
In the hills of Galilee, far from the hustle and bustle of Jerusalem, lies a small, obscure village of no significant repute. But like in every village or large city, romance and love provide the heart beat, the life, the joy of the community. In the town of Cana lives a young man who is head over heels in love with the woman of his dreams. He goes to her father and tells him of his desire to marry his daughter. The Father is taken by this young man and agrees that he would be a good match. So they negotiate the purchase price, the customary dowry, that is to be paid to the Father.

Several weeks pass before the formal announcement is made. Of course, like all aspects of this event, it demands celebration, ceremony, and tradition. On a mutually agreed to day the families of both the soon to be bride and groom meet at the home of the Bride's father. In the presence of the witnesses, the Groom announces the engagement and gives the bride a ring. They both drink from a cup which indicates that a covenant of marriage had been entered into, a covenant that can only be broken by death or divorce. Although they are not formally married, this covenant of engagement is a contract of marriage supported by law.

This ceremony begins the time of waiting, the time of planning, the time of preparation for the big day. The wedding won't take place for another twelve months or so. During this time the bride continues to live with her family while the groom is busy preparing their home and their future.

Finally the big day arrives. Friends, family, and all sorts of relatives travel from miles around to join in this celebration. The marriage festivities would typically last anywhere from 3-7days. Which means that each attendee made quite a financial and practical sacrifice to join in this celebration.

After most of the guests have arrived, the groom and several friends leave the house and lead a procession to the home of the bride's father. The bride now comes out of her father's house. She is all dressed up and adorned with jewels, and of course she is veiled. Once she has joined the procession, they collectively head to the house of the groom where the friends of the bride are waiting outside. Everyone is anticipating their arrival and once the bride and groom arrive, everyone else gets to go inside and begin the festivities.

Now the fun begins. There is feasting, drinking, stories, dancing, and singing, all in celebration of this couple and the new life they will begin. This scenario provides the backdrop to our passage.

John 2:1-12

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." So they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it to him. When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it

came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now."

This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.

After 30-long years of *waiting*, Jesus begins His ministry. It does not start with a big pronouncement, He is not in Jerusalem where He could really kick this thing off with a bang and get the attention of all the local leaders. There are no fireworks, big-bands, or grand parades; rather, we find Jesus in a little insignificant village in Galilee, called Cana. The way the text reads, it does not appear that He was even one of the main guests; Jesus and His disciples were kind of tag-along invitees. It seems that Mary was the guest and probably knew this family well, as she obviously was involved in the back-room details of what was happening and was not out with the others in the midst of celebration.

So let's understand the dynamic of this scene. There is a huge party going on and people have traveled for miles to join this celebration and the host has run out of wine. You might think that is no big deal and they could just run down to the local liquor store and stock up. That is not how things worked in those days. This was a grave and horrible situation. They had planned for 12-months and had prepared everything and for some reason they totally blew it.

I doubt if anyone in that small village was even open for business—they were all probably at the wedding. In addition, big amounts of wine for an event like this were not just sitting around. The host was about to experience total social suicide—humiliation beyond description. In addition, the host would likely be confronted with a slew of law suits. In those days, this was an offense that required monetary compensation. The liability derives from a legal theory that is still around today called detrimental reliance. People gave up their time, their work, and they incurred significant financial cost just to attend this event all the while relying on the fact that they were going to be adequately provided for by the host. Thus, if the provision failed, they were entitled to monetary justice.

That was the culture, that was the tradition, and it was supported by the law. Not a lot has changed in 2,000 years. Has it? So the net of it all is that this host was in great trouble, this was no small offense or trivial faux-paux, this miscalculation had painful social and financial implications.

Mary was both aware and extremely sensitive to what was about to happen to her friends and so she came to Jesus for help. I have found that the next few moments of dialogue in this story, at their face value, are some of the hardest in the Bible to understand. Jesus looks at His mom and says “woman, what does that have to do with you or me?”

Jesus knew what was at stake and yet He responds with this hands-off kind approach as if to say, that’s not my job. First of all, it is really confusing as to why He would address His mother as “woman” and then be so reluctant to even consider the idea of helping out these family friends. Plus, after He gives this seemingly harsh and rude response, He then goes forward and performs the miracle without really giving any explanation as to why He apparently changed His mind.

