affect the openness honestly of your prayers? Your relationships? To God, "all hearts are open, all desires known and from him no secrets are hid." We can fool other people, but we can never fool God. This should effect everything we do. It keeps us accountable. We also can be totally honest with God about what we think or are feeling. We don't have to worry that he'll be offended or love us any less. He knows what is in our heart before we even do.

## Response

**John 20:31** - But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. Share with your group what *words, events* or *dialogue* in **John 2** you find most convincing in supporting John's dual purpose for writing this gospel?

## Encounter with Jesus

If you compare **your life** to the **rooms of a house**, which room do you think Jesus might want to clean up: *Library* – the reading room? *Dining room* – appetites and desires? *Workshop* – where you keep your skills? *Recreation room* – leisure activities? *Family room* – where most of your relationships are lived out? *Closet* – where you keep your hang-ups?

Jesus is a gentle and humble teacher and he is willing to come in and help you "clean house", teaching you to live life to the full so that you may experience rest for your soul (**Matthew 11:28-29**). There is nothing in your life that he doesn't already know completely and there is no problem that he doesn't have the solution to. But you must open the door and let him in. He is a Gentleman and he won't make a forced entry!