

# Jesus Turns Water to Wine

## Summary and Goal

John did not recount the story of Jesus turning water into wine for our entertainment; by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he intentionally presented the truth that Jesus' miracles reveal God the Father. Through the details of this miracle, we see Jesus' compassion for our needs, a glimpse of His identity, and His ability to reveal God in all He does.

### ***Main Passage***

John 2:1-12

### ***Session Outline***

1. Jesus' miracles were a response to human need (John 2:1-5).
2. Jesus' miracles communicated the nature of His identity (John 2:6-10).
3. Jesus' miracles displayed glory and strengthened faith (John 2:11-12).

---

### ***Theological Theme***

The miracles of Jesus were part of His purpose in bringing glory to His Father.

### ***Christ Connection***

Sin has disrupted our relationship with God, leading to spiritual barrenness and sorrow in our lives. Christ's miracles are a sign that joyful reconciliation with God is possible again through faith in Jesus' glorious life, death, and resurrection.

### ***Missional Application***

God calls us to do whatever Jesus tells us to do as we seek to display His glory and lead others to faith.

## Session Plan

# Jesus Turns Water to Wine

## Session 7

### Pack Item 1: Stories and Signs

Display this poster in a place that will help group members follow the storyline of Scripture, to remember where we've been and where we are going.

### Introduction Option

Show the clip "Dinglehopper" from the film *The Little Mermaid* to complement the Introduction.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=R\\_ScbXFwGBE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_ScbXFwGBE)

### Point 1 Option

Prior to the group meeting, enlist a volunteer to do some research on first-century Jewish weddings and to share some insights with the group as they relate to this story in John 2. You might consider providing the volunteer with the *Biblical Illustrator* article "First-Century Jewish Weddings" (included in this quarter's *Biblical Illustrator* Digital Bundle for *The Gospel Project* and also available on the DVD in *The Gospel Project for Adults: Leader Pack*).

## Introduction

Begin with the idea of things having a *purpose*, even if they can be used in other ways (leader p. 82; PSG p. 65).

- When have you used an item in a way that was not its intended purpose? How did it work?
- How would you describe our purpose as human beings? As believers in Christ?

Say that we can be confused about our own purpose, but Jesus was not. Then summarize this session on Jesus turning water into wine (leader pp. 82-83; PSG p. 66).

## 1. Jesus' miracles were a response to human need (John 2:1-5).

Read John 2:1-5. Explain Mary's involvement at the wedding in Cana and the significance of running out of wine at the event. Also address her reason for coming to Jesus and the nature of His response (leader pp. 83-84; PSG p. 66). (Use **Pack Item 3: Jesus' Ministry Map** to highlight a possible location of Cana.)

- How does our confidence in God reveal itself in our prayer life?

Show how the need of Mary and the hosts moved Jesus' heart, so He acted, even though the eternal implications were few. Compare Mary's trust in Jesus with the way we should trust God with our concerns (leader pp. 84-85; PSG p. 67).

- Why might we find it difficult to bring our human needs to God?

## 2. Jesus' miracles communicated the nature of His identity (John 2:6-10).

Call attention to Jesus' teaching elsewhere in the Gospels that we are identified by our fruit (Matt. 7:17-18). This miracle Jesus would perform was an example of His good fruit. Then ask a volunteer to read John 2:6-10. Briefly comment on the exceptional result of the miracle, but focus in on the meaning behind the only people who witnessed the miracle—the servants and the disciples (leader pp. 85-87; PSG pp. 68-69).

- ❓ Does the humility of Jesus bring you comfort or concern? Why?
- ❓ How can we balance His servant-ness with His holiness?

## 3. Jesus' miracles displayed glory and strengthened faith (John 2:11-12).

*Referencing Pack Item 7: Jesus' Signs*, emphasize that there was no sleight-of-hand trick here; this was a miracle that revealed Jesus' glory as the Son of God. Then read John 2:11-12. Connect the ideas of *glory* and *holiness*, both revealed through the perfection of the outcome of this miracle (leader pp. 87-88; PSG pp. 70-71).

- ❓ When was a time you witnessed something that was unmistakably God? How has that experience affected you?

