

**Women's Bible study – Winter/Spring 2018**  
**The Gospel of John – John 2**  
**January 24 ~ Angie Pankratz**



Here in this chapter we see the start of Jesus' public ministry - His very first miracle. To quickly summarize what you read - Jesus attends a wedding feast and after being prodded by his own mother, turns water into wine. It appears that the only individuals who know about this is his mother, a few disciples and the servants at the wedding. The groom ends up getting the credit for providing such fine wine. Then a few days after the wedding we read that Jesus heads with his mother, brothers and disciples to Jerusalem during Passover. When he comes into the temple courts he is so grieved and angered by what is occurring in the temple at Passover that he makeshifts a whip, overturns tables and clears out the temple.

Now if I was around at this time and was a part of the marketing committee that determined how Jesus would begin his public ministry... (I know that is a big "If" and a stretch to say the least... but work with me here...) I would never recommend the route that God chose to proclaim to the world that Jesus is the Messiah.

Instead I would recommend that Jesus would do something a little more impressive than changing water into wine and certainly, would never recommend that he upset his base-those waiting for his big arrival. After all those in the temple were His people. They were doing (or at least they would say they were doing) what God commanded them to do hundreds of years before. In regards to His first miracle, we know Jesus is capable of so much more. Why not heal a leper, cast out demons and then throw them into a herd of pigs, feed 5000 individuals with just five loaves and two fish or better yet raise a dead man to life!?!?

Any person who begins his or her political campaign strategically designs where they will make that big proclamation. They plot for months about where, when and how they will announce that they are running for office. They desire to motivate their loyal supporters to campaign for them, convince those who are on the fence and intimidate those who are against them. But here it appears that Jesus chose a rather quiet, simple, humble beginning to his ministry and then did anything but motivate his base as he drove them out of the temple. Everyone knows that if you want to dramatically come onto the public scene you need to go big or go home. Well, of course we are not dealing with just anyone here. This is the Messiah. He is fully God and yet is the only way to God. He doesn't do a lot of things I would recommend but then again, we aren't called to make decisions on his marketing. We are called to believe in Him.

As an overview of this chapter I found 5 things I learned about Jesus that show us what God is like...

**1. Jesus likes to party.**

I wasn't sure how to word this but I'll trust you all that this will translate well. It is clear from the beginning of the Bible to the very end that Jesus delights in feasting, resting, playing and partying. If your theology does not picture a God in this way then it is incomplete.

Here at the start of this passage we find Jesus at a wedding reception. We don't know whose it is but we know that He, his mother Mary and the disciples were invited. Originally there is no spiritual purpose for Jesus to be at the party. He is just there celebrating this marriage along with his family and friends. Weddings that took place in this culture often lasted for days.

This isn't the only time we see Jesus at a party. In fact, Jesus talks a lot about parties throughout Scripture. Specifically in Luke 14-15 Jesus attends a dinner party at a Pharisee's house in order to tell him the Good News. He even explains how to take the lowest seating spot at a party in order to be exalted. He then goes on to promote partying over finding a lost sheep, coin or a prodigal son. Jesus went to parties, talked about parties and is even preparing the greatest party for us in heaven.

If you're uncomfortable with the word party, feel free to use one of the "more Biblical words - "feast or festivals." There are many feasts that the Israelites are commanded to participate in in the Old Testament. We are called to celebrate and rejoice in that which delights God. This is one way we can thank the Lord for His provision in our lives.

Now every day should not involve partying and feasting. Let us remember that partying should always be done in a way that is uplifting and without sin. Most feasts and designated times of rest in the Bible follow long periods of work. God is clear that we are never to drink in excess and are to avoid being drunk. We are not to be gluttons or involved in any type of debauchery. Parties should not be a distraction from the work at hand but rather a reward for the work accomplished. One of my favorite mantras at my home is Work hard; play hard and when I consider the Biblical models of work 6 days and then enjoy a Sabbath or pressing on toward the prize then I know that God is the author of my mantra and is pleased when we celebrate his goodness... by a good party!

## **2. Jesus is holy.**

The temple was to be a place for worship, prayer, offering sacrifices and to most importantly, meet with God and seek His face. It was not ever meant to be a place for business transactions. In verse 13 we are told that it was Passover. Every male Jew age 12 on up was to attend this week long celebration (or dare we call it "party") of God's deliverance of His people from slavery. Unfortunately it appears the Jewish leaders weren't doing that and instead they were intent on filling their pocket books and taking advantage of those in need.

