

## At This Table

John 2:1-12

### Wedding at Cana

Hey Friends- Welcome to a new series, At This Table. It is an early summer series about imitating Jesus in the way he acted at tables. When Jesus wanted to connect deeply, it was often at a Table. Whether at Mary and Marthas place, the home of a Pharisee or the last supper, many significant moments happened at tables. Now our series comes with a challenge that I will give later in the message. And I want to ask you what kind of a spiritual challenge do you want this summer? Pick Easy, medium or hard.

#### **Challenge for the summer – Easy, Medium, or Hard?**

**So easy is for people who are just in a crisis, life is overwhelming and you have no capacity. Medium is for most people who are doing average well and Hard is for people who are hungry for more of Jesus, hungry for the kingdom of God and eager for personal transformation. Turn to the person next to you and tell them which challenge you want.**

Have you ever thought about the gift of food? I am a fan of food. Some people have a dysfunctional relationship with food, but that is not my problem. My problem is that I have a VERY functional relationship with food. I love it in all forms, ethnic forms, cheesy forms, casserole forms, grilled forms, dessert forms... I am just a food guy.

When I was a sophomore in college, I actually thought about food as a gift for the first time. I was sent, along with 100 student leaders in a leadership camp, on a “Retreat of Silence” – 3 hours alone with God. I didn’t know how I would make it. They sent us with a sack lunch – just sandwiches and trail mix and an apple – funny I still remember that – And part of our exercise was to eat slowly. Enjoy each taste and texture. Thank God for every bite. Actually thinking about my food was amazing. I thought “God is so good – to give us smells and tastebuds and teeth and a supersensitive tongue to experience food as it goes down.” Since then, experiencing ethnic foods from around the world. Thousands of basic meals, and dozens of really nice or really exotic meals that delight the senses.

But our need for food also drives us to community. Preparing food is hard work! Can the family chefs say amen? So, for efficiency sake, every culture has someone or someones who are designated to prepare the food and everyone gathers around it. We do this because we need nourishment. But God also knew that we would need each other. Food is a part of his design for community.

And then some of these food preparers become artists in their field. You call them grandma! Since grandma has made 1000 mistakes in the kitchen, her food is so good. And an industry where you pay people to prepare food – the restaurant industry. And on and on.

So, we have sustenance, community, and art all combined into a daily experience called a meal. I dare say that more transformational conversations have happened around meals than any other format. Jesus knew this, so he showed up at meals all the time.

In fact, his coming out party was a party. A wedding. At Cana of Galilee. Oh, you don't know where Cana is? Fortunately for you, I have [a MAP!](#) Just a short hike from Jesus' ministry headquarters of Capernaum is Cana. Right between his hometown of Nazareth and Capernaum. Apparently, these were some family friends because Jesus' mother was there as well. Here is the story:

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

<sup>4</sup>"Woman,<sup>[a]</sup> why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

<sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

<sup>6</sup>Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

<sup>8</sup>Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, <sup>9</sup>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 <sup>10</sup>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."

<sup>11</sup>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.

Let me throw out a few observations here. First, it was Jesus' first public miracle. It was his coming out party. In fact, you get the sense that Jesus did not really want to go public yet, when he told his mom "My hour has not yet come."

Now, I speculate that Jesus did miracles that Mary knew about – lets say private miracles – and this is why she came to him. She knew that he had the power to solve a problem.

Second, notice that Jesus calls her “woman” – now if I called my mom “woman” – like “Happy Mother’s day woman.” It is a little harsh... impersonal. But in the Greek, this is actually an endearing term. (Soft voice “woman”). He is showing respect... which really plays out if he is acting against his own intuitions to help his mom.

But peek a little deeper here. Some scholars suggest that this echoes back to the garden of Eden where the woman prodded the man to the first sin. Just maybe, Jesus is giving a clue that here the woman is prodding the man in the first act of redemption... the first miracle that points to the kingdom and starts the ball rolling to the cross and resurrection.

She actually does not wait for the approval of the son of God... cuz he is also the son of Mary. Maybe the only person in the world who can get away with it. She just turns to the servants “Do whatever he tells you.” And walks away... leaving Jesus in that awkward moment to make a career changing decision.

OK... now it is really getting exciting... verse 6. Six stone water Jars, 20-30 gallons, made for ceremonial washing. OK, so Jesus makes not just a little, but like 150 GALLONS of wine! **150 gallons!**

**Ceremonial washing – Leviticus** – Did you notice in v. 6 what the jars were for?

Ceremonial Washing. So, whenever there was a moment of being unclean – remember Leviticus? – there was ceremonial washing to get back with God. These jars represent the laws needed to get right with God. And they were good, but Jesus came to bring something better. Just like water is good, but Jesus turns it into really, really good wine.

**6 – incomplete** – And did you notice the number 6? You know what that is for, right? 7 is the number that means “complete” or “whole” in the Bible and is “Just short of complete.” It is another reference to the old covenant compared to the new.

**Wine – transformation** – And when Jesus brings the new... boy does he bring it. He brings out the wine. And not just a little wine. 150 gallons is 750 bottles of wine. I don’t know how big this wedding is, but Jesus may be leaning into generosity here. And, it is not nasty cheap wine. Not cooking wine. No Milwaukee’s best. Like Dom Perignon or something from France (I am a wine ignoramus, but you get the idea.)

