

February 5 – February 11, 2012
Tough Questions, Straight Answers: “Seeing is Believing”
Daily *Life Notes* for Individuals and Couples

As we study the gospel of John together during 2012, we encourage you to find time to sit and read the entire gospel as a letter from John to you. You can read John in one sitting or read 3-4 chapters a day until you're done. Allow John's telling of God's story to unfold for you.

At MISSION, we are working together throughout 2012 to deepen our understanding of God, as we explore tough questions and expect straight answers. We all wrestle with ideas and truths we cannot fully comprehend, and that's a good thing. In fact, the more we get to know God, the more we'll encounter teachings that seem difficult. Pastor Mark says we are in great company. Even those who walked closely with Jesus each day of his public ministry struggled to understand much of what he taught. We invite you email Pastor Mark with questions you have about the text at markc@mission68.org.

Our goal, with ***Life Notes***, is to help you question, discover, and draw closer in an intimate, honest, real relationship with our Creator. It is our prayer that you daily experience the love of Father, Son and Spirit during 2012.

The following quote by a beloved professor, pastor and Jesus-follower, Henri Nouwen, helps explain where we're headed and why.

From *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit*, p. 124.

“Only out of the place of solitude and introspection can we hope for community and ministry. The journey inward precedes the journey outward, and the chronology is important. Spiritually, we need to know our selves and God in order to know other people. We need to love our selves and God in order to love each other. Communion with God precedes community with others and ministry in the world. Once the inward journey has begun, we can move outwardly from solitude to community and ministry.”

This week: “*Seeing is Believing*”

Monday

If possible, read John 2:1-11 out loud, and pay attention to key words, phrases or ideas that particularly stand out in this reading. Reading out loud helps us listen differently, and listening for key words, phrases or ideas helps us engage in a new or fresh way to what God is speaking into our lives.

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the

wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, 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 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."

This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Did any key words, phrases or concepts stand out while reading the passage? If so, underline or circle those things that stood out for you or record them in your journal.

This week's passage is all about love and miracles, surprise and glory. It's also about someone wanting something and letting God know her wishes.

Jesus is attending a wedding celebration when his mother asks for a favor. The bridegroom has run out of wine and Mary wants Jesus to do something about the situation. Jesus responds by telling his mother that it isn't their business and it isn't yet his time, but Mary isn't satisfied with that answer. She decides to take the matter a bit into her own hands.

How often are you like Mary?

A great way to begin this week is with some honest evaluation. These questions aren't meant to shame in any way – just to help us see where we sit on the "God can be trusted to take complete care of everything" vs. the "God helps those who help themselves" continuum.

How often do you try to figure out what God wants for your situation before taking matters in to your own hands and asking God to bless your efforts?

Another way of putting this is,

How often do you patiently wait on God to move instead of helping him out just a bit (or a lot)...because you know what's best?

(Feel free to journal some specifics.)

Most of us ask God to behave or respond in a certain way. And we aren't suggesting God minds that, nor is he surprised. We are human beings, and our perspective is locked within those confines. Jesus lived here and experienced everything we experience, but without sin. He sees the bigger picture, and that's difficult for us to see.

Today, write down any situations or relationships that you're struggling to trust to God's care. Be honest about the circumstance and about what you want God to do. Then commit these situations to God, as best you can, and let's see what he reveals to you this week.

Pastor Randy challenged us to do one thing every day this week. He asked us to pray, *"God, show me your glory. Please open my eyes to see all you are doing."* So we'll be praying that prayer every day and we'll be asking, each day, what God has revealed to you.

Spend some quiet moments entering this prayer.

Tuesday

Begin your time today focusing on an assignment Pastor Randy asked us to visit each day.

"God, show me your glory. Please open my eyes to see all you are doing."

Spend some quiet moments entering this prayer and discuss or journal what you've seen God do in the past 24 hours.

Then read the following verses two times, making sure to note any words or phrases that stand out for you.

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

“Dear woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. “My time has not yet come.”

