

### Discuss:

Share with your group about the most memorable wedding or reception you have been a part of. What made it particularly remarkable?

What contemporary signs or symbols are used at weddings to represent our hopes and desires for the couple getting married?

### A Sign of What's to Come

The fruit of the vine is an image found throughout both the Old and New Testaments. A quick search of the NIV for the words “wine”, “grapes”, or “vineyard” reveals at least 400 references... far too many to summarize here. At times these passages warn us of the dangers of intoxication and drunkenness. More frequent, though, are references to wine as the evidence of God’s blessing and favor.

Wine was used at weddings and celebrations like Passover. It was used as a drink offering in the worshipping life of God’s people. Wine was considered a gift from God himself. Consider this brief excerpt from *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*:

“Numerous metaphors using wine reflect upon the goodness of life. One who fears the Lord will have a wife like a fruitful vine (*Ps. 128:3*). God provides the wine that gladdens the heart (*Ps. 104:15*), but he withholds it as a form of judgment (*Isa. 16:10; 24:7-13*). Drinking wine and eating bread were symbols of peace and prosperity (*2 Kgs. 18:31-32; Prov. 3:10*). Israel’s restoration from judgment and captivity is envisioned as a time of abundant produce from the vineyards (*Jer. 31:12; Joel 2:19, 24; Amos 9:13-14*).”

As noted above, Israel’s prophets spoke often of an era flowing with new wine which would mark the fulfillment of God’s promise to reveal himself to Israel. “The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. **New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, and I will bring my people Israel back from exile.**” (*Amos 9:13–14*)

Even in the Rabbinic period following Jesus’ ministry, the abundance of new wine remained one of the most anticipated signs of the Messianic age. Third century teacher Rabbi Joshua Ben Levi suggested that the Messiah would bring with him “wine prepared from the beginning of the world”.

When we come to the first of Jesus’ miracles in John’s Gospel, it just so happens to involve an abundance of new wine. Just days after revealing himself to John and his disciples, Jesus leads them to a wedding in nearby Cana. What happened next was unparalleled in Israel’s history... and yet, it was precisely what they had been told to expect!

### **A Closer Look:**

1. Read verses 1-5. Then, do your best to briefly summarize the nature of the problem faced by the family in Cana. Why is this a critical moment?
2. Look at verses 6-10. Note the details John records about how Jesus' miracle takes place. Which of these might be significant or even symbolic? Explain.
3. Finally, consider just verses 10-11. What is said about the result/outcome of Jesus' miracle? How does this sign help us to better see and understand *who* Jesus truly is?

### **Making it Personal:**

1. While this passage captures a miracle of great magnitude, Jesus' presence and intervention at this wedding also speaks of his deeply human and relational side. What about God's character does this miracle communicate to you personally?
2. Has there been a critical moment in your life where you have looked to Jesus for help? What happened? How has that affected your relationship with him?

### **The Passage: John 2:1-11**

John 2:1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

4 "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, 9 and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside 10 and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

11 What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.