

Session 8: Cana

They have no wine

LEADER PREPARATION GUIDE

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim. The sealed guesses open: the group discovers why Jesus calls his mother 'Woman,' watches the queen mother's office finally work as designed, and learns from Mary's two sentences the whole grammar of intercession.

Catholic Touchstone. At Cana, Mary's intercession and the sign of the messianic wedding feast (CCC 2618; 1613).

What You Need to Know

Tonight is the study's hinge, and it runs on ceremony as much as content. The sealed My Guess boxes from Take-Home 1 open tonight. Run it with some gravity: collect the sheets at the door, and at the marked moment in the plan have each participant read their own guess aloud, without commentary, before any discussion. Seven weeks of accumulated typology will do the grading; most groups discover that their early guesses ('he was being distant,' 'it was a cultural thing') now sound like they were written by different people. That felt distance IS the lesson: it measures how far the study has taught them to read.

The 'Woman' resolution, stated for the leader in full: Jesus' address gathers Session 2's discovery and seals it. In John's Genesis-shaped Gospel ('In the beginning,' the counted days, the third-day wedding), addressing his mother as 'Woman' at the opening of his signs identifies her as *the* woman of Genesis 3:15, the one set in enmity with the serpent, mother of the conquering seed; and his linking of her request to 'my hour' ties her, from the first sign, to the Cross where the crushing happens and where he will say the word again (John 19:26). Tell the group plainly that one payoff remains sealed: there is a third 'Woman' text in Scripture's last book, and it waits three more sessions. The ache is intentional.

Thread D also resolves tonight. In Session 4 the group watched the gebirah's office promise more than Bathsheba's story delivered: 'I will not refuse you,' followed by refusal, because the request was corrupt and the king merely shrewd. At Cana the office finally works as designed: the King's mother notices a need (John records no request made to her) and brings it to the King with no agenda but mercy ('They have no wine'), and the King, after words that sound like refusal, grants more than was asked: not a resupply but a sign, the first, manifesting his glory (John 2:11). The type limped; the fulfillment runs.

Handle *ti emoi kai soi*, 'What have you to do with me?' (literally 'what to me and to you'), with complete honesty, because the steelman owns this phrase. It is a genuine Semitic idiom of disjunction; everywhere else it marks distance or protest (Judges 11:12; 1 Kings 17:18; and on demons' lips, Mark 1:24). Jesus really is marking a distinction: something is changing between Nazareth's mother and son; his 'hour,' the Passion, now governs everything. But exegesis reads outcomes, and the outcome is that he does what her word set in motion. Whatever the idiom marks, it does not mark refusal. Mary's response is the most confident sentence in the Gospels: 'Do whatever he tells you' (John 2:5), her last recorded words in Scripture, and the whole of Marian devotion in five words.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Wine as the sign of the age to come: the prophets pour it. 'The mountains shall drip sweet wine' (Amos 9:13); 'a feast of wine on the lees... he will swallow up death for ever' (Isaiah 25:6–8). When the

Messiah's first sign is a hundred and twenty to a hundred and eighty gallons of the best wine at a wedding, a first-century Jew hears the prophets uncorked: the messianic banquet has begun, and death's defeat is on the menu.

The wedding itself is typology: Israel's God is her bridegroom (Isaiah 62:4–5; Hosea 2:19–20). John stations the Bridegroom at a wedding for his first sign and lets the steward unknowingly announce him: 'you have kept the good wine until now' (John 2:10). Revelation will finish the figure at another wedding supper, but that is for later sessions.

'Do whatever he tells you' has an Old Testament shadow many commentators hear: in Egypt's famine, Pharaoh tells the hungry, 'Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do' (Genesis 41:55). The group discovers the echo tonight; present it as an echo, weighed with both texts open: the mother directs the servants to the true provider as Pharaoh directed Egypt to Joseph, and in both stories obedience to the steward of God's abundance turns scarcity to plenty.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AUGUSTINE

Preaching on Cana, Augustine teaches, in substance, that Jesus' answer does not repudiate his mother but distinguishes his two births: what he is about to do as a sign flows from his divinity, which he did not receive from Mary, while the hour of the Cross belongs to the weakness he did receive from her; and there, at that hour, he will acknowledge her from the Cross.

Tractates on the Gospel of John, on John 2 (summary)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

St. Bernard teaches, in substance, that grace comes to us from the Father through Christ, and that God willed to let it reach us also through Mary as through an aqueduct: not the source, not the reservoir, but a channel the Source freely built, so that no one need fear to approach.

Sermon for the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin (De aquaeductu), summary

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II

St. John Paul II teaches, in substance, that at Cana Mary appears as the first believer who places herself between her Son and human need, presenting to him not demands but the simple fact of it, and that her 'Do whatever he tells you' makes her intercession inseparable from obedience: she never points anywhere but at him.

Redemptoris Mater 21–22 (summary)

Catechism Connection

CCC 2618 teaches that the Gospel shows us Mary praying and interceding in faith: at Cana 'the mother of Jesus asks her Son for the needs of a wedding feast,' which the Catechism reads as the sign of another feast, the wedding feast of the Lamb, where the Church receives the Bridegroom's wine.

CCC 1613 notes that the Church attaches great importance to Jesus' presence at Cana as a confirmation of the goodness of marriage and an announcement that marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ's presence. Cite both as written; the Genesis 41 echo and the gebirah resolution are, respectively, a commonly observed textual echo and this study's own thread architecture, and should be labeled so.

Thread Watch

THREAD WATCH (LEADER ONLY)

THREAD A PARTIAL RESOLUTION + CEREMONY MECHANICS. Collect sealed sheets at the door. At the marked point: each person reads their own guess aloud, no commentary, straight through the room. Then run the Build questions; the resolution lands inside question 3. After it lands, say explicitly: 'One Woman text remains, in the Bible's last book. Three sessions.' That keeps Thread A alive though resolved in its Johannine half. If someone's guess anticipated Revelation 12, honor it by name tonight and still hold the text.