His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Mary’s response is interesting. While she wants Jesus to do something about the shortage of wine, she doesn’t tell him explicitly what to do. This response is worth our reflection. Instead of Mary getting involved in the specifics, she turns to those who are serving and says, *“do whatever he tells you.”*

Think about that statement and you’ll know a little bit more about what we’re praying happens for each person at MISSION this year. We want to help you do whatever God tells you to do. We want to help you learn to spend time alone with God and listen for his voice. We want to help you hear from the Holy Spirit.

“Do whatever he tells you” is an interesting command coming from Mary. She knows that she wants something from her son, but she also knows it’s his ability and personhood she’s relying on, not her own. Mary knows she has no power to provide the wine, but her son does. Her power is simply to tell the servants to do whatever Jesus tells them to do.

What if we only did what we sensed Jesus telling us to do?

What if we could truly live according to his word and the leading of the Holy Spirit?

Journal or talk to God about what you need to hear from him today.

What attitudes, decisions, situations or relationships need God’s attention or wisdom?

How are you tuning in to hear what God has to say?

What do you sense God is saying to you?

If you had to go out and “do whatever he tells you to do” today, what would that look like? What would be different about your life?

Wednesday

Begin your time today focusing on an assignment Pastor Randy asked us to visit each day.

“God, show me your glory. Please open my eyes to see all you are doing.”

Spend some quiet moments entering this prayer and discuss or journal what you’ve seen God do in the past 24 hours.

Now read the passage for this week once again, focusing on the story as if you were right there participating in the event. Perhaps you were one of the servants who knew the water had been turned to wine. Perhaps you were a guest who knew nothing more than the best wine had been served last. Perhaps you were a disciple, watching all this unfold just a short time after you'd encountered Jesus and begun to follow him. Perhaps you were Mary. Perhaps you were the bridegroom...or the bride.

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

"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water;" so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, 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 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."

This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

This particular passage unfolds the first public miracle recorded in Scripture. Jesus turned water into wine for a wedding feast. Though Jesus told his mother it wasn't yet time for him to publicly display this power, she wanted him to respond anyway.

The longing for miracles and prayers that are answered the way we long for them to be answered is part of the relationship we have with Father, Son and Spirit. God sees things we cannot fully see and is not limited by time and space, but we are. We feel personal pain, loss, confusion or frustration or that of someone we love, and we naturally want God to step in and remove or resolve the issue. This is a completely normal reaction. And many times God

does step in and alter the situation or remove the suffering. And many times he does not.

Pastor Randy told us that God is committed to doing the best thing for us – even though we might not see the outcomes as best. God loves us immeasurably, and he responds only out of love, even when we cannot understand his point of view.

Pastor Randy told us about a close friend. This friend's wife and Randy's wife both had cancer, and God healed Randy's wife while his friend's wife died. What was God doing? Did both families receive a miracle, as Pastor Randy suggested? Can you see similar situations in your history?

Pastor Randy shared his belief that miracles happen all around us every day, but sometimes what seems like a miracle to one seems the opposite to another. The promise? God knows what he is doing and he's actually doing his best for us, even though the circumstance might seem like the worst possible outcome.

Journal about some of the times when you've experienced a miracle that you longed for.

Where have you desired and then experienced a miracle?

What were the long-term effects of that miracle in your life?

Now journal about some of those miracles you've longed for but not received. While this is a difficult thing to do, write about those moments when you've thought Jesus has forgotten you or failed you in some way. Think about some of those times when what you wanted seemed to be completely different from what God allowed.

As Pastor Randy taught, sometimes what we want and what God provides are completely different. Jesus ate with his disciples, washed their feet, called them friends and revealed his heart to them, and just a few days later they were devastated when he was crucified on a cross and buried in a tomb. They couldn't see the good at that moment and they struggled deeply, on and off, for many days before they saw God at work in their midst. Had Jesus really disappeared, or was something "bigger" happening that they could not see?

Where have you prayed for a miracle but felt disappointed by what seemed to be no miracle?

