

REFLECTION GUIDE

JOHN 2:1-11 | OVERCOMING A JOY-SHORTAGE

KEY TERMS

Mother of Jesus - John never names Jesus' mother—only referring to her as *the mother of Jesus*—but the synoptics (Matthew, Mark, & Luke) identify her as Mary.

Six Stone Water Jars - The stone water jars were used for cleaning hands before eating as part of Jewish purification rituals. By transforming the water into wine, Jesus not only meets a practical need but also points to the new, inward spiritual purification he brings.

Wine - Wine was a common drink in the ancient world, and was part of Jewish temple worship (see Ex 29:40). In the OT, Israel is called God's vineyard (see Is 5:1-17 & Jer 2:21) and Jesus will later call himself *the true vine* (John 15:1).

Signs - While the synoptic gospels use the word *miracle* to refer to Jesus' actions that are unexplainable in human terms, John prefers the word *sign*. It seems that John is less interested in the wonder they create and is more interested in what the miracles/signs point to—namely that Jesus is the Son of God. John will include seven *signs* in his story.

SYNOPSIS

Jesus was invited to a wedding in Cana, a village located about 5 to 8 miles north of Nazareth, which would have been roughly a two-hour walk. Jewish weddings in the 1st century were multi-day celebrations with food and drinks provided by the host family and, during the wedding, Jesus' mother comes to him and tells him, *They have no wine* (v. 3). To run out of wine mid-celebration would have been a significant social embarrassment for the host and Mary's concern for the shortage of wine has led some to suggest that the wedding may have been for a close family member or friend. Jesus responds by saying *What does this have to do with me?*, before stepping in and turning water from stone jars into wine (vv. 4-8). The wine is evidently high quality because when the *master of the feast* tastes the new wine, he calls the groom over and congratulates him on keeping *the good wine until now*, which was opposite the normal custom to serve the best wine first and lower quality wine later (vv. 9-10). John then tells his readers that this was *the first of his signs*, which *manifested his glory*, and that *his disciples believed in him* (v. 11). Interestingly, the wedding guests or hosts don't seem to know what has occurred, but those who do come to see that Jesus really is who he says he is.

GOING DEEPER

Read Revelation 19:7-9, where the marriage supper of the Lamb is described. How does this celebration of Christ and his Church compare with the wedding at Cana? How might the wine at Cana point toward the joy and abundance of this future, heavenly celebration? Is it natural for you to think about your faith in terms of joy and abundance? Why or why not?

DID YOU KNOW?

The six water pots would hold up to 180 gallons, which means there would have been enough wine to serve around 200 people for a week of celebration. The sheer abundance of wine of the highest quality highlights Jesus' extraordinary generosity.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read John 2:1-11, and make 4-5 quick observations. What's the main idea?
2. Discuss the interaction between Jesus and his mother. First, what happens on a surface level related to the wedding feast? Second, what is happening on the higher level of Jesus' mission as the Messiah through the symbolism and meaning of these events?
3. Read Jeremiah 31:12-14 and Amos 9:13-15. How do these passages help explain the meaning and significance of the sign that Jesus performs at the wedding?
4. Where do we see people in the story trusting Jesus and acting upon their confidence in him? Can you find at least four ways people display faith in this passage?
5. In verse 11, John summarizes the significance of this "sign" with important reference points that connect this episode to the rest of the Gospel of John. First, what connection can you make to John 1? Second, what connection can you make to John's stated purpose for this book in John 20:30-31?

LIVING THE WORD

6. How does Jesus reveal a greater, more joyful fulfillment of God's glory than the old religious purification system in Judaism?
7. In this event, the bridegroom faced a socially tragic situation unless a remedy was found to his crisis ("They have no wine!"). In a honor-shame culture, this was a nightmare for his family, as they were supposed to provide for their entire village for the celebration which could last up to a week. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you did not measure up to the expectations or the demands of the situation? How do you respond emotionally in those moments when you face this kind of personal crisis?
8. Is there any area in your life where you are experiencing disappointment and scarcity of joy? How does the gospel of Jesus promise a deeper, more satisfying, more glorious joy?