We will try and dissect each of these issues. First of all, calling His mother “woman” was actually not disrespectful at all; it was merely a formal way of addressing her. Our equivalent would be “Madame.” This is the same way He addressed the Gentile woman who was from the area of Tire and Sidon (*Matthew 15:28*), it was the way He addressed the Samaritan woman at the well (*John 4:21*), it was the way He addressed His friend Mary Magdalene (*John 20:15*), and it was the way He addressed His mom when He was on the cross and He asked John to take the responsibility of caring for her (*John 19:26*). So it is not unusual, it was just a cultural thing.

You may be wondering why such formality with His mother. I am not sure, but I do think that what we see happening here is that in front of His followers, Jesus begins to make a formal separation between His earthly family and the family that His Father is going to create for Him. We will see this played out much more aggressively later on in the book. Whatever the reason, Jesus is clearly declaring His independence from His mother.

Jesus also makes it clear to His mother that He is doing things according to a specific schedule, or a time frame, which we will discover was established by His Father. Therefore, as tragic as this situation maybe, He makes it clear that He will only do things according to the times established for Him.

John 9:4

All of us must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent me, because there is little time before the night falls and all work comes to an end.

John 5:36

...my teachings and my miracles. They have been assigned to me by the Father, and they testify that the Father has sent me.

John 6:38

For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do what I want.

Jesus uses this statement, “My time has not yet come,” many times in the gospels, but it is always connected to some concern for His life and the time appointed for His death. But it would be a bit of a stretch to try and impose some errie kind of prophetic death meaning to this statement. I really don’t think there is a connection at all. But getting back to the fact that Jesus only did work by the appointments and assignments that God gave Him, I think that when Mary first came to Him, the Father had not yet revealed to Jesus that this was His assignment. Therefore, He told His mother that it was not yet His time—essentially telling her that He would not do anything on His own initiative even if personally He felt sorry for the host.

Don’t forget, Jesus was in a relationship with the Father and He was dependent upon the Father to reveal to Him all that He was to do and when He was to do it.

John 5:19-20

"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished."

In His humanity, Jesus did not know all the details of what was going to take place in His life. He had to seek God, pray, and discern His will just like we do. For example, Jesus went and spent a night praying before He chose those of His disciples who would be Apostles (*Luke 6:12-16*). In fact, strange as it may seem, even in His divinity, there are aspects of the Father's plan that He has yet to reveal to Jesus—for example, the time of His return. That is something that only the Father knows (*Matthew 24:36*).

This should not surprise us for the relationship that we have with the Father is not unlike the relationship Jesus had with the Father—it required seeking, waiting and discerning the will of God. That is why we are instructed to follow Jesus' example in all things. Remember, *Hebrews 14:15* says that He was tempted in all areas. This means that He dealt with the same kind of situations with which we have to deal. And in the same manner as us, He had to refuse to rely on His own understanding and listen only to the voice of the Lord. It was through this process that He learned obedience to the Father (*Hebrews 5:8*) and it is for these reasons that He is our perfect high-priest who is able to sympathize with all our weaknesses (*Hebrews 4:15*).

We all have times in our lives where we need direction or an answer from God and so we pray, but He requires us to wait, and wait, and wait. Often it seems like He is never going to answer. But at the right moment in time, when the Father knows it is necessary (not when we think it is necessary), He opens up His will to our understanding. It's all about His timing. Sometimes He lets us know in advance and sometimes it is spur of the moment. We don't always see the road ahead; we have to trust His leading.

Proverbs 20:24

How can we understand the road we travel? It is the Lord who directs our steps.

The implication in this verse is that there are many times where we will not "know" or "understand," nevertheless, the Lord will guide and direct our steps; and it is only at that point that we will see what God wants as that step is laid before us. Rarely will we see the whole picture, just the next step at just the right time.