When have you felt unsure about what God is doing in your life or the life of someone you love?

When have you felt unsure about God's seeming absence in the midst of your need?

Have you experienced God at work, even in that difficulty or loss or fear?

Can you honestly see his good at work, even in the pain?

Take a few moments and write in your journal about what God has shown you in the difficult times.

Thursday

Begin your time today focusing on an assignment Pastor Randy asked us to visit each day.

“God, show me your glory. Please open my eyes to see all you are doing.”

Spend some quiet moments entering this prayer and discuss or journal what you’ve seen God do in the past 24 hours.

Read the following passage at least two times, looking for words or phrases that catch your attention. Underline or journal anything that stands out for you.

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.”

They did so, 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 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.”

While we can’t know all the purposes behind the stories in the Bible, there are things we can better understand now than they might have understood at the time the narrative stories or letters were written. Though we do not get to experience Jesus here with us in bodily form, we do have a complete Scripture and we know things that many in Jesus’ time didn’t know. Even though we still see dimly as in a mirror (1 Corinthians 13), we do see a bit more clearly than many did in earlier times.

Most commentators see this miracle in Cana as a foreshadowing of the wedding of the lamb (Revelation 19). One day, the lamb (Jesus) will receive his bride (the

Church) and we will all worship together in an unimaginable celebration. But there was an earlier picture given us, the night that we refer to as “the last supper.”

That night, Jesus shared wine and bread with the disciples as symbols of his body and blood (Matthew 26). Jesus committed to them as fully as possible. In fact, John writes in John 13, Jesus showed the disciples the full extent of his love that night. He washed their feet, shared his heart, prepared them for his death and promised the Holy Spirit to be with them and in them until his return (John 13-17). Jesus is the bridegroom, and we are his bride. While we’re away from him at the moment, he saves the best for last.

Jean Vanier, discussing this miracle, writes:

“Jesus leading his disciples to this wedding feast is our hope. He is leading us all to this final, wonderful celebration of love. Our desire for love is not a hoax, awakening in us a thirst for an unattainable, infinite, eternal love that can be quickly crushed by the limits and brokenness in us all. We are not cheated of love; love is possible. In changing the water into wine, Jesus reveals that he wants to change the waters of our broken humanity into the joys of wine - today. In order to be able to do this, Jesus needs our cooperation, just as he needed the faith, trust and hard work of those servants who filled the jars to the brim with water. He needs our trust and our belief. He needs us to work at this inner transformation and to live our humanity to the brim. The ‘eternal’ wedding feast to which Jesus is bringing us is not just the ecstasy that we will live after death; this eternal wedding feast can begin as we enter today into a personal relationship of trust and of friendship with Jesus. This can gradually grow and deepen into a song of songs, where we discover we are beloved of Jesus. He is our beloved.”

We will experience joy and celebration together for eternity, and that will be a gift we can only begin to imagine. But we are living in his kingdom right here, right now as well – not fully experienced yet, but not completely hidden either. Jesus is our bridegroom, and he reveals his love every day.

Journal for as long as you have time today about love.

How does God’s love show up for you each day? When and how do you experience God’s love?

How was Jesus showing love to everyone in the John 2 story?

What, if anything, can you personally apply from this miracle?

Jesus offered his best – through the eyes of the God of the universe who loves us more than we can imagine.

Friday

Read just the final verse of this week’s passage several times.

This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Pastor Randy titled his sermon, “Seeing is Believing.” What did the people see? Scripture says they saw Jesus at work, revealing his glory, even though only a handful likely understood what had happened. But for those who were able to see, they saw glory revealed, and Pastor Randy challenged us all to look for God’s glory revealed each day in some specific way.

“God, show me your glory. Please open my eyes to see all you are doing.”

And he added,

“The more you see his works the greater your faith will be.”