Point out that Jesus' miracle was not shouted from the rooftops, preserving the coming of His "hour" for the right time, but His disciples saw the miracle and believed in Him even more than before. The only question that remains is *do you believe in Him?* (leader pp. 88-89; PSG p. 71).

- ❓ When have you seen God reveal His glory outside the walls of your church? How were the observers changed?
- ❓ How does our mission of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus reveal the glory of God outside of the church?

## Conclusion

Wrap up this session with the truth that we are miracles of Jesus, if we have trusted in Jesus for our salvation from sin. Jesus' purpose—His "hour"—has already been accomplished, so now we live with the purpose of reflecting Christ and pointing others to Him in faith (leader p. 89; PSG p. 72). *Apply the truths of this session with "His Mission, Your Mission" (PSG p. 73).*

### ❓ For Further Discussion

God does everything for His glory and for His people's good. How is this truth exemplified in Jesus' miracle?

### ❓ For Further Discussion

How are miracles distinct from the displays of God's common grace in everyday life (e.g., sun, rain, food, clothing, etc.)?

How might we cheapen the reality of miracles if we use the term too often?

**Christ Connection:** Sin has disrupted our relationship with God, leading to spiritual barrenness and sorrow in our lives. Christ's miracles are a sign that joyful reconciliation with God is possible again through faith in Jesus' glorious life, death, and resurrection.

**Missional Application:** God calls us to do whatever Jesus tells us to do as we seek to display His glory and lead others to faith.

## Expanded Session Content

# Jesus Turns Water to Wine

## Session 7

### Voices from the Church

“When we see the Lord accomplish the unbelievable, our faith grows as we begin to consider what He can do in our lives. In the miracle of turning water into wine, there was a change that challenged all categories of ‘possible.’ It is clear that the Father was using Jesus to do something remarkable. He can do the same thing in your life.”<sup>1</sup>

—Gregg Matte

### Introduction

It’s extremely helpful to know and understand what something is made to do. There’s a priceless scene from the movie *The Little Mermaid* in which Ariel finds several human artifacts that she is unfamiliar with. She brings them to her know-it-all seagull friend, Scuttle, and asks him the purpose for each item. He has no clue what their names or purposes are, but his answers are quite entertaining. For example, Scuttle examines a fork and declares that it is a “dinglehopper,” an instrument that humans use to straighten out their hair.

Perhaps you’ve used something in such a way that went against the item’s purpose. Many have put fingernail polish on a bug bite, used fingernail clippers to snip a hair that was just a tad too long, or used a rubber band to temporarily repair a broken button. (All of these work, by the way.) Such uses might get the job done, but that doesn’t change the item’s *purpose*.

-  When have you used an item in a way that was not its intended purpose? How did it work?
-  How would you describe our purpose as human beings? As believers in Christ?

Too often we are confused about our own intended purpose. One of the most often asked questions in all of humanity is “Why are we here?” or better yet, “Why am I here?” Where we struggle with this question, however, Jesus did not. He knew His purpose.

As we look closely at Jesus’ first miracle, we will see that He did not perform miracles in order to bring attention to Himself (though it sometimes did), to make His life easier (though He could have), or to impress His disciples (though they were). Every miracle brought glory to God the Father, and more specifically, they did so by attesting to Jesus’ identity as God’s Son and the Savior of the world.

## Session Summary

John did not recount the story of Jesus turning water into wine for our entertainment; by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he intentionally presented the truth that Jesus' miracles reveal God the Father. Through the details of this miracle, we see Jesus' compassion for our needs, a glimpse of His identity, and His ability to reveal God in all He does.

## 1. Jesus' miracles were a response to human need (John 2:1-5).

John 1 recounts John the Baptist's declarative statement of Jesus' identity as the Lamb of God (1:29) and Andrew's testimony that He was the Messiah (1:40-41). When Jesus revealed His knowledge of Nathanael's character and location, Nathanael called Him the Son of God and the King of Israel (1:49). These men had correctly identified Jesus and even shared who He was with others, who in turn followed Him as well.

Though many had given Jesus a title or description in John 1, it isn't until chapter 2 that we actually see the physical proof.