It's an understatement to say that Jesus is troubled as he approaches the temple. He overturns tables, drives out the animals and scatters the coins. With anger he states, **"Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"** In this statement, He was claiming to be the Son of God by calling the temple his Father's home.

The Jews ask Jesus to give them proof on who he was. Jesus tells them to destroy the temple and in three days he will raise it up. This left everyone utterly confused because it had taken 46 years to build this temple. However, looking back, after Jesus was raised from the dead, Jesus' disciples understood that Jesus was really speaking about himself - He would be destroyed and to their astonishment be raised up again in three days.

In preparing this lesson, I found many who use this passage to justify their own anger. After all, if Jesus is able to display his anger then we too, as his followers should be able to do the same, right!? NOT EXACTLY! That argument carried through would mean that since God is a jealous God, we can be a jealous people or carry it further, since I can send my daughter to her room for a bad attitude then my son can also tell her to go to her room whenever he feels it's appropriate. (Though he might like that, I assure you that would soon lead to anarchy!)

But let us not forget that Jesus is holy. We are striving for holiness day by day and because of Jesus we have been declared holy but yet are still a sinful people living in a corrupt world. Just because God has the authority to show his righteous anger does not justify our anger. He is holy, perfect and he has authority over all things... We cannot even begin to think that we can compare ourselves to that.

It seems now in our culture that anger is looked at as a positive trait. I even feel those of us in the church throw around the term righteous anger even all too freely. ("I didn't have road rage - That was righteous anger!") I didn't have to look long and hard to find articles out there that encourage us in our anger. The Huffington Post recently had an article called "The Year Women Found Their Rage" or how about the article marketed to younger girls in Teen Vogue, "Most Women You Know Are Angry - and That's Alright." Or my personal favorite - "When Getting Angry Makes You Happy."

Let me just say I find the overwhelming number of allegations of sexual violence and harassment shocking and repulsive. To abuse or force yourself on any human being in a weaker state than you should be dealt with seriously as a criminal offense. Even Jesus said anyone who causes a little one to stumble would be better off with a millstone around their neck and to be cast into the sea. Of course, there is always repentance but never underestimate the consequences of such lewd behavior. As women we do not need to cower to abuse. We can take a stand for truth, justice and righteousness **but** without rage and without lumping all men into a category that is disrespectful. That only hurts us and greatly discredits the men who stand for integrity!

There are lots of verses about anger in the Bible. Most of them say to refrain from anger, be slow to anger and to overlook transgressions, etc. The Bible also mentions that the wise person is one who refrains from anger and it is the fool who is quick tempered. One of the most common and (possibly the most misunderstood) passages is Ephesians 4:26 "**In your anger do not sin.**" So everyone seems to interpret this as the "righteous anger" verse. Some use it to justify their anger. However, remember that the verse goes on to say "**Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.**" So yes in this world you will get angry but it is important that you deal with it and get rid of it quickly.

Though the world may encourage you to be angry, God does not. God's anger is the only righteous anger I am aware of... We can be grieved and disappointed by those around us but we are not to hold onto our anger. We are to work through it and get rid of it as soon as possible. Matthew 18 shows us how to deal with conflict... It's not through bitterness, gossip or vengeance. Medical studies show that you are a much unhappier and unhealthier person if you hold onto anger... There is nothing new under the sun... That news was written in God's Word 2000 years ago!

So God shows His righteous anger to the (church leaders) of his day because they didn't get it. They were using their religion to for their own profit. Now as followers of Jesus we are God's temple.

**“Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?” 1 Cor. 3:16**

We are now God's temple and are called to be holy just as God is holy. When we do anything to hurt one another or ourselves it is a great abuse and an offense to the Lord. Though many prefer to only study God's love, we must never overlook these passages on God's holiness. When we don't recognize that we serve a Holy God, it diminishes his love for us and the great lengths He went to draw an unholy people to Himself.

### **3. Jesus uses ordinary people.**

Jesus did not ask the master of the banquet, the bride or the groom to assist him with this miracle. He asked the servants of the wedding. Jesus used ordinary men to accomplish this great miracle. There are vast examples in the Bible of God using ordinary individuals to accomplish His great purposes. Let's flip back and forth in our Bibles to remember together...