We know that questions like this are often difficult to discuss. It’s much easier to talk about knowledge-based questions than personal experience questions, especially when they involve some of the tougher questions of our faith. But learning to see God at work right here, right now, each day in our very individual lives moves our faith from something that primarily affects our future or our gatherings to something that impacts every thought, every action, every relationship. It takes time and practice to learn to respond to questions of the heart rather than questions of the head, and we want you to know we appreciate you joining us on this journey.

We are each facing difficulties, uncertainties, questions, changes in life or challenges in relationships. Think about the following questions.

Where have you seen God’s glory show up in your life in the past 24 hours?

Where have you wanted to see God’s glory show up but couldn’t find him...couldn’t discern what he is doing in your life right now?

Who, in your life, sees Jesus in a way you long to see Jesus?

Who, in your life, needs to see Jesus the way you’re learning to see Jesus?

Where in your life do you need to invite Jesus to be present? (Perhaps there's an area of your life or a relationship that you try to distance from your spiritual awareness or that of others.)

Saturday

We want to encourage you to let Saturdays be a “mini Sabbath” moment. If Saturday is a work day for you, simply exchange this day in **Life Notes** for the day you have off. It's really important to learn to simply “be” with Jesus, with yourself, with those you love, without an “agenda.”

Sabbath simply means “cease” and “rest.” So, today, spend a few moments truly resting with God the Father, Son and Spirit. “Cease” all of the detailed work and worries that creep into your life everyday.

You might take a walk or sit outside. You might need a long period of physical rest. You might listen to music or sing a song that comes to mind. You might journal. You might laugh or cry with God about things that have happened in your life this week. You might appreciate creation, read a book, share a meal with family or friends, watch a movie. Just let the time unfold. Sense God's love for you; seek his peace and pursue it.

Discover Jesus in all you do. He'll delight and amaze you.

This weekend's sermon will be on marriage. Ask God to begin to open your heart to understanding more about the gift of marriage.

February 5 – February 11, 2012
Tough Questions, Straight Answers: “Seeing is Believing”
Life Notes for Families

Your children are being taught wonderful lessons about God in their respective programs at MISSION, and we’d love to encourage you to continue the conversation from Pastor Mark’s sermon throughout the week. A great way to continue the conversation is to simply ask questions and listen to your child’s response. Some great times to ask questions during the week include mealtimes, car rides (when you’re not competing with iPods and the radio), during play moments or maybe at bedtime. Questions provide us with amazing opportunities to know our children better, no matter what their age, and we’re hoping you’ll share with us some of what your family learns together. We are praying that 2012 takes each MISSION family farther down the road of loving Jesus.

This week: The following suggestions are various discussions you can have together throughout the week. These discussions will lead you down lots of different paths, and the end result will be learning more about Jesus, about following Jesus and about each other. There isn’t an order to the discussions – so look through and choose what interests you most!

Miracles all around us...and in us

Those who write dictionaries do not consider spiritual realities. They just present the facts...the plain facts, as they understand them. So here is dictionary.com defining “miracle.”

1. an effect or extraordinary event in the physical world that surpasses all known human or natural powers and is ascribed to a supernatural cause.
2. such an effect or event manifesting or considered as a work of God.
3. a wonder; marvel.
4. a wonderful or surpassing example of some quality

As believers, we’d have to add something...something seems missing. What do you think?

Maybe...

5. the inexplicable, inward transformation of a follower of Jesus

As a family, discuss the idea of a miracle. Remember, as Pastor Randy said, a miracle isn’t just God doing what you want him to do because he is able! A miracle is God doing what he does naturally, just because he loves us and because, at that moment, God sees his action (or inaction at times) as the best thing for us. Think about your life and everything you experience. You might come up with a very long list.

In your own words, what is a miracle?

Have you ever seen or experienced a miracle first-hand? Think about every aspect of your life – what happens outside, what happens in a friendship or family relationship, what happens in your own heart, what happens physically, what happens through decisions that get made by others, what happens through prayer – see how many things you can think of together and talk about the miracles you've witnessed.

"Seeing is Believing"

This weekend, Pastor Randy read us the account of the very first public, recorded miracle! And it all happened at a wedding.