<sup>1</sup> *On the third day a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee. Jesus's mother was there, and* <sup>2</sup> *Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding as well.* <sup>3</sup> *When the wine ran out, Jesus's mother told him, "They don't have any wine."*

<sup>4</sup> *"What does that have to do with you and me, woman?" Jesus asked. "My hour has not yet come."*

<sup>5</sup> *"Do whatever he tells you," his mother told the servants.*

As we will see, the circumstances surrounding this wedding miracle reveal so much about Jesus and His relationships at this early point in His ministry. For starters, Jesus was staying near His mother, Mary, who lived in Nazareth. And though we don't know the exact geographical location of the city of Cana, we can assume that Cana and Nazareth were near one another. We also observe that Jesus and His disciples were beginning to work as one—Jesus received an invitation to the wedding along with His disciples.

Mary was not just a guest at this wedding; obviously she was involved in the serving or planning or at the very least a trusted member of the family or a close friend. She could have been like the cousin or aunt who shows up on the morning of the wedding and asks, "How can I help?" We know Mary was intimately involved because she became aware of a need that was not public: the wine had run out.

The fruit of the vine used to make wine grew well in Palestine. Wine was a common drink but also used as a medicine and disinfectant. Though drunkenness is condemned throughout Scripture, wine was a staple Jewish thirst-quencher and obviously provided at weddings.<sup>2</sup> Running out of wine was likely a statement either of poor planning by the hosts or entertaining more guests than expected.

## Further Commentary

"This is the 'third day'—that is, two days after Jesus' encounter with Nathanael (1:43-51). This continues the narration of Jesus' activities spanning an entire week (see...1:29,35,43)...The wedding party's running out of wine may be seen as symbolizing the spiritual barrenness of first-century Judaism, especially against an OT background that viewed wine (but never drunkenness) as a sign of joy and God's blessing (Ps. 104:15; Prov. 3:10; cf. Matt. 26:29)...Jesus' address for his mother, 'Woman,' is an expression of polite distance, as is his question to her. 'My hour has not yet come.' In John, Jesus' 'hour' is the time of his crucifixion, at which time his saving work is accomplished in his atoning death (see 7:30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1; 17:1). At this point in his ministry, because of people's misconceptions about the coming Messiah, Jesus chooses not to reveal himself openly to Israel (though he does perform numerous messianic 'signs'...). Even this miracle is done quietly. Compared to the other Gospels, John places less emphasis on Jesus' public ministry and more emphasis on his private ministry to specific individuals."<sup>3</sup>

—Andreas J. Köstenberger, *ESV Study Bible*



## Voices from Church History

“The Lord was invited and came to a wedding. Is it any wonder that he who came to that house for a wedding came to this world for a wedding?... Therefore he has a bride here whom he has redeemed by his blood and to whom he has given the Holy Spirit as a pledge.”<sup>4</sup>

—Augustine (354-430)



## Further Commentary

“The wedding day had a holiday atmosphere. The young men played games; the young women danced. Relatives and friends brought gifts to the couple. Toward evening everyone enjoyed a generous meal, including roasted oxen and fatted calves. Everybody ate and drank heartily. The hosts were to meet every need. To run out of anything, such as wine, would have been a serious breach of hospitality and a terrible embarrassment...The feasting and rejoicing of Jewish weddings generally lasted for seven days, often severely straining a family’s resources. Poorer people went to their jobs each day but returned for the evening meals...Jewish weddings were so filled with joy, fellowship, and celebration that the New Testament uses the image of the wedding feast for the Messiah’s future banquet to picture the joy, fellowship, and celebration Jesus will have with His followers in God’s kingdom forever.”<sup>5</sup>

—Sharon H. Gritz,  
*Biblical Illustrator*

The need was there, presented plainly by Mary: “They don’t have any wine.” What did Mary expect Jesus to do? We can’t be sure entirely. Some speculate that perhaps the addition of Jesus and His disciples to the wedding feast overloaded the need for food and drink, causing the embarrassment. Some suggest that perhaps Jesus could have acted as a helper, going to purchase more wine. But Jesus’ response to His mother shows that she knew He was capable of a supernatural response.

