

The First Sign: Fine Wine Saved Until Now

JOHN 2:1-11 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

Jesus saves the fine wine until now, showing who he is.

Open with it, bring it back after every section, close with it. By the end they should be able to finish the sentence for you.

- Before this passage (day 2): John 1:35-51, Come and See. Its big idea: Jesus asks what you want, then says: come and see.
- After this passage (day 4): John 3:1-21, Born Again.

Open

Recall last time (John 1:35-51): Jesus told his first followers to 'come and see,' and he promised Nathanael he would see greater things. Today they see the first. Ask: 'When have you run out of something at the worst possible moment, with everyone watching?' Take two or three answers. Read John 2:11 aloud. Big idea: Jesus saves the fine wine until now, showing who he is. Ask one person what stuck from last time.

Run Sheet

1. They Have No More Wine (John 2:1-5, about 12 min)

The one thing: The story starts with an ordinary shortage, and Mary takes it straight to Jesus.

Ask: Mary just says, "They have no more wine." What does it say about her that she brings this small, embarrassing problem to Jesus?

2. Filled to the Brim (John 2:6-8, about 12 min)

The one thing: Jesus uses the jars of ritual washing and the servants' simple obedience.

Ask: The servants carried plain water to the man in charge of the feast. What might they have been thinking on the walk over?

3. His Glory Revealed (John 2:9-11, about 12 min)

The one thing: The sign quietly shows who Jesus is, and his disciples believe in him.

Ask: The master of the banquet praises the wrong person, the bridegroom. The servants knew the truth. What do you think the disciples saw that made them believe?

Close (never cut it)

Land on what the passage shows about Jesus, not on homework. Reread v10-11. Say plainly that the one who revealed his glory at a small-town wedding is the one who keeps the fine wine until now. Let that stand, and give a moment of quiet before you pray.

PROTECT THE ENDING

If Section 3 starts late, drop its illustration and side note, read v10-11, and go straight to the close.

KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 5, 3, 1, 4, 2 (top to bottom) · Feelings: Jesus' mother, Mary worried, The servants worried, The master of the banquet happy, Jesus' disciples happy · Code: FINE WINE UNTIL NOW

Act it out: Pick kids to be Mary, Jesus, servants, and the master of the banquet. The servants pretend to pour water into jars 'to the brim,' then carry a cup over. The master tastes it and shouts, 'You have saved the fine wine until now!'

1. They Have No More Wine

JOHN 2:1-5 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- A village wedding runs dry. It is a real shame for the families.
- Mary brings the need to Jesus. Jesus answers that his hour has not yet come.
- Mary does not argue. She points the servants to him.

Jesus replied, "My HOUR has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Do WHATEVER He tells you."

Discuss: Mary just says, "They have no more wine." What does it say about her that she brings this small, embarrassing problem to Jesus?

The story starts with an ordinary shortage, and Mary takes it straight to Jesus.

MUST COVER

- v3: Running out of wine was public shame for a family. The feast could last days, and the whole village came.
- v4-5: Jesus says his 'hour' is not yet here. Mary still trusts him: 'Do whatever He tells you.'

IF THERE'S TIME

- 'Woman' was a respectful way to address someone, not rude. Jesus uses the same word for Mary from the cross (John 19:26).
- 'Hour' runs through John's Gospel. Much later Jesus says it has come (John 12:23), pointing to his death.

Illustration idea: A host at a birthday party sees the food table empty while guests are still coming through the door. There's that sinking feeling.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: She knew he could do something about it.
- Listen for: She cared about the family's embarrassment, not just big spiritual things.

If it drifts: If talk turns to Mary in general or church teaching about her, return to verse 5. What she actually does here is point everyone to Jesus.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

The wine is gone, and the one who keeps the fine wine is standing right there.

Short on time? Skip the 'Woman' and 'hour' side notes. Keep the shame of the shortage and Mary's words in v5.

Bridge → Mary has pointed the servants to Jesus. Now watch what he tells them to do.