What's the best wedding you've ever been to? Why? What did you like about it?

What do you think weddings are supposed to be like?

What makes weddings fun? What makes them feel like a celebration?

Now read the following together as a family.

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

"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, 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 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."

This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

It's a great story. Jesus performed his first miracle at a wedding – and that would have been fun.

There's something to this story that we don't often talk about. And here it is.

Did you know that Jesus is called a bridegroom?

He is. Jesus is referred to as a bridegroom in several places in the Bible, but let's focus on Revelation 19: 6-9.

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

“Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.”

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

Interesting, yes? One day, when we are all together in eternity, there will be this big wedding feast and it will be Jesus marrying all of us – the “C” Church – followers that he loves so much. That will be a party like none other.

Secret Gifts of Love

Start this discussion reading the passage together from this week's sermon.

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

“Dear woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. “My time has not yet come.”

His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, 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 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."

This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

If you didn't notice, Jesus does this miracle sort of in secret. Not many people know what he's done, but they are all blessed or happy as a result of his action.

Have you ever done something nice for someone and they didn't even know you'd done it? Have you ever secretly made someone happy?

If you have, talk about it.

How did it feel to do something for someone without them even knowing?

Has someone ever done something special for you without taking the credit?

This might be harder to think about since, technically, you wouldn't really know!) If you're aware of something, talk about how you felt receiving a gift from someone else.

Is there someone who you could make happy right now by doing something special for him or her without the person even knowing? (Kids in the Orange program...this is honor!)

Maybe your family can help you think of fun ways to bless someone in your life.

Pastor Randy's Homework

Pastor Randy gave us an assignment, and here it is. He asked us to pray this prayer every day and then talk about what we see God doing.

"God, show me your glory. Please open my eyes to see all you are doing."

A great way to connect as a family this week is to pray this prayer together every day and then talk about all that God is doing.

February 5 – February 11, 2012
Tough Questions, Straight Answers: “Seeing is Believing”
Life Notes for Missional Communities

(supplemental reading: The Gospel of John by Paul Louis Metzger)

Pages 55-58 of Metzger supplement this week’s sermon materials. To summarize, Jesus is at a wedding feast when his mother asks a favor – one that he isn’t ready to grant. But Mary really wants this favor, and so our Lord performs the first recorded public miracle.

This week’s **Life Notes** give you many options, but you might not make it all the way through the material. It doesn’t matter. The important thing is to focus, as a Missional Community, on what you sense the Holy Spirit is doing in your lives and in your community. We want the notes to support you, not detract from how God is moving in your midst. This is a week of surprise; so the last thing we want to do is miss God’s surprises by trying to follow some notes.

Note: As we go through **Life Notes**, you’ll see blocks of questions throughout the outline for you to consider. Read each block of questions aloud as you come across them and allow the question that stands out to you, whether difficult or not, to be the one you respond to and share with the group.

A Brief Discussion on Spiritual Formation

The following quote comes from the writings of a beloved professor, pastor and Jesus-follower named Henri Nouwen. In *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit*, p. 124, Nouwen writes,

“Only out of the place of solitude and introspection can we hope for community and ministry. The journey inward precedes the journey outward, and the chronology is important. Spiritually, we need to know our selves and God in order to know other people. We need to love our selves and God in order to love each other. Communion with God precedes community with others and ministry in the world. Once the inward journey has begun, we can move outwardly from solitude to community and ministry.”

Talk for a moment about your own spiritual journey and the community journey.

Do you feel like you’re growing in your own intimacy with Father, Son and Spirit?

Do you feel like you’re growing in true community with each other?

The Word

Invite someone in the group to read John 2:1-11 out loud, and ask everyone to pay attention for key words, phrases or ideas that particularly stand out for them in this reading. Learning to listen for key words, phrases or ideas helps us listen in a new or fresh way to what God is speaking into our lives right now. We'll be asking you to read this way all year, as we move God's presence from paper or conversation into our very lives.

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

"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, 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 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."