Jesus’ reply seems harsh to our 21<sup>st</sup>-century ears, but to the 1<sup>st</sup>-century Jews, it was clear He held no contempt. His response was straightforward but not disrespectful: “What does that have to do with you and me, woman?...My hour has not yet come.” In other words, “Now is not the time to reveal My identity as the Son of God to the Jews.”

If anyone knew with certainty that Jesus was not simply born of a woman but of God, it was His mother, Mary. If anyone knew His power and purpose, it was Mary. If anyone knew the One who could help with the lack of wine at a wedding, it was Mary. She knew He was the only one who had the power to immediately meet the need.



How does our confidence in God reveal itself in our prayer life?

Though she was a mature woman, full of faith, Mary was childlike in her request. When a young child has a need, she goes to her parents full of faith, confident they can meet her need. Many parents have cringed at the sight of a demolished toy in the hands of a child trembling with tears, asking for it to be fixed. Parents rush to the aid of a sick child, helping her to find comfort and peace in a struggle. Children don’t try to bargain or instruct their parents when a true need arises; they simply state the need. Perhaps this is part of the truth in Matthew 18:3-4, when Jesus said, “Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child—this one is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” The irony of this scenario at the wedding is that the mother comes to the Son, acknowledging His authority and divine power.

Mary told Jesus the need and entrusted the result to Him. She didn’t give Him money to go get more or a list of three possible solutions. She simply stated the concern on her heart and instructed the servants nearby, who were obviously listening to her, to do as He said.

For some, the story of the Roman centurion’s faith in Matthew 8:5-13 may come to mind: The military leader understood that one with authority need only speak and the command would be carried out. Mary understood this exact power that Jesus held not only over the situation at hand but over all of His creation (Col. 1:16).

Though the lack of wine did not affect Jesus' identity, power, or purpose, Mary's need and the need of the hosts moved His heart. Someone He loved was coming to Him with a need. The wedding itself may have had no eternal implications other than the fact that God's Son was there, meeting the needs of a beloved one, but His act of glory would not go unnoticed.

Like Mary, we are needy and unable to solve our problems alone. But do we approach Jesus as Mary did, simply stating our need, or do we instruct Him how to solve it and feel He didn't hear us when the need is not met as we prescribed? May it be the former, though we do so with conviction. The writer of Hebrews encourages, "Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need" (4:16). We approach God's throne with confidence, not because of who we are or because of our good deeds but because we know He is rich in mercy and grace and powerful to help.

Mary leaves the narrative at this point; we hear and see nothing else from her. She doesn't follow up or check in on His progress. Similarly, knowing that our needs will be met when we bring them to God in Jesus' name, we have the confidence to leave them at His feet, waiting to see what He will do but believing fully that He will act.

 Why might we find it difficult to bring our human needs to God?

## 2. Jesus' miracles communicated the nature of His identity (John 2:6-10).

Later in His ministry, Jesus would say these words: "Every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can't produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit" (Matt. 7:17-18). The words He spoke strike at the hearts of His hearers—We are identified by our fruit.

Years ago at a county fair, I observed a hilarious situation in the poultry and rabbit barn. One of the fair volunteers placed a freshly-laid chicken egg inside one of the rabbit cages. As children walked by, touching the soft fur of the beautiful bunnies, they stopped and stared at the egg in the cage. Almost every child asked, "Did that rabbit lay that egg?" The wise volunteer would answer with another question, "Do rabbits lay eggs?" You could see the wheels turning in their young minds as their parents snickered in the background. Their brains were telling them that rabbits do not lay eggs, but their eyes seemed to be revealing something else.



### Voices from Church History

"With [Jesus], nothing is incomplete or done at the wrong time, just as with the Father there is nothing haphazard."<sup>6</sup>

—Irenaeus (circa 125-202)

## Further Commentary

“John does not say how or when the miracle took place. He simply speaks of ‘the water that had been turned into wine.’ He does not even tell us how much water was changed into wine...The master of the banquet did not know the origin of the wine he was tasting, but he recognized its quality. He summoned the bridegroom (who was responsible for the feast), and commented on his departure from common custom. People universally put out the better wine at the beginning of a feast, while palates are still sensitive. It is only when their guests are somewhat affected (the verb rendered ‘have had too much to drink’ means ‘are drunken’) that they produce the worse wine. This bridegroom, however, has kept the good wine until the end. We are thus left in no doubt as to the quality of the wine that resulted from the miracle.”<sup>8</sup>