OK, sidenote. Some people are saying “wait... if Jesus makes wine, why are some Christians so uptight about drinking?” Here is what the Bible says: No getting drunk, No disobeying the law – which is underaged drinking, but a glass of wine or two for dinner or a wedding is part of enjoying the abundance of God’s creation.

But back to the main point. Jesus is providing, but not just a little. He is starting with water and ending with tons and tons of the best wine anyone has ever tasted.

So what if he starts with a different raw material. Could he turn a stone into a steak? Yup. How about a saltine cracker into a hundred loaves of sourdough? You bet. How about a human being...

Friends, Jesus is the transformation specialist. He is so good at doing this. He starts with your wrecked and simple soul and makes you into something so beautiful that if the eye could apprehend it, you would die because of the sheer beauty.

If he turns water into wine, and the Old Covenant of law into the New Covenant of grace. Oh man, he can take humans and turn them into eternity based, resurrection powered, world shaping transformation vehicles. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come. Are you tracking with me? Do you believe this is true?

### **Human Side**

Now, lets look at the human element. Jesus has saved a lot of people's bacon here. I mean, in the ancient world, wedding feasts often lasted days. Maybe the most embarrassing thing as a host is to run out of food and drink and have everyone say... this party blows. I'm going home ya cheapskate.

The parent's of the bride reputation is on the line. You know who else? The master of the banquet – the party coordinator. Who else? The wine maker or wine steward. Who else? Mary... who said "let me see what I can do." Jesus did not do this to show off. He wasn't looking to do something super cool as a party trick. He really cared about people.

This is why he did the miracle. Love. Love. Love. Interesting that some of the first people to witness a miracle were the servants... then the wine taster. But the Bride and Groom the Mom and Dad, the hired help... they all avoided certain social disaster. He loved them.

This is why he shows up at weddings. I'll bet he was an incredible conversationalist. I'll be he danced. I'll bet he laughed. I'll bet he hugged and high fived and played the wedding games of the day.

Did you ever think of this? They were all lost people. Good people, mind you. Probably good Jewish people mostly. But they were locked in the law. Like those ceremonial jugs. And while those symbolized the Old Covenant, the wine of the new covenant was coming. The wine that represents Jesus' blood. The blood of Jesus that is both abundant, and the highest quality ever... just like the wine.

And Jesus knew that he was the only hope for this whole wedding party. So he went to the wedding. And to Matthew's party. And to the Pharisees house. And to chief tax collector Zaccaeus house, and to Mary and Marthas. And at each place he sat at a table with people and changed their lives.

Friends, we are just like Jesus in that we are surrounded by lost people. And every one of them goes to a table to eat three times a day. Funny, sometimes I hear Christians say "I have nothing in common with the worldly around me." And I just ask "Do ya eat?" Guys, our number one way to enter into the conversation with people who don't know Jesus is to share meals.

Our dream is that this summer, we will have the **summer of 1000 tables.**

**Easy: Once this summer. Medium: Once a Month, Hard: Once a week**

I want to challenge you to share meals with people who don't know Jesus. This might be a barbecue with your neighbors. It might be a lunch with coworkers. It might be hotdog at a golf course with an old college roommate. The important thing is not the context, but the relational proximity to non-Christians.

For the next six weeks, we will remind you to be intentional in this. So now, we are asking you to pray daily, and eat together.

Oh, and one more thing that comes from our passage. When Jesus shows up at a table, he comes to be a blessing. One exercise you can do is to read through Luke – highlight every time Jesus is at a table and ask "How was Jesus a blessing that meal?" There is a healing, an act of service, a prayer, a transformational teaching, an invitation. Every time, Jesus is a blessing. But it is seemingly always in the moment.

OK, now I have tripled up on my challenge:

- **Pray daily**
- **Eat together**
- **Be a blessing**

Seriously, if you take the "Hard" path and do this once a week – eating together and being blessing, you'll see dramatic transformation in your opportunity to love people far from God.

Let me give some blessing examples from the last month. One is just sincere compliments. For the Dads in our neighborhood, I love to catch them doing something right with their kid and just say – You are doing a great job as a Dad. They don't know how good they have it, but they will thank you in ten years. You know, guys love to hear from

older guys that they are doing a great job. OH, since I am like the old Dad in the neighborhood, that is meaningful.

One of the kids in our neighborhood was just sitting alone looking at bugs, so I pulled out a frisbee and threw it at him... I mean next to him. We played for a while and the Spirit prompted me "Invite him to the volleyball game." I had four tickets and three people going, so Kelle, Haiven and I just invited him to come along. He chatted us up for two hours that night and I ended by telling him "you are a great conversationalist." He said "Yeah, most people just say I talk too much." I told him that's what people told me when I was his age.

Kelle heard about a kid in our neighborhood who was in the hospital, and she brought a meal to the family. Our bushes were overgrowing the fence so I asked our neighbor if I could invade their backyard and cut them down. You see the idea? Not that hard. Just look for opportunities to make lives around you better. They will see the life of Jesus when you do that.

OK, so got it? **Pray daily, Eat together, be a blessing.** (same slide) There is more, but you will have to wait til next week to hear about that.

*Possible moment of silence to reflect on what God wants you to do.*

**Pray for one more**