This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Did any key words, phrases or concepts stand out while reading the passage? If so, share them with the group. Maybe begin by sharing why you think John chose to include this particular miracle in his book.

Miracles Around Us

This particular passage unfolds the first public miracle recorded in Scripture. Jesus turned water into wine for a wedding feast. Though Jesus told his mother it wasn't yet time for him to publicly display this power, she wanted him to respond anyway.

The longing for miracles and prayers that are answered the way we long for them to be answered is part of the relationship we have with Father, Son and Spirit. God sees things we cannot fully see and is not limited by time and space, but we are. We feel personal pain, loss, confusion or frustration or that of someone we love, and we naturally want God to step in and remove or resolve the issue. This is a completely normal reaction. And many times God does step in and alter the situation or remove the suffering. And many times he does not.

Pastor Randy told us that God is committed to doing the best thing for us – even though we might not see the outcomes as best. God loves us immeasurably, and he responds only out of love, even when we cannot understand his point of view.

Pastor Randy told us about a close friend. This friend's wife and Randy's wife both had cancer, and God healed Randy's wife while his friend's wife died. What was God doing? Was he showing everyone love? He was offering his best – through the eyes of the God of the universe who loves us more than we can imagine.

Step into this tough subject with each other. Be honest, be a good listener, don't try to "fix" any one else's situation. Just be with each other and reflect.

Where have you desired and then experienced a miracle?

Where have you prayed for a miracle but felt disappointed in what seemed to be no miracle?

In what ways have you seen good come out of some historical or current suffering, unfulfilled need or unresolved issue in your life?

Jesus didn't work alone.

While Jesus could have just filled the stone vessels with wine and skipped the part where he asked the servants to fill them with water, he chose, instead, to include others in this miracle.

Can you think of a time you've been used by God to be part of a miracle for someone else? Do you think you were aware at the time? Do you think the other person(s) was aware at the time?

Can you think of a time someone else has been used by God to be part of a miracle in your life? Were you aware of that involvement at the time? Do you think the other person was aware?

Where is God showing up?

Pastor Randy titled his sermon, "Seeing is Believing." What did the people see? Scripture says they saw Jesus at work, revealing his glory, even though only a handful likely understood what had happened. But for those who were able to see, they saw glory revealed, and Pastor Randy challenged us all to look for God's glory revealed each day in some specific way.

"God, show me your glory. Please open my eyes to see all you are doing."

And he added,

"The more you see his works the greater your faith will be."

We know that questions like this are often difficult to discuss. It's much easier to talk about knowledge-based questions than personal experience questions, especially when they involve some of the tougher questions of our faith. But learning to see God at work right here, right now, each day in our very individual lives moves our faith from something that primarily affects our future or our gatherings to something that impacts every thought, every action, every relationship. It takes time and practice to learn to respond to questions of the heart rather than questions of the head, and we want you to know we appreciate you joining us in this journey.

We are each facing difficulties, uncertainties, questions, changes in life or challenges in relationships. Think about the following questions and share with the group.

Where have you seen God's glory show up in your life in the past 24 hours?

Where have you wanted to see God's glory show up but couldn't find him...couldn't discern what he is doing in your life right now?

Who, in your life, needs to see Jesus the way you're learning to see Jesus?

Where in your life do you need to invite Jesus to be present? (Perhaps there's an area of your life or a relationship that you try to distance from your more spiritual side.)

For Missional Communities following a different track than Pastor Mark's sermons.

Please allow 15-20 minutes for those in your group to respond to this two-sided question:

Where have you seen God's glory show up in your life in the past 24 hours?

Where have you wanted to see God's glory show up but couldn't find him...couldn't discern what he is doing in your life right now?

Next week's sermon will be on marriage.

Thank you for taking time to form together around questions and personal sharing. Responding to questions has long been a formative experience, and we appreciate you stepping in to this kind of intimacy with each other. Your honesty opens up dialogue about God and our response to God's presence and daily work in our lives. We prefer answers, but sometimes God is best understood as we share in questions together.