—Leon Morris

## Voices from the Church

“Jesus Christ says, ‘I am the Lord of the Feast. In the end, I come to bring joy. That’s the reason my calling card, my first miracle, is to set everyone laughing.’”<sup>9</sup>

—Timothy Keller

Jesus came to dispel the myths that Jews in authority had held over God’s people for far too long. The truth He taught is that outward righteousness, only visible with the eye, has nothing to do with God’s righteousness. Like the rabbit in the cage with the egg, the Jewish leaders of the day had everyone convinced that their acts of righteousness made them holy and close to God. A quick glance at a person’s life might not give an accurate assessment of that person’s fruit, but over time the fruit reveals the substance. Jesus, on the other hand, was truly righteous as the Son of the Most High. He would reveal His identity through His miracles, which would stand in stark contrast to the bad fruit lying near the Jewish leaders.

Peter expressed this truth in Acts 2:22 when he said, “This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him.” God enabled and instructed Jesus to perform miracles to identify Himself through them.

Imagine being a fly on the wall—or better yet, an observant disciple—as this scene unfolds:

*<sup>6</sup> Now six stone water jars had been set there for Jewish purification. Each contained twenty or thirty gallons.*

*<sup>7</sup> “Fill the jars with water,” Jesus told them. So they filled them to the brim. <sup>8</sup> Then he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the headwaiter.” And they did.*

*<sup>9</sup> When the headwaiter tasted the water (after it had become wine), he did not know where it came from—though the servants who had drawn the water knew. He called the groom <sup>10</sup> and told him, “Everyone sets out the fine wine first, then, after people are drunk, the inferior. But you have kept the fine wine until now.”*

We first notice the six stone water jars “for Jewish purification.” In Scripture, seven is a number of completeness or wholeness, while six—obviously just short of seven—sometimes signifies incompleteness.<sup>7</sup>

Purification water is mentioned a few times in the Book of Numbers (8:7; 9:19; 31:23). We’re not certain that the jars would be used for this event or if there was any intent to fill them with water; but they had been set apart for a holy purpose. These large jars were empty and evidently unused until the time Jesus needed them.

Jesus never said a magic word or touched the jars. He simply instructed that the jars be filled with water and then some of the water taken immediately to the chief servant. Somewhere between the filling and the tasting, the water became wine. And not just wine but “fine wine,” said the chief servant. We can be certain that, given his position, he knew good wine from bad; it was good enough that he went directly to the groom to comment on its high quality.

But the focus of this passage is not on the fact that Jesus made good wine. After all, we know that all things were made by Him, through Him, and for Him (Col. 1:16) and all of His creation is deemed “good” by the Father (Gen. 1). Rather, look at who was allowed to see this first miracle. It wasn’t the groom or the chief servant (they appear to be mystified about the entire event). The servants were the ones in the know.

If you’ve ever been a servant in any capacity, you know how you’re sometimes treated: second-class. Expected to grin and bear it, these servants knew their place, and it wasn’t one of honor. The honored positions were guests of the wedding; these were just the lowly servants.

How fitting of our Lord to first reveal His identity as the Son of God to servants. In Mark 10:45, Jesus explained the concept plainly: “Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” In the Book of Philippians, Paul said it even more boldly: “He emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross” (2:7-8). In heaven, Jesus was and is the exalted One, the object of glory, the Beloved of the Father. On earth, though, He was the Suffering Servant (Isa. 53), humble and meek.

Jesus alone chose who got to see His identity. In fact, He said, “No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son desires to reveal him” (Luke 10:22). In this first miracle of Jesus’ earthly ministry, the servants and the disciples were the only ones privy to such information—and now so are we.

- ❓ Does the humility of Jesus bring you comfort or concern? Why?
- ❓ How can we balance His servant-ness with His holiness?

### 3. Jesus’ miracles displayed glory and strengthened faith (John 2:11-12).

It was so much more than turning water into wine. You’ve seen magicians and conjurers. You’ve watched them at a county fair or maybe on a street corner. You’ve seen the woman sawed in two or the rope that has been cut in half miraculously appear whole. You know there’s a trick; just because you don’t know how it’s done doesn’t mean you believe your eyes.

