

## John Chapter 2

Jesus and his disciples are invited to a wedding and, of course, they go. It's a celebration of something that glorifies God. Plus, it's an excuse to party.

While Jesus and his friends are at this wedding, they run out of wine. Wine is a pretty important part of Jewish weddings, and running out is not good. So, what does Jesus do? At his mom's request, he makes more wine.

In this moment, Jesus has just established himself as the life of the party. What could have been a huge disaster for the families involved, has just turned into the best party around. Because, not only is there now enough wine for everyone, but this wine is even better than the wine they were drinking before.

It's not uncommon for people (especially some Christians) to question Jesus here. Are there drunk people at this wedding? Probably. There's no way a Jewish wedding runs out of wine without there being a few guests who overdid it. But that doesn't stop Jesus from being the one to keep the party alive. Jesus saves that wedding by providing wine, much in the same way he saves us by providing his blood. Which we commemorate by drinking wine. Ever noticed that connection between Jesus' first miracle and the Last Supper?

Christian, we should be the ones people want at their parties. Because the character of God can be seen so clearly in celebration. When we help people have more fun, we are giving them a glimpse of the Kingdom of God, showing them that God wants to give us joy. If we are going to show people what Jesus is like, we bring the best wine to the party.

Notice that Jesus' first miracle happens while he is celebrating a marriage. Do you celebrate marriage as much as God does? Learn to love weddings, if you don't already. They are wonderful places to see God at work, and to enjoy life with people.

A few days after the wedding, as Passover is approaching, Jesus walks into the temple. This event is nothing like the last. Instead of celebrating and having a good time, Jesus gets angry at what he sees. Merchants have set up tables to exchange money and sell items to Jews for their Passover sacrifices.

This makes Jesus mad for two reasons.

First, they have cheapened the Passover by providing low quality animals for the offering. Now, instead of a shepherd choosing his best animal to give as a sacrifice to God in remembrance of what he did for Israel in Egypt, people can travel to the temple emptyhanded. All they need is money, and they can buy whatever is available for purchase. Then they can offer that to God, instead of having to travel with their best livestock. It turns the sacrifice into nothing more than an obligation.

Things that undermine God's connection with his people should be exposed. Shortcuts don't help anyone, and Jesus knows that making the offering easy robs it of its significance. Do you take shortcuts in your spiritual life that take away from the significance of your actions?

Second, these merchants are selling item at exorbitant prices to make more money, and the money changers are doing the same. These people are making a profit by extorting God's people. They're

getting rich by taking advantage of those who want to please God and Jesus is not going to stand for that.

Be careful that you don't think of days like Christmas and Easter as opportunities for the church to benefit. For many people, these are the only days they will give Jesus much thought. Knowing this, we should take that as an opportunity to help them know him better. But, do it for their sake, and to glorify God, not to pad the church attendance numbers or overcome a deficit in the church budget.

Note the placement of these two events. Jesus helps people celebrate a wedding by restocking the wine. Then, only a few days later, he kicks merchants out of the temple for making it easier for Jews to make Passover sacrifices. It sounds a little backwards in comparison to modern Christian thinking, doesn't it?

Today, Christians complain about alcohol consumption at a wedding, while at the same time, applauding any seller of Christian trinkets and church supplies. If a couple wants to get married in a church, alcohol is often prohibited. Yet, there is no shortage of religious odds and ends for sale to make it easier to maintain a daily quiet time and bring people into a Sunday service.

To some extent, this is one of the reasons we have such a bad reputation today. It seems that Jesus would rather see us celebrate with our unsaved friends than half-heartedly go through the motions of religion.

Is Jesus pleased with us when we elevate religious obligations to be the most important part of our faith, even if we are just going through the motions, or if it means we aren't able to celebrate a major event with our neighbors? Is there a balance to be found? Have you found it yet?