This is likely what was happening at this moment when Mary asked Jesus to step in and help. He had not heard from the Father about this situation and He was absolutely not going to take things into His own hands. He knew that if the Father wanted Him to step in that He would make it clear. Mary, on the other hand, was appealing to Jesus not on the basis of what the Father wanted but on the basis of emotion, sympathy, and concern. Jesus did not want to be tempted in that way, so I believe that is why He responded to His own mother in a manner that came across as cold insensitive, and even rude.

When we live by seeking and following the will of God, we will also at times come across as cold, insensitive, uncaring, and even rude—at least that is what others will think about us even if it is not our heart. Under the normal mindset of the *religion of Christianity*, we do things because there is a need, or because there is purpose, or because that is what we desire. But what we see in this encounter, and we will see over and over in John, is that Jesus was not moved to action by needs or wants, or purposes—but only by the direction of the Father.

Do you understand how this is such a wonderful way to live. Imagine, you don't have to carry a heavy burden for the people in your life and the problems of the world. You are responsible only for what God specifically assigns to you. The rest is His responsibility not yours. This is a matter of faith—letting go believing that God knows all things and that He is responsible for others; not you. Although there is a lot of freedom when you learn to live this way, it is also a scary way to live. Others will simply not understand it and believe me they won't like it. People will try and give you burdens, duties, tasks, responsibilities (all under the guise of good Christianity, good intentions, family responsibility, and so on), and you will have to say no and mean it.

Notice how Jesus expresses this to His mom “what does that have to do with me and you.” In other words, He is telling Mary (and indirectly I believe all those who were following Him), that He expects her, and them, to live in this manner as well. In other words, He was asking Mary if she knew that this problem had been assigned to her by the Father; and, if she did not know, why she taking action and making decision based on her emotions or her own wisdom.

This is a powerful question that we should ask ourselves and each other. It is so easy to get caught up in life and try and navigate it by our emotions, our wisdom,

our perceptions, what we want, what we desire, but it is another thing altogether to make all our decisions by seeking and waiting on God only doing what He tells us. Yet, that is how we are supposed to live.

Proverbs 3:5-7

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will direct your paths. Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn your back on evil...

We are instructed to seek the Lord in all we do; yes, all we do, even something as seemingly trivial and common sense as helping out some people in need. Notice, there is no room for common sense in this instruction. There is no room for your own wisdom. There is no room to respond by feelings. There is only room for the voice of God and His leading and direction. That is the position Jesus took; therefore, that is how we are to live.

Do you wait to hear the Lord's instruction or truly sense His leading before you engage with someone or take on some task? Do you seek the Lord about the classes you are to take, about who you are to hang out with, what you are to major in, about where you are to work, live, and so on? Or do you have the view that you can handle most things and will just take the big ones to God? What we will see patterned throughout this book is that God cares about any interaction, activity, or relationship that impacts you, or another person in your life, and He wants you to

seek His opinion on the matter and then follow His lead. In all your ways acknowledge Him and then it is up to Him...He will guide your steps.

Getting back to the text, based on how Jesus said He lived, we have to conclude that right at that moment the Father told Him it was ok to go and help the host out in this situation. He must have suddenly known in His Spirit that there was complete alignment between this need and the heart of God. So He immediately took action and, as usual, His ways were purposeful and poignant with meaning.

The jars that He asked to be filled with water were used for washing of the hands and feet, utensils, and other ceremonial cleansing rituals. Our equivalent would be the bathroom and kitchen sink. Could you imagine inviting people over for dinner and then scooping their favorite beverage from the bathroom sink? I think your guests might have a problem with that. Don't you think that it is strange that Jesus picked these jars in which to perform this miracle of *creation*—where mere water was turned into wine? It's a good thing no one but the servants knew where the wine came from.

Notice we are told the size of the containers. I think John does this so we get a feel for how large the crowd was at this wedding and how substantial the miracle had to be. Six pots each holding about 20-30 gallons—or a capacity of approximately 120-180 gallons of water. This indicates that there was quite the gathering at this wedding and there was a huge need.

Do you get the picture? We are like those household pots; nothing special, but when we are subjected to the unleashing of Jesus' creation power, we become vessels filled with His Spirit. We are just ordinary people only good for ordinary purposes, and then wham, when we are born-again, the Spirit of God fills us and

we are ready to be used as God's *blessing* here on earth—we become the living evidence of the fulfillment of His promises or His *covenant* to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So in this one miracle, we once again see the major themes of *creation*, *covenant* and *blessing*.