Not so with Jesus. There was no sleight of hand or special effect lighting. There was no mistake of pouring something that may have tasted like wine into the jars.



## Voices from Church History

“Now this transformation of the water from its own substance into another testified to the powerful presence of the Creator. Only he who had made it out of nothing could change water into something whose use was quite different. Dearly beloved, have no doubt that he who changed water into wine is the same as he who from the beginning has thickened it into snow and hardened it into ice. It is he who changed it into blood for the Egyptians and bade it flow from the dry rock for the thirsty Hebrews—the rock that, newly transformed into a spring, was like a mother’s breast refreshing with its gentle flow a countless multitude of people.”<sup>10</sup>

—Maximus of Turin (380-465)

## 99 Essential Christian Doctrines

### 30. Miracles

A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things, or supersedes natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God’s message to the people. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

## Further Commentary

“The miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee is the first seven ‘sign’ miracles that John chose to record in his Gospel... Signs, for John, answer the question, ‘Who is Jesus?’ They do this in part by affirming one or more of the titles ascribed to Jesus in the prologue (1:1-18). What is revealed about Jesus in this first sign? Through Christ all things were created; he has power over the material universe. Who is Jesus? He is the Messiah who has come in the fullness of time, to usher in the longed-for messianic age—in which wine (evidence of blessed fruitfulness and provision) will flow in overwhelming abundance and the mountains will drip with the best wine for the joy of God’s people (Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13-14; Jer. 31:12). Who is Jesus? He is the One who takes what is meant for purification and provides blessing through it. In doing so, he shows that he transforms the daily Jewish purification rites by the power of his perfect life (cf. John 2:6-7 and Heb. 9:12; 10:10). Who is Jesus? He is not merely the guest at our weddings but the great eschatological bridegroom who makes us *his* bride, by the cost of his life (Eph. 5:22-33). He clothes us with the wedding garment of his own righteousness (Isa. 61:10) and prepares us for the great wedding banquet of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-10). Who is Jesus? He is the Lord of glory, who calls us to believe in him and to put our trust in him.”<sup>11</sup>

—Scotty Smith,  
*Gospel Transformation Bible*

The wine at the wedding was gone.  
Jesus gave the command to put water into jars.  
The water changed to wine.  
The wine was amazing.  
And this revealed Jesus’ glory.

<sup>11</sup> *Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.*

<sup>12</sup> *After this, he went down to Capernaum, together with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples, and they stayed there only a few days.*

God’s glory is related to His holiness. He is set apart and beyond our understanding. And He requires holiness from everything and everyone who is His. On our own, we can never reach His level of holiness, but we are called to be holy as He is (1 Pet. 1:15-16)—set apart and consecrated, a light to shine before all humankind for the glory of God (Matt. 5:16).

God’s holiness is unique and cannot be mistaken for another glory. When Moses saw His glory in the burning bush, the old shepherd knew it was not simply a plant on fire (Ex. 3). When the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai as a cloud, no one mistook it for your everyday cumulus clouds (Ex. 24:16-17). When Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall, he knew he wasn’t seeing things (Dan. 5:5-9). When God announced the birth of Jesus, it was to lowly shepherds, and the announcement was adorned with the glory of His angelic host.

And when Jesus turned the water into wine, it was as holy and set apart and as glorious as any other of God’s miraculous displays. The amount of wine (John 2:6) and the quality of wine (v. 10) were not missed: John wanted to make sure we grasped that over 100 gallons were considered “fine wine” by the chief servant. God’s perfect holiness and glory was revealed through the perfection of the outcome.

 When was a time you witnessed something that was unmistakably God? How has that experience affected you?

The wine was perfect. And isn’t it funny that the secret never escaped? The chief servant raved about the wine to the groom but didn’t look too hard for the source. The groom may never have known about the miracle. The servants and the disciples seemed to be the only ones privileged enough to know the real story. Jesus met the need of one He loved and still His “hour” did not come; no one of power or influence was any wiser. Surely the servants and disciples were blown away by the miracle, but they didn’t run around shouting it from the rooftops.

