

GROWTHguide

FOR THE WEEK OF June 5, 2016

“Water Becomes Wine”



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

John 2:1-11, 1 Peter 5:6-7, John 10:10, Amos 9:13-14, Romans 1:20

REFLECTION AND STUDY

There is a section in John's Gospel that is referred to as the “Book of Signs,” which encompasses chapters 1:19-12:50 because of seven signs performed by Jesus. John's sign stories have several levels of meaning: one, the surface story places the sign in a historic context; two, they teach us about Jesus Christ; and three, they reveal a constant truth about God. This week we will explore Jesus' first sign, when he turned water into wine at a wedding.

DAY 1: Read John 2:1-3

In the midst of the small, impoverished village of Cana, a big wedding celebration took place and Jesus, his mother, and his disciples were present. In early tradition it has been speculated that this wedding might have actually been the apostle John's because he never mentions who is getting married. Throughout his gospel, he does not like to refer to himself, but rather, keeps the focus on Christ by describing the events of Jesus' ministry. Thus, it would be consistent with John's character not to mention if this was his own wedding. It has also been speculated that Mary may be John's aunt, implying that he may have been Jesus' first cousin. This would explain why Jesus and his mother were present, since they would have been relatives of the couple. In those days, the wedding ceremony involved a procession from the bride's home to the groom's, followed by a feast for seven days. But something has gone wrong, and they have run out of wine. Proper hospitality was a matter of honor, so Jesus's mother, knowing her son's capabilities, asks him to help save this family from embarrassment.

Before we unpack the rest of the story, take today to think about situations you may have been in when you wanted God to intervene and cause a miracle.

- Would you consider them small? Were they situations where you felt embarrassed, stressed, or maybe you were in a panic? How did God respond?

Take some time to pray. If you are going through a situation right now where you need God's intervention, pray and ask for his help.

DAY 2: Read John 2:4-11

What else does the story tell us about Jesus? First, that he was joyful and happy to celebrate. As was pointed out last week, we don't demonstrate faith with gloominess, and this story reminds us of the same thing. Second, it tells us that Jesus cares about the “ordinary” places. Third, that Jesus cares about our daily lives and the little things. What can we draw from this? We need to make room in our homes for Jesus because for Christ, the home is a sacred place. Also, we should not wait for a big crisis to turn to Jesus, he wants to help us in our daily challenges.

- Have you made room for Jesus in your home?
- Do you wait to turn to Jesus until a big crisis comes?

Spend time praying to God to be in your home and to help you with even the smallest challenges. Jesus showed us just how much he loves us when he took the penalty for our sin on the cross. God cares for you and he loves you.

DAY 3: Read 1 Peter 5:6-7

Mary's actions in going to Jesus for help remind us to do three things. First, we need to turn to God for solutions to all life's issues. Second, we need to have faith that God will act to resolve the situation. As pointed out last week, we need to turn to God with faith that he can and will respond to all illnesses, challenges, and temptations. Third, we need to listen for his guidance and then do what he says.

- How are you living into these three things?
- Are you turning to God for solutions? Do you have faith that God will respond? Are you listening for his guidance?

Take time to pray and seek God with faith. Spend some time in silence and patiently listen for God's guidance.

DAY 4: Read John 10:10

In the story of the wedding miracle, Jesus took six stone water jars that were reserved for Jewish ceremonial washing, probably for the washing of hands. Each jar held 20-30 gallons of water and there were six of them. Jesus tells the servants to fill the water jars up with water, and the servants fill them to the brim. Then Jesus tells them to draw some out and to take it to the head steward. It's an awkward situation because these water jars are full of water that was probably like taking water from your bathroom sink, or even like water from your bathtub, where you would cleanse yourself. So, this is an odd and almost humorous request! The servants were probably very confused. But what happens? Jesus turns about 120-180 gallons of unclean water into wine! Notice that he did not turn bad wine into good wine but he turned *water* into wine, and not even good water! The only people who knew that a miracle had taken place were the servants and Jesus' disciples. Now, what truth did Jesus demonstrate about God? He demonstrated that God is *extravagant* in his provision.

In this small, ordinary village of Cana, a relatively small problem has arisen. Yet, Jesus has responded to Mary's request with an extravagant miracle! Why is it then that we sometimes doubt that God will care about our "small" crises? God has shown that he responds when we call on him and when he does so, he does it extravagantly.

Today, give thanks to God that he gives extravagantly.

DAY 5: Read Amos 9:13-14

What else can we glean from the story of the wedding miracle? Not only did Jesus demonstrate his authority by performing a miracle but he also gave us a glimpse into his sacrifice on the cross. When Jesus grants new life by changing dirty water into the best wine, this was a sign of the fulfillment of God's promise to restore us and offer us salvation. Jesus came to fulfill and perfect the imperfect. As with the ritual water, which was used to wash off human dirt, Jesus' sacrifice on the cross changes us from being imperfect and filthy to being pure and good! And unlike washing with water, which has to be done over and over, Christ's sacrifice provides a forever cleansing. Since we could not fulfill the requirements of the old law, due to our sinful nature, God's grace became the perfect, abundant and transforming power to wash our sins away. In performing this miracle, Jesus took ordinary things and made them outward signs of inward grace. Likewise, our baptisms are an outward sign that we are made new, that we are incorporated into a community of believers, and that we are clothed in the regal robe of our Lord.

- What should our response be to Jesus?
- Have you accepted Christ's salvation and allowed him to make you into the best wine? If not, pray this prayer today:

God, I have sinned and broken your laws, which separates me from you. I am sorry for the sins I have committed, I turn my life over to you and ask for your forgiveness. I believe in your son, Jesus, and that he died for my sins, was resurrected from the dead and hears my prayer. I invite you to be Lord of my life, to live in my heart, and to guide and direct me forevermore. Please send me your Holy Spirit to help me obey your commands and do your will. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 6: Read Romans 1:20

Sometimes, like the wedding guests, we often miss God's signs. Maybe we're too busy or we lack faith that God cares about the small stuff. Or, maybe we lack faith that God can do what science cannot prove. The famous empiricist skeptic and philosopher, David Hume, once wrote an essay titled *Of Miracles* in which he argued that miracles go against the laws of nature and therefore are impossible. However, John Lennox, Christian apologist and Professor of Mathematics at Oxford, argues:

"Newton's law of gravitation tells me that if I drop an apple it will fall toward the centre of the earth. But that law does not prevent someone from intervening, and catching the apple as it descends. In other words, the law predicts what will happen, provided there is no change in the conditions under which the experiment is conducted. Thus, from the theistic perspective, the laws of nature predict what is bound to happen if God does not intervene; though, of course, it is no act of theft, if the Creator intervenes in his own creation. It is plainly fallacious to argue that the laws of nature make it impossible for us to believe in the existence of God and the possibility of his intervention in the universe."

--John Lennox, *Gunning for God: Why the New Atheists are Missing the Target*

We can be confident that God has given us evidence of his work in our world and we can have faith that God intervenes, even in the small stuff. Remember to take time to pray, to give thanks to God for intervening into this world and for listening to your prayers. Thank him for intervening, even in the "small stuff." Remember that God loves you and cares for you!

Day 7

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.