

Unit 2

JESUS THE MIRACLE-WORKER

Gospels

Memory Verses

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

—JOHN 11:25-27

Writers

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Jesus Turns Water to Wine

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

It's extremely helpful to know and understand what something is made to do. 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?



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."¹

—Gregg Matte

Too often we are confused about our own intended purpose. But not so with Jesus. He knew His purpose—to bring glory to God the Father.

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).

¹ On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. ³ When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴ And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

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. Running out of wine was likely a statement either of poor planning by the hosts or entertaining more guests than expected.

The need was there, presented plainly by Mary to Jesus: "They have no wine." Jesus' reply seems harsh to our 21st-century ears, but to the 1st-century Jews, it was clear He held no contempt. His response was straightforward but not disrespectful: "Woman, what does this have to do with me? 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?

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.

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.



Voices from Church History

"With [Jesus], nothing is incomplete or done at the wrong time, just as with the Father there is nothing haphazard."²

—Irenaeus (circa 125-202)

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, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help 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.



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 healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit” (Matt. 7:17-18). The words He spoke strike at the hearts of His hearers—We are identified by our fruit.

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. 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.

⁶ Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. ⁹ When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

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 “good 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.

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.’”³

—Timothy Keller

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.

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 came not 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 taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even 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, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses 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.

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.



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.

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.

¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for 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).

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 "good 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?

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."⁴

—D. A. Carson

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. 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?*



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.

HIS MISSION, YOUR MISSION

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.

1. What encouragement should we take for our mission because Jesus responds to the needs of human beings?

2. What is Jesus—the Son of God—calling you to do for the sake of the gospel?

3. How can we as a group/church faithfully point one another to Jesus that we would be strengthened in the faith and confident in His glory and power?

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Unit 2:

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