The wine was incredible, the best. Jesus held nothing back. He truly blessed this family beyond what they could imagine. This is the same thing He does for us when we live through His *new creation* such that His Spirit, or the new wine, dominates our mere earthly vessels and Jesus is excessive in lavishing upon us His substantial *blessing*.

Ephesians 3:20-21

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

I want to describe to you a little more about this lavish *blessing* that is abundant and beyond, but first, look at what the master of ceremonies says:

John 2:10

“Usually a host serves the best wine first,” he said. “Then, when everyone is full and doesn't care, he brings out the less expensive wines. But you have kept the best until now!”

Given what we have been learning about how John wrote, you must know that this is statement that has a double meaning—a spiritual meaning. The Jews were the beneficiaries of the covenant of God and the blessing of God. They are the people of Israel (or Jacob), chosen to be God’s special children. God revealed His glory to them and gave His Law to them. They had the privilege of worshiping Him and receiving His wonderful promises. They experienced the glory of God and their ancestors were great people of God. They were served a great cup of wine and the Jewish people seemed satisfied with it and did not want anything more. They wanted to just live and enjoy what they had. But God had a plan whereby He would provide something even better—the best wine. He would provide His own Son, the true blessing for all to enjoy. Yes, God had kept the best until now! Now was the time!

As far as application to our life, what does that abundant *blessing* look like? Paul talks about this in his letter to the Corinthians and he explains why we can confidently believe that God will speak to us, will share His mind with us, and will lead us if we trust in Him in all things without leaning on our own understanding. God provides to us Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, in full measure, though the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Let’s read how Paul described this.

1 Corinthians 2:1-14

And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in

weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written,

"THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."

For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

What Paul is saying is that we can know the mind of God, for we have His Spirit living in us. Therefore, if we submit to His rule and authority, He will speak to us,

guide us, and lead our lives so that, like Jesus, we will know how to only do what the Father tells us to do, only say what the Father tells us to say, and only go where the Father tells us to go. We will know His will and we will understand how good, pleasing and perfect His will really is (*Romans 12:1-2*).

Let's look at *verse 9*, notice that only the servants knew what really happened. Jesus did not come out and tell everyone what He did, the work He did was discreet and only for a few. The *blessing* of Christ is for the masses—for God so loved the world—but only a few get to truly understand that Jesus is the fulfillment of the *covenant*. We see this same notion of the “few” even in Jesus birth. The King of glory was born in a barn and the only ones invited to this amazing event were a handful of common shepherds.

I think it is the same today as it has been throughout time. Many people know Jesus, consider themselves Christians, and have been blessed by what He has done for the world on the cross; however, precious few ever really understand the “who” and ever truly get to marvel at His miraculous act of *creation* in the *new man*. If you have been born-again, if you have learned what it means to walk by faith in the Spirit of God, whereby He lives His life through you, then like the servants and like the shepherds, you are one of the precious few who get to know the “who” behind the *blessing*.

In closing, let's quickly look at *verse 11 and 12*. This was Jesus' first display of His glory. This means that it was the first—period! No, unlike what some people have said, Jesus did not perform any miracles as a child. He did not show up in India or any other lands and do marvels. This was His first miracle. This was the beginning of His works that would display His glory and the glory of the Father.

Why did the Father appoint this miracle? So that His disciples would believe that He was, in fact, who John the Baptist said He was—the Messiah, the Christ, God in the flesh.

Notice that the text is very careful to point out that it was His disciples who believed but it says nothing about His family. Yet, in the very next verse, we know that He left the wedding with His Mother, His brother, and His disciples. They were all traveling together. Maybe His brothers were not around when He did this miracle, but His Mother was. I am hard pressed to think that she, or the disciples, did not talk about the miracle in front of Jesus' brothers. This is definitely what we would safely call Biblical foreshadowing as we will find that despite the miracles, His family had some serious struggles believing Jesus was in fact God.

Next week we will move from the region of Galilee and travel down to Jerusalem as Jesus displays His authority over the temple.

Let's Pray