2. Filled to the Brim

JOHN 2:6-8 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Six big stone jars stood there for Jewish washing rites.
- Jesus gives plain orders: fill them, then draw some out.
- The servants obey fully before they see anything happen.

The jars had been set there for the Jewish rites of PURIFICATION.

So they filled them to the BRIM.

Discuss: The servants carried plain water to the man in charge of the feast. What might they have been thinking on the walk over?

Jesus uses the jars of ritual washing and the servants' simple obedience.

MUST COVER

- v6: These jars held water for ceremonial washing. Stone was used because it was thought to stay ritually clean. Jesus fills what was meant for cleansing.
- v7-8: 'To the brim' means there was no half effort and no room left. Each jar held 20-30 gallons, so there was far more than enough.

IF THERE'S TIME

- The prophet Isaiah pictured God's coming salvation as a feast 'of choice wines' (Isaiah 25:6). This abundance hints that the feast has begun.

Illustration idea: Following a coach's drill that seems pointless. You only see why it mattered weeks later, in the game.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: They probably felt foolish or nervous about getting in trouble.
- Listen for: They trusted Mary's word and just did it.

If it drifts: If it becomes a debate about Jewish law in general, bring it back to v6-7. These particular jars, filled by these servants, are where the sign happens.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Jesus fills washing jars to the brim, because he is the one who brings the fine wine.

Short on time? Drop the Isaiah note. Keep the purpose of the jars and 'to the brim.'

Bridge → The servants have carried the water over. Now someone tastes it.

3. His Glory Revealed

JOHN 2:9-11 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 3 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- The master of the banquet tastes water that has become wine.
- He is amazed: "You have saved the fine wine until now!"
- John calls it the first sign. It revealed Jesus' glory.

He thus revealed His GLORY.

And His disciples BELIEVED in Him.

Discuss: The master of the banquet praises the wrong person, the bridegroom. The servants knew the truth. What do you think the disciples saw that made them believe?

The sign quietly shows who Jesus is, and his disciples believe in him.

MUST COVER

- v9-10: The master of the banquet's job was to judge wine. His surprise tells us this is the finest, and it came last.
- v11: John calls it a 'sign.' It points past itself to Jesus' glory, and the disciples believed.

IF THERE'S TIME

- Jesus later calls himself the bridegroom (Matthew 9:15). Here the true bridegroom provides what the earthly one could not.

Illustration idea: A chef at a family meal expects the last dish to be an afterthought. It turns out to be the best thing on the table.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: They saw real power over creation, from water to wine.
- Listen for: They saw he cares about ordinary people's needs, quietly and without fanfare.

If it drifts: If the talk goes to whether Christians should drink, say it's a fair question for another time. John's point in v11 is what the sign shows about Jesus.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

The best came last, and it came from him. That's who he is.

Short on time? Skip the bridegroom note. Read v10-11 slowly and go to the close.

Bridge → Let verse 11 carry you into the close. This sign shows us who Jesus is.

With One Friend, Over Coffee

ABOUT 30 MINUTES · FOR A FRIEND WHO IS CURIOUS, OR NOT SURE

1. Set the scene. Explain that Jesus has just gathered a few followers. Now he is a guest at a village wedding in Cana, a tiny town in Galilee. Running out of wine meant real shame for the family.
2. Read it together. Read John 2:1-11 aloud once, straight through. Ask, 'What stood out to you?' Then just listen.
3. Notice the details. Point out a few things together: the awkward exchange with his mother, the servants who 'knew,' and the steward praising the wrong man. Ask what they make of Jesus working so quietly.
4. Take the doubt seriously. If they raise the 'story grew in the retelling' objection, give it room. Share the honest answer below, and don't claim more than you can.
5. Leave the question with them. Read v11 again. John says this showed Jesus' glory, meaning who he really is. Ask, 'What do you think it shows about him?' Let them keep that question. There's no need to answer it now.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

“Isn't this just a story that grew each time it was told?”