Jesus' primary concern when Mary told Him the need was about the timing of His "hour," His mission to go to the cross. He was not ready to reveal to everyone His glory and His purpose. And because the miracle was almost too much to believe, it didn't make the front page news. No Pharisees came questioning. It's almost as though it became the wondrous secret of the few servants and disciples. But make no mistake—His disciples saw what He did and they believed in Him. And now we have read the story—*do you believe in Him?*

This wouldn't be the last time one of Jesus' miracles caused someone to believe in His true identity. Yes, He met needs. Yes, He healed. Yes, He touched and loved and cared and helped. But every miracle was solely focused on one purpose: to glorify the Father. The servants who saw the miracle may have had no idea who Jesus was and why He had followers, but the miracle changed them forever. The disciples certainly knew who He was and had agreed to follow Him, but this miracle gave them a deeper connection in believing He was who He said He was.

- ❓ When have you seen God reveal His glory outside the walls of your church? How were the observers changed?
- ❓ How does our mission of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus reveal the glory of God outside of the church?

## Conclusion

"So what does this have to do with me?" you might ask. "Jesus is not on earth anymore; I don't get to see His miracles." Correct. But you are a miracle of Jesus, pointing others to God.

"Me?" you might ask, "I'm a sinner saved by grace." *Exactly.* And when you tell others how Jesus won your heart, called you by name, and changed you from the inside out, you are just as amazing and awe-inspiring to unbelievers as the turning of water into wine.

Just as Jesus considered His purpose before each miracle, we should consider our purpose before each conversation, each lunch meeting, each relationship, and each trial: Am I reflecting Christ? Do I point others to Him? Can others tell by my words and actions that Jesus is King of kings, Lord of lords, and the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world?

**CHRIST CONNECTION:** Sin has disrupted our relationship with God, leading to spiritual barrenness and sorrow in our lives. Christ's miracles are a sign that joyful reconciliation with God is possible again through faith in Jesus' glorious life, death, and resurrection.

## Voices from the Church

"By this first sign, Jesus revealed his glory, 'the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth' (1:14). His glory would be revealed in greatest measure in his cross, resurrection and exaltation, but every step along the course of his ministry was an adumbration of that glory."<sup>12</sup>

—D. A. Carson

## Additional Resources

# Jesus Turns Water to Wine

## References

1. Gregg Matte, *I Am Changes Who I Am* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2012), 19.
2. David Maltsberger, "Wine," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, eds. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: B&H, 2003) [WORDsearch].
3. Andreas J. Köstenberger, in *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 2022-23, n. 2:1; n. 2:3; n. 2:4.
4. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 8.4.1-3, quoted in *John 1-10*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, vol. IVa in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (IVP, 2001) [WORDsearch].
5. Sharon H. Gritz, "First-Century Jewish Weddings," *Biblical Illustrator* (Summer 2015): 45.
6. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.16.7, quoted in *John 1-10*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, vol. IVa in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (IVP, 2001) [WORDsearch].
7. Andreas J. Köstenberger, in *HCSB Study Bible* (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 1806, n. 2:6.
8. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, rev. ed., in *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010) [WORDsearch].
9. Timothy Keller, *The Wedding Party*, vol. 4 in *The Encounters with Jesus Series* (New York: Dutton, 2013) [eBook].
10. Maximus of Turin, Sermon 23, quoted in *John 1-10*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, vol. IVa in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (IVP, 2001) [WORDsearch].
11. Scotty Smith, in *Gospel Transformation Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 1409-1410, n. 2:1-12.
12. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, in *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1991) [WORDsearch].
13. Rick and Shera Melick, *Teaching That Transforms* (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 187-93.



Get expert insights on weekly studies through Ministry Grid at [MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject](http://MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject).  
Grow with other group leaders at the Group Ministry blog at [LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry](http://LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry).

## Study Material

- "A Wedding in Cana"—Pages 69-77 from *Reflections on the Gospel of John* by Leon Morris
- "The Credibility of Jesus' Miracles"—Article by Craig Blomberg; find a link to this article at [GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)
- Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles, including "First-Century Jewish Weddings," can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator](http://LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator). Look for Bundles: The Gospel Project.