THREAD D RESOLVES tonight inside question 4; call back Session 4 by name ('remember the request Solomon refused') so the payoff is felt as payoff.

Thread B (the lost Ark) and Thread C (mother of all living): dormant; do not touch.

Pastoral note: a session about weddings and wine can quietly sting the single, the divorced, and those in recovery. The prophets' wine is God's joy, not alcohol's; say one sentence to that effect naturally, and keep the feast imagery pointed at the Eucharist where it belongs.

Session Goals

1. Sealed-guess ceremony completed with every guess read aloud and honored.
2. Group can state the Woman resolution in their own words and knows one text remains.
3. Group can contrast Bathsheba's failed petition with Mary's granted one and explain what changed.
4. Group can defend 'Jesus honored, not rebuffed, his mother at Cana' against the idiom evidence honestly stated.

Timed Plan (75–90 minutes)

Segment	Minutes
Welcome and opening prayer	5
THE OPENING OF THE GUESSES (ceremony)	10
Win questions	5
Build: the scene read whole (John 2:1–12); the prophets' wine	15
Build: the Woman resolution	15
Build: the queen mother's request that worked (Thread D)	10
Build: steelman and answer	15
Send, Live It, memory verse, closing prayer	10

If short on time: Cut the Genesis 41:55 discovery to a leader-stated echo and trim the prophets' wine to Amos 9:13 alone. The ceremony, the Woman resolution, and the steelman are untouchable tonight.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Opening Prayer

Leader prays: Father, at Cana your Son revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him. Tonight, as we open what we sealed seven weeks ago, reveal to us how much your word has taught us, and give us the faith of the servants who filled the jars to the brim. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win: Opening Questions

1. Before we open anything: what do you remember about writing your guess seven weeks ago? What did you know then, and what do you know now?
2. When has someone noticed a need of yours and acted on it before you asked? What did that do to you?

Build: Into the Text

1. Read John 2:1–12 aloud, slowly, all of it. First observations only: what details surprise you now that would not have surprised you in Session 1?

Read aloud: John 2:1–12

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Let the group harvest; expected finds: 'on the third day' closing John's counted week (Session 2's Dig Deeper); the mother of Jesus named first, before Jesus and the disciples; the address 'Woman'; 'my hour'; six stone jars for Jewish purification repurposed for glory; the enormous quantity; 'the first of his signs... and his disciples believed in him.'

Then one discovery clue: 'Two prophets promised days when wine would be the sign of God's victory, one of them in the last chapter of Amos, one in Isaiah 25. Find either.' Surface Amos 9:13 and Isaiah 25:6–8 (where the feast of wine sits beside the swallowing up of death for ever). The first sign is the prophets' banquet beginning.

2. THE RESOLUTION. Guesses have been read. Now assemble the answer the study has been building since night one: why does Jesus call his mother 'Woman'? Let the group construct it from Sessions 1, 2, and 5 before opening the box.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Because John has rebuilt Genesis around her. His Gospel opens 'In the beginning,' counts its days to a third-day wedding, and there, at the head of the new-creation week, Jesus names his mother with the title God used at the first battle line: 'I will put enmity between you and *the woman*' (Genesis 3:15). She is the Woman of the promise, mother of the seed who crushes the serpent.

And the address is fused to 'my hour': the hour, in John, is the Cross and glorification (John 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1). By answering her request with a word about his hour, Jesus links her petition to the Passion itself: the first sign is the first step toward the head-crushing, and the Woman's word sets it moving. He will say 'Woman' once more, from the Cross, at the hour itself.

So the address is not coldness but coronation: he is not calling her less than mother; he is calling her more. Then the promised honesty: one 'Woman' text remains, in the Bible's final book, and it stays sealed for three more sessions.

Close the ceremony's loop: invite two or three to say how their guess reads now, and what changed it. Name the skill they have acquired: they can now hear an Old Testament under a New.

3. Thread D. Recall Session 4: 'Make your request, my mother; for I will not refuse you,' and then Solomon refuses Bathsheba. Compare that scene, element by element, with Cana. What failed there that works here?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The petitioner: Bathsheba carried another's self-interested request, maneuvered into it; Mary carries a need of others; John records no one prompting her and shows her seeking nothing for herself. The intercessor's purity has caught up with the office.

The king: Solomon, shrewd and fallible, must refuse to protect a throne. Jesus, the King who cannot be manipulated and whose throne is the Cross, can grant, and grants beyond the asking: the good wine, the first sign, faith kindled in his disciples.

The grammar of her intercession, worth writing down: she states the need ('They have no wine') and dictates nothing; she takes even an apparent refusal as material for trust; and her only instruction points away from herself ('Do whatever he tells you'). Every Catholic claim about Mary's intercession is an extension of these five words, and every distortion of it violates them.

If time allows, the echo discovery: 'A famine, a ruler, and five words very like Mary's: Genesis 41, near the end.' Surface Genesis 41:55, 'Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do,' and weigh the echo with both texts open.

DIG DEEPER: SIX JARS, FILLED TO THE BRIM

For a group with time: the jars are 'for the Jewish rites of purification' (John 2:6), and Jesus transforms their water into wedding wine. The old covenant's washings become the new covenant's feast; compare Hebrews 9:10–14. The servants' role rewards attention too: they fill the jars 'up to the brim,' obedience without visible reason, and John notes that the servants who had drawn the water knew where the wine came from, while the steward did not (John 2:9). The steward tastes; the obedient know.

STEELMAN: PRESENT AT FULL STRENGTH

Present with full