That's a fair worry. But look at what John includes: an obscure town, a slightly awkward moment with Jesus' mother, and a steward who never finds out what happened. Those details are not how you'd embellish a legend. John also names the servants as the ones who knew. You still have to weigh whether you trust him as a witness.

“Why would God bother with wine at a party?”

That's part of the surprise. Jesus' first sign isn't in a temple. It's in an ordinary family's embarrassing moment. It suggests he cares about everyday life, not only 'religious' things.

“Wasn't he rude to his mother?”

It sounds sharp in English. But 'Woman' was a respectful address in that culture, and he uses it tenderly toward her later, from the cross. He's saying his timing is his own, and then he still meets the need.

“Is this saying drinking is fine?”

Wine was a normal part of a wedding then. The story isn't a lesson about alcohol. John's focus is on what the sign reveals about Jesus. Scripture elsewhere does warn against drunkenness.

Evergreen Principles

Four standards every week. The rest rotate: each lesson brings the few that fit its passage best.

EVERY LESSON

1. Pray before you prepare

Teaching the Bible is spiritual work first (John 15:5).

If you're new: Pray for your class by name during the week.

If you've taught for years: Pray for the one person you find hardest to reach.

2. Study the text first

Understand the passage yourself before any help.

If you're new: Read it in two translations; write your own questions first.

If you've taught for years: Don't lean on old notes. What did you miss last time?

3. Teach one big idea

People remember one sentence, not four points.

If you're new: Write it in 12 words or fewer before anything else.

If you've taught for years: Test every story against it. If it doesn't serve it, cut it.

4. Point to Christ

All of Scripture points to him (Luke 24:27).

If you're new: Ask: what does this show about Jesus?

If you've taught for years: Show grace as the reason for obedience, not just the rule.

FOR THIS LESSON

1. Let the Bible do the talking

The details in v6-11 carry the meaning without much help from us.

If you're new: Read each section aloud before explaining it. Keep asking, 'What does the text actually say here?'

If you've taught for years: Resist sermonizing on law and gospel. Let the jars and 'to the brim' make the point themselves.

2. Admit what is hard

Alcohol, Jesus' reply to Mary, and unmet needs can quietly trouble people.

If you're new: Name the 'Woman' question and the wine question briefly and honestly. Then return to v11.

If you've taught for years: Watch faces during v10. Follow up privately with anyone who seems unsettled.

3. Let the passage land the way it lands

This passage shows who Jesus is. It doesn't hand out a to-do list.

If you're new: End on v11 and the fine wine. Don't add an assignment.

If you've taught for years: Trust silence after the key verse instead of reaching for a strong application.

BEFORE CLASS

- ☐ Read the passage three times
- ☐ Big idea in one sentence
- ☐ Opening and close chosen
- ☐ Know what you'll cut
- ☐ Handouts, pens, extra Bibles
- ☐ Prayed for the class by name

Openings, Closings & Hard Moments

Pick one opening and one close; rotate so class doesn't get predictable.

OPENINGS

- ask a real-life question: When have you run out of something at the worst possible moment, with everyone watching?
- use an object: Set an empty wine glass or pitcher on the table. Ask what it would mean to a host halfway through a week-long wedding.
- start in the text: Read the steward's line in v10 first. Ask, 'Who is he really praising, and does he know it?'

CLOSINGS

- call back to the opening: Return to the moment of running out. In this story, that's exactly where Jesus showed his glory.
- allow quiet reflection: Read v11 slowly. Then give thirty seconds of silence to consider what this sign shows about Jesus.
- send them out with a verse: "You have saved the fine wine until now!" (John 2:10). Say it together as you leave.

WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- Someone in recovery, or someone who grew up with a drinking parent, goes quiet at v10's 'after the guests are drunk.': Acknowledge it gently. The story isn't praising drunkenness. It's showing Jesus meeting a family's need. Keep the focus on him, and check in with that person privately afterward.
- Someone who has drifted says, 'My wine ran out and nothing happened.': Don't rush to fix it. Admit that John records this sign without promising the same outcome in every crisis. Point to what the passage does say: Jesus cares, and his glory is real. Offer to talk more later.
- Silence after a question: Wait. Then rephrase simpler, or ask them to talk to a neighbor first.
- One person dominates: "Thanks. Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet." Talk privately if it continues.
- A question you can't answer: Say so, write it down, bring an answer next week.
- A tangent takes over: "Great question. Let's catch it after class so we can finish the passage."

READ THIS WEEK

- Isaiah 25:6-9 (a prophet's picture of God's coming feast of choice wine)
- John 4:46-54 (Jesus' second sign, also in Cana)
- Matthew 9:14-17 (Jesus calls himself the bridegroom and speaks of new wine)

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/john/2-1-11/lesson

The First Sign: Fine Wine Saved Until Now

JOHN 2:1-11 (BSB) · WHO DO YOU SAY I AM? · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: "He thus revealed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." John 2:11

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus saves the fine wine until now, showing who he is.

1. THEY HAVE NO MORE WINE · JOHN 2:1-5

- A village wedding runs dry. It is a real shame for the families.
- Mary brings the need to Jesus. Jesus answers that his hour has not yet come.
- Mary does not argue. She points the servants to him.

Jesus replied, "My _____ has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Do _____ He tells you."

Discuss: Mary just says, "They have no more wine." What does it say about her that she brings this small, embarrassing problem to Jesus?

2. FILLED TO THE BRIM · JOHN 2:6-8

- Six big stone jars stood there for Jewish washing rites.
- Jesus gives plain orders: fill them, then draw some out.
- The servants obey fully before they see anything happen.

The jars had been set there for the Jewish rites of _____.

So they filled them to the _____.

Discuss: The servants carried plain water to the man in charge of the feast. What might they have been thinking on the walk over?

3. HIS GLORY REVEALED · JOHN 2:9-11

- The master of the banquet tastes water that has become wine.
- He is amazed: "You have saved the fine wine until now!"
- John calls it the first sign. It revealed Jesus' glory.

He thus revealed His _____.

And His disciples _____ in Him.

Discuss: The master of the banquet praises the wrong person, the bridegroom. The servants knew the truth. What do you think the disciples saw that made them believe?

Read this week: Isaiah 25:6-9 (a prophet's picture of God's coming feast of choice wine) · John 4:46-54 (Jesus' second sign, also in Cana) · Matthew 9:14-17 (Jesus calls himself the bridegroom and speaks of new wine)

For Kids: The First Sign: Fine Wine Saved Until Now

JOHN 2:1-11 · NAME: _____

Big idea: Jesus gives the very best.

1. PUT THE STORY IN ORDER! NUMBER THE BOXES.

- ☐ The water becomes the best wine.
- ☐ Mary tells Jesus about it.
- ☐ Jesus goes to a wedding party.
- ☐ Servants fill six jars with water.
- ☐ The wine runs out.

2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

Jesus' mother, Mary: happy · sad · worried

The servants: happy · sad · worried

The master of the banquet: happy · sad · worried

Jesus' disciples: happy · sad · worried

3. WORD SEARCH

S V F O R C O N N
E H H B V S Y B K
R W E D D I N G C
V W Y J N B K B A
A A H A W U C R N
N T P R I H U I A
T E F S N H R M S
S R G R E D V P R
O P G L O R Y S Y

WEDDING · WINE · WATER · JARS · SERVANTS · GLORY · CANA · BRIM

4. SECRET CODE

1=E 2=F 3=I 4=L 5=N 6=O 7=T 8=U 9=W

2 3 5 1 9 3 5 1 8 5 7 3 4 5 6 9

5. DRAW IT!

Draw six big stone jars filled to the very top. Show the servants carrying some to the man in charge.

6. MEMORY VERSE

“He thus revealed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.” John 2:11 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

Jesus showed his glory when he _____. _____