## Sermon Podcast

John Piper: "Obedient Son, Ultimate Purifier, All-Providing Bridegroom"

Find a link to this at [GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)

## Tip of the Week

### The Leader/Group Member Relationship

The leader/group member relationship is very important to the learning environment. Here are some considerations for how to connect with your group:

- **Respect for Culture.** Be aware of and choose to learn from multiple cultural perspectives represented in your group.
- **Appropriate Vocabulary.** Speak on the level of the group God has given you.
- **Provide Educational Tools.** Don't be condescending, but empower group members to discover truth for themselves. Reject sarcasm and humiliation.
- **Trust and Love.** Without these, it becomes impossible to teach, much less learn. This requires humility to seek forgiveness when you've made a mistake and loving confrontation when you have been wronged.<sup>13</sup>

*The Gospel Project*<sup>®</sup>  
Adult Leader Guide CSB  
Volume 5, Number 4 Summer 2017

**Eric Geiger**  
Vice President, LifeWay Resources

**Ed Stetzer**  
General Editor

**Trevin Wax**  
Managing Editor

**Daniel Davis**  
Content Editor

**Josh Hayes**  
Content and Production Editor

**Ken Braddy**  
Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

**Michael Kelley**  
Director, Groups Ministry

**Send questions/comments to:**  
Managing Editor,  
*The Gospel Project: Adult Leader Guide*,  
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0102;  
or make comments on the Web at  
[www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com).

Printed in the United States of America

*The Gospel Project*<sup>®</sup>: *Adult Leader Guide* CSB  
(ISSN pending; Item 005438061) is published  
quarterly by LifeWay Christian Resources, One  
LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234, Thom S. Rainer,  
President. © 2017 LifeWay Christian Resources.

For ordering or inquiries, visit [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com),  
or write LifeWay Resources Customer Service,  
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0113.  
For subscriptions or subscription address changes,  
email [subscribe@lifeway.com](mailto:subscribe@lifeway.com), fax (615) 251-5818, or  
write to the above address. For bulk shipments mailed  
quarterly to one address, email [orderentry@lifeway.com](mailto:orderentry@lifeway.com),  
fax (615) 251-5933, or write to the above address.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author;  
salvation for its end; and truth, without any  
mixture of error, for its matter and that all  
Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To  
review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit  
[www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline](http://www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline).

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are  
taken from the Christian Standard Bible<sup>®</sup>, copyright  
1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009, 2016 by Holman Bible  
Publishers. Used by permission.

**Unit 1:**



**Ed Stetzer** (sessions 1-2) holds the Billy Graham Distinguished Chair of Church, Mission, and Evangelism and is the Executive Director of the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism at Wheaton College. He serves as the general editor for *The Gospel Project* and is the author of numerous books, including *Transformational Groups* and *Compelled*.



**Trevin Wax** (sessions 3-6) is managing editor for *The Gospel Project* and author of several books, including *Gospel-Centered Teaching* and *This Is Our Time: Everyday Myths in Light of the Gospel*. He has served in pastoral roles in churches in the United States and Romania. He and his wife, Corina, have three children.



**Unit 2:**

**Leslie Hudson** (sessions 7-8) is living her life calling to let others know the full riches of Jesus Christ (Col. 2:2-3) by teaching, speaking, and writing about God's Word and its power. She and her husband, David, live with their children in White Bluff, Tennessee, where she works with Youth and Women's ministries at First Baptist Church, Dickson.



**D. A. Horton** (sessions 9-10) currently serves as a pastor at Reach Fellowship, a church plant in North Long Beach, California, and as the Chief Evangelist for UYWI. He is also working toward his PhD in Applied Theology at Southeastern Seminary. He and his wife, Elicia, have three children, Izabelle, Lola, and Damon Jr (aka Duce).



**Vance Pitman** (sessions 11-13) is senior pastor of Hope Church in Las Vegas, Nevada. He also serves with the North American Mission Board as a national mobilizer, engaging and mobilizing pastors to plant more churches. He and his wife, Kristie, have four children and one son-in-law. Fellow pastors **Jordan Smith** and **Tom McCormick** assisted in writing these sessions.