

John: The Gospel of Light and Life

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Chapter 2 Discussion

The Miraculous Signs of Jesus (pgs. 31-45)

Opening Prayer

Holy God of light and life, thank you for your son, Jesus Christ. Thank you for these stories written so long ago. Open our minds as we consider these stories so that we may grow in our understanding of who Jesus is and who you call us to be. Open our hearts that we may hear and receive your word and live faithfully as your children. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Bible and Book Study and Discussion

Opening Sentence:

The first twelve chapters of John contain stories of seven miracles that Jesus performed during this ministry on earth. John calls these miracles “Miraculous Signs.”

These “miraculous signs” may be read on two levels:

1. A straightforward level that follows the actions of the story
2. A deeper level that reveals the nature of Christ invites us into a relationship with Christ.

Look at Hamilton’s description of “Starry Night”- Vincent Van Gogh (pg. 31-32)

Read John 2:1-12- (pg. 48-49) (Cultural Background Study Bible pg. 1806-1809)

- (Can be read dramatically or just as a parable.)

- Who are the characters in the story?
- Jesus
- The servants
- Mary (Jesus’ Mother)
- Master of the Banquet
- Bride
- Bridegroom
- Head waiter
- Brothers
- Disciples

- What does each character do in the story?
- Jesus turned water into wine.
- Servants followed Jesus' instructions.
- Master of the Banquet- ran out of wine, served Jesus' wine.
- Mary told Jesus they ran out of wine and told the servants to follow all his instructions.

- Why do you think it is significant that this story takes place at a wedding party?
- This story is not only about Jesus providing wine for a wedding but also about the life he offers to each of us.

- What is the significance of the instruction to "Do what ever he tells you?" Consider both the meaning in the story and in our lives today.
- The servants did what they were told, water was changed into wine, the ordinary was converted to the extraordinary.

- Why might John have offered the detail that the water jars were made of "stone"?
- Likely, this detail takes us back to the Old Testament, where in Ezekiel God says, "I will remove your stony heart from your body and replace it with a living one" (Ezekiel 36:26).
- It's not just about Jesus changing water into wine, but how life in Christ is richer and more joyful than the ritualistic religion of first-century Judaism.

- How does the reference to the "Jewish cleansing ritual" broaden the significance of this story? (pg. 35)
- It's not just about Jesus changing water into wine, but how life in Christ is richer and more joyful than the ritualistic religion of first-century Judaism.
- Jesus disregarded the purpose of the "stone pots" for his friend's honor.

- What does the "good wine" represent?
- Things could include:
 - A spiritual life that is characterized by forgiveness.
 - Joy
 - Peace

○ Hope

- How does the image of jugs filled “to the brim” describe your experience of the Christian faith?
- John is telling us that Jesus wants to fill us up completely.

Information on Dionysus and Bacchus, the ancient Greek or Roman God of wine and mirth (pg. 36-38) *Greek Mythology*

Originally Dionysus was the Greek god of fertility. Later, he came to be known chiefly as the god of wine and pleasure. The Romans called him Bacchus. Dionysus was the son of the supreme god Zeus and Semele, the daughter of a king. He journeyed far and wide. Everywhere he went he planted vines and taught the people viniculture. On his travels Dionysus was accompanied by satyrs (demons) and ‘Maenads’ or ‘Bacchae’; ‘possessed women’ who gave themselves to ecstasy.

Excessive drinking and debauchery generally accompanied the cult of Dionysus, giving rise to the word ‘bacchanalia’ for a party featuring drunken revelry. Initially Dionysus was often portrayed as a dignified, elderly man with a beard, and later as a beautiful, nude youth or as a small, fat man. A barrel of wine, a bunch of grapes in his hand or a wreath of vines crowning his head are rarely missing in these depictions.

- How does the secular world tempt us away from Christ?
- Answers will be personal or may vary according to personal belief.
- How can we resist temptation and remain in Christ?
- Answers will be personal or may vary according to personal belief.
- What does Christ offer us that the world does not?
- Answers will be personal or may vary according to personal belief.
- Pg. 38- Jesus offers us “what is truly life.” (1 Timothy 6:19)

Healing the Blind Beggar

Read John Chapter 9 (pg. 82-84) (Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible pg. 1829-1831)

- Who are the characters in the story?
- Narrator/Storyteller
- Disciples
- Jesus
- Neighbor
- Crowd or Some
- Others
- Blind Beggar
- Some Pharisees/ Jewish Leaders
- Other Pharisees
- Parents

- What are the main events in the story?
- Jesus was healing people in the Synagogue.
- Jesus spit in the dirt to make mud.
- Jesus puts the mud on the Blind Beggars eyes.
- Jesus tells the Blind Beggar to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam
- The Blind Beggars follows instructions.
- The Blind Beggars sight is restored.

- Why did the disciples ask: Who sinned?
- The Pharisees said that Jesus was a sinner because he had broken Jewish law by healing a blind man on the Sabbath.
- The religious leaders refused to listen to Jesus and condemned him as a sinner.
- But did he really sin?
- The real question is who is truly blind in this parable? If we look deeper those who chose to condemn and not obey are the true blind people. The Jewish leaders. (pg. 43)

- How is this “cause-and-effect” way of thinking still evident in our world today?

- There may be many answers.

Two Points on Suffering:

- Sometimes bad things happen to us as a consequence of our own actions.
- God does not punish us with hardship and suffering, Jesus suffered the punishment for our sin.

Read John 9:35-38- (pg. 83) (Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible Pg. 1831)

- REMEMBER that the healed blind man did not recognize Jesus at first because he had been blind when he left Jesus to go wash in the pool of Siloam. (Pool of Siloam

Background- Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible pg. 1830)

- How are people spiritually blind today?
- These answers are open for discussion, and maybe very broad in nature.

- How can we as followers of Christ help heal people's spiritual blindness?
- By showing them that: Christ offers life, and sharing with them that the life that Christ offers is far richer and more meaningful than the ritualistic Judaism of his day or the sensuality offered by Bacchus.
- Christ is the light of the world.
- As we trust in Him, and do as he asks, your/our eyes will be opened to see life as it is and to see God as he is.

- How does the blind beggar in this story represent each of us?
- These answers may be personal.
- One answer may be that Just as he trusted Jesus and did what he asked, he was healed or brought to the light and life of Jesus, If we do the same and answer the call or the "signs" we can experience the same life.

Hymn Study and Discussion

"Amazing Grace"

- What does the word *grace* mean to you?

- How is the meaning of the word affected, changed, or deepened by its use in the hymn?
- There may be many answers.

- Consider and share examples of dramatic changes in people's lives or your own life. What role, if any, did grace play in those changes?
- There may be many answers.

“Amazing Grace”
John Newton

Verse 1

Amazing Grace how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

Verse 2

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Verse 3

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
‘Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

Verse 4

The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Portion be,
As long as life endures.

Verse 5

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

Verse 6

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.

Verse 7

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

Wrapping Up

Food for Thought (Optional Personal Journal)

Hamilton points out that John recorded these stories to show us that Christ offer us life.

- In what areas of your life have you been offered “new wine?”
- In what areas of your life have you received healing from spiritual blindness?
- What does Christ call you to do to receive new life and healing?

Closing Prayer

God of miracles and new life, make us aware of our blindness. Grant us courage to do what you call us to do. Let us be receptive to your healing presence so that we may truly experience life in you. Amen.