- There was an **ordinary** teenage girl who was nearly scared to death by the visit of angel who told her that she would become miraculously pregnant and give birth to the Son of God. Mary asked how this could be and the angel told her NOTHING is impossible with God. (Even if you're ordinary, NOTHING is impossible with God!)
- How about the **ordinary** man in the Old Testament who had been abandoned as a child. Moses had committed murder and was a total failure as the prince of Egypt. However, God called him to lead his people out of Egypt even though he did not display true leadership qualities and had a speech impediment.
- Then God transformed the life of an **ordinary** fisherman with the reputation of being impulsive and who failed his leader many times. Yet God used Peter to proclaim truth and to build his church upon.
- Again back in the Old Testament there is Rahab who we can hardly say her name without mentioning her occupation. She was Rahab, the prostitute. An **ordinary** girl who was born into a corrupt culture. Yet God chooses to use her to spare his people and her own family. She ends up raising a great man of faith (Ironic - most romantic and

godly man in Scripture is raised by a prostitute...) and became direct relation to King David and most importantly was in the lineage of Christ.

There are so many more examples.... Consider Gideon, Ruth, John, etc. Study these individuals and many others and see that God uses ordinary people who are OBEDIENT...

#### **4. Jesus blesses obedience.**

In verse 5 there is one thing that Mary told the servants - "Do whatever he tells you." Jesus is a guest. He is not an important person at this wedding and yet somehow these servants do exactly what he has told them to do.

When these servants woke up that morning, they thought it would just be a day like any other. They would put in a hard day's work and then leave with another meager day's worth of earnings. Who would have thought they would have been part of Jesus' first miracle - The very first time he shows his power and deity. Undoubtedly their lives were changed and one can only speculate how they treasured that day in their hearts for the rest of their lives.

It would be understandable if the servants had told Jesus, "No, I'm not doing that." They didn't know Jesus - They had no idea He was their Messiah. He was just some guy at the wedding who asked them to fill six water pots. These were used in ceremonial washings. We are told in verse 6 that each pot held 20-30 gallons. Somehow they knew that this was no ordinary man giving them direction. Somehow they knew that though it was not easy that it would be worth it.

On the other hand, let's look again at Jesus cleansing the temple - The leaders there knew that they were being disobedient because no one tried to question or stop Jesus. They had guilt written all over their face as they knew what they were doing was not pleasing to God... I can guarantee you that their lack of obedience was not worth the extra change jingling in their pockets. They were not there to worship the Lord because you cannot serve both God and man. Our obedience to the Lord is how we show Him our love. The money changers' hearts would never be full as long as their pockets were. God blesses our obedience.

We can bring him nothing but our obedience. For Jews, wine represented life and abundance (Radmacher, Allen & House, 1999). The symbolism in this first miracle is so rich. Because of God's grace - His provision through Jesus Christ - we have life but without Him we are nothing. God will take our ordinary and worthless lives and transforms it into an abundant life through the power of Jesus Christ if we are obedient to His calling in our lives.

#### **5. Jesus is calling us to be believers - not just followers.**

After Jesus changed the water into wine verse 11 says, "This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him."

Now we already read how Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathaniel became followers of Jesus Christ. It even says in John 1:49 that Nathanael declared "You are the Son of God." But somehow there's something different after the disciples see firsthand that Jesus has power and authority over the laws of science.

Then after this miracle we read in verse 11 that Jesus went down to Capernaum with his mother, brothers and his disciples. We know that Mary obviously believed Jesus was the Son of God. In Luke 1 an angel told her that she would become pregnant and that she was carrying the Son of the Most High God whose kingdom would not end. She said she was willing and pondered all those things in her heart. We know that the disciples were followers of Jesus but look what John 7:5 says about Jesus brothers -

"For even his own brothers did not believe in him."

It seems completely absurd that one could have been raised in the same home as Jesus and not know that He was the Christ - the Redeemer of all. Here we see that they were following Jesus. They witnessed his miracles. They had to know he was sinless - fully man yet fully God. Somehow though they chose to not believe. (Spoiler alert - We are told in Acts 1 that they were part of the community of believers that met in the upper room when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost.)

We don't know when their hearts changed. We don't know if it was gradual or if it was like a lightning rod. It appears Jesus was patient with them but it must have been tough to be in such close proximity to those who thought you were a counterfeit.

I don't know where you are today. You may be a solid believer of Jesus Christ or maybe you are just here checking things out. You may be hesitant or maybe in a season of doubt. Let me encourage you to keep following Jesus. God promises that if we seek Him with our whole heart that we will find Him (Jer. 29:12). Our Father is patient and compassionate - not wanting any to perish. But I am praying that today that you will become a believer of Jesus Christ - not just a follower of the One who has called you by name!

Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). Nelsons new illustrated Bible commentary. Nashville: T. Nelson .

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