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# Study One

# EMPTY

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## *Jesus is an Abundant Provider*

Where is Jesus when I feel like I've run out? Is Jesus enough to meet the deepest needs in my life? In this study, we'll look at Jesus' first sign, turning water into wine at a wedding, and see how he longs to meet us when our needs feel too big to handle on our own.

JOHN 2:1-11



## JOHN 2:1-11

The next day there was a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. 3 The wine supply ran out during the festivities, so Jesus' mother told him, "They have no more wine." 4 "Dear woman, that's not our problem," Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." 5 But his mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 6 Standing nearby were six stone water jars, used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons. 7 Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with water." When the jars had been filled, 8 he said, "Now dip some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies." So the servants followed his instructions. 9 When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. 10 "A host always serves the best wine first," he said. "Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now!" 11 This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him.



# BEFORE THE STUDY

## Preparing

When we study scripture it's really important to understand what the text would have meant to the original audience. Use these key-terms definitions to help you understand the historical context for the passage as you lead your group.

### *Wedding (v.1)*

- Weddings in this time were a big deal! They often lasted a full week and it was expected that the bridegroom's family would provide plenty of food and wine for the entire celebration. Failure to do so would bring shame on the entire family and the newlyweds.

### *Wine (v.3)*

- In the Old Testament, wine was a symbol of God's abundance and provision and also pointed to the time when God would bring salvation to the people of Israel. In Amos 9:14, God says "I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine."

### *Washing Jars (v.6)*

- These ceremonial washing jars were part of the Jewish cleansing ritual and held about 30 gallons of water. Every person at the wedding would wash their hands in these jars so that they would be ceremonially clean, purified from their sins.

### *Master of Ceremonies (v.9)*

- This is the wedding host, the one who makes sure everything runs smoothly throughout the celebration.

### *Glory (v.11)*

- In this case, glory refers to the fullness of God being revealed through Jesus. This is a recurring theme throughout the gospel of John.

## Praying

Once you've prepared for the study, spend time praying for the people God has brought to your group. Ask God to show you who you could personally invite this week and spend time listening for his guidance as you seek to lead your friends into his presence.

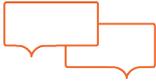
## Invite

### PUBLIC INVITATIONS

Remember to extend invitations and reminders to your group this week through whatever channels you're using to communicate (group chat, text, email, etc.) Consider creative ways to get the word out via social media, flyers or encouraging people to invite friends.

### PERSONAL INVITATIONS

Who has God put in your life this week? Have you had any spiritual conversations or sensed openness from someone? Is there anyone God has put on your heart to reach out to? Take some time to personally invite them to the study this week.



# DURING THE STUDY

## Entering the Text (5-10 min)

### INTRO QUESTION

*This icebreaker question ties in with the theme of the study and is meant to help open up the group to discussion. It will also help everyone get to know each other a little better!*

- When is a time you ran out of something important that you needed? (It's normal to feel embarrassed or anxious when we've run out of something. Today we'll look at a story from John 2 and see what Jesus does at a wedding that has run out of wine.)

### PRIOR TO THIS PASSAGE

Right before this passage, in the first chapter of John, Jesus is publicly announced as a special kind of spiritual leader who will “take away the sins of the world.” After this he begins gathering a small group of people to journey with him. Three days later, we see Jesus and his new followers at a wedding where he will perform his very first miracle!

### READ. OBSERVE. INQUIRE

*Pass around the scripture handouts and invite 1-2 people to read the passage aloud. Give everyone about 5 minutes to read through the passage a few times silently on their own. Encourage participants to take note of things that seem interesting or confusing. Pay attention to the characters, who they are, and what they're doing. Invite them to be curious and think of some questions they have about the passage. You'll be using their observations and questions to help fuel the study.*

## Share Observations (10 min)

*Observation helps us discover the “what?” of the passage. Who are the characters? What are they doing? Look for repeated words, comparisons, contrasts, etc. Imagine yourself in the story. What do you see, hear, smell? Once people have had time to read the passage and make observations on their own, invite everyone to share what they observed with the group and which verse(s) their observations come from. This helps everyone follow along and also encourages participants to draw directly from the text.*

- What did you observe about the passage? (share which verse(s) your observations come from)

*If your group has trouble coming up with observations, you can use these optional questions to help them take a closer look at the text.*

- In Jesus’ day, running out of wine at a wedding would have been a shameful failure. How would you feel if this was your wedding?
- Who are the different characters in the story?
- Jesus is notified that the wine has run out. What do you notice about his process of restoring the wine to the party? (take note of the people, actions, order of events)
- What do you notice about the quantity and quality of the wine?
- What are the different responses to the party being restored? (v.10, 11)

## Interpretation (10 min)

*Interpretation questions help us uncover the “why?” of the passage based on the observations we’ve made. What’s significant about the details we observed? Why are the characters doing what they’re doing? Why is this passage or story here? Use the following questions to discuss the passage with your group. You can use the extra space to write in other questions the group asks. If you run out of time to discuss all of these questions it’s ok! Just do the best you can in 15 mins and then move on to the next section.*

- Jesus chooses to involve the servants in the process. What does this show us about the way Jesus works? (v. 7-8)
- What is significant about the quantity and quality of wine Jesus produces?
- Jesus uses signs to demonstrate who God is. What is Jesus showing us about God through the sign of turning water into wine? (Help the group see that God is generous, involved, brings joy, etc.)

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## The Sign: Abundant Forgiveness & Restored Relationship (5 min)

*Jesus' seven signs are full of symbolism. Each sign points back to ideas or stories from the Old Testament while also pointing forward to Jesus' death and resurrection. The signs are meant to show us how God was going to rescue the world through Jesus!*

*This section will help you lead the group into the deeper meaning of the sign. If you don't have time for the "Discussing the Sign" section, you can move straight to "Explaining the Sign". Feel free to read the sections below out loud or put them in your own words.*

### DISCUSSING THE SIGN: WINE, WEDDING, ABUNDANCE

This passage is full of symbolism. In the Old Testament, wine and blood are linked with the idea of God's forgiveness. God also talks about his relationship with his people through the metaphor of a wedding. Later, in John 6:54, Jesus makes this interesting announcement, "But anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise that person at the last day." Lastly, Jesus says to his mother in verse 4, "my time has not yet come," pointing to something important that Jesus will do in the future.

- What do you think Jesus is pointing to with the sign of providing wine at the wedding?

### EXPLAINING THE SIGN

The wine has run out and the party is on the brink of failure. The shame of a failed wedding is blowing in like a storm. However, Jesus swiftly steps in and not only saves the party, he abundantly provides the highest quality wine. So much so, that the master of the banquet is overflowing with joy. But, this isn't just a story about a wedding running out of wine. This sign points to the reality that we've all run out of forgiveness. Jesus has poured out his blood on the cross abundantly, like an overflowing jar of wine. In the same way that the wedding is restored, our relationship with God can be restored through this forgiveness. If we turn to him and ask him to forgive us, we too can have overflowing joy restored to our life.

### THE BIG IDEA

Jesus has come to restore our relationship with our Father in heaven through the abundant outpouring of forgiveness through his blood on the cross.

## Applying the Text (10 min)

### TAKE IT DEEPER

*This question is designed to help participants connect emotionally with what's happening in the passage and will help you bridge into the application question.*

- When you feel like you've run out (emotionally, spiritually, financially), how do you deal with it?

### APPLICATION QUESTIONS

*Choose one of the questions below to help your group apply the text to their own lives.*

- Have you received God's abundant forgiveness in your life? Do you want to start a relationship with God today? *(If someone wants to start a relationship with God, use the "Call to Faith" section and walk the group through it!)*
- In this passage we see that God is an abundant provider in the midst of crisis. How does this compare with your view of God?
- How is Jesus asking you to partner with him in bringing "new wine" to your corner of campus or network of friends? Where is Jesus inviting you to partner with him in restoring people's relationship with God?

### PRAYER

Close your time together in prayer. You may pray for the group yourself or invite others to pray if they feel comfortable. Use the application questions and discussion to guide your prayers. If you'd like and if time allows, you can use this time to ask if anyone needs prayer for a specific need in their life.

## Call to Faith (optional)

*If you sense that someone is ready to follow Jesus, lead your group through this call to faith and make sure to follow up with anyone who makes a decision!*

### INVITE

In the same way that the party is in desperate need of wine, our world is in desperate need of God's forgiveness.

In the bigger story, wine is a metaphor for blood, and in this case, a foreshadowing of the blood Jesus will pour out from the cross into an empty world. While the world was distant from God and empty of his presence, Jesus came to earth to restore our relationship with him. He does this by going to the cross to die for our sins and to offer forgiveness through the shedding of his blood. The kind of forgiveness that is available to you and me is the highest quality and most abundant amount. It's total forgiveness through Jesus!

### RESPOND

While there are a number of ways we can respond to Jesus, the most foundational response is to confess your emptiness and to invite his presence into your life to fill you completely. Jesus wants you to invite him to become the leader and filler of your life. Regardless of where you are, I want to give you a minute of silence to listen to God and consider how he may be inviting each of us to respond. *(1 minute of silence)*

### SHARE

How do you feel like God is inviting you to respond? *(Share as a group.)*

### PRAY

God, I pray that you would help all of us continue to listen and respond to you. For those who are making the decision to let Jesus forgive and fill them for the first time or for the first time in a long time, we pray: "God, I believe Jesus is your son. I believe he died on the cross for me and took away all my sins, paying the cost for all of us. I believe that you raised him from the dead and that he is alive today. Forgive me for the wrongs that I have done and the ways I have neglected you, pursuing other things I believed were more valuable than you. I accept your love, forgiveness, and leadership over every part of my life. Change me; make me the person you want me to be."

### FOLLOW UP

I'd love to follow up with each of you in the next couple of days to help you take the next steps. *(Find more resources on leading a call to faith at [tinyurl.com/sgcall2faith](http://tinyurl.com/sgcall2faith).)*



# AFTER THE STUDY

## Tracking

### WHO

- Write down the names of everyone who attended this week.
- Keep track of people you've had spiritual conversations with outside of the study.

### WHAT HAPPENED

- Was there anything said or asked that you'd like to follow up on? Did someone have a significant encounter with Jesus?

### WHAT NEXT

- What can you do to follow up with 2 people on your list? Find a time to talk with them this week.

## Praying

Pray for everyone listed that they would be open and responsive to the conversations you've had and the work that God is doing in them (Colossians 4:3). Also, prayerfully consider the people you just listed, and spend a moment listening to God for 1-2 people you should follow up with this week.

## Following Up

Be intentional this week about following up with 1-2 people God has brought to mind. Pick a day, time, and place where you can have a conversation. Be sure to schedule this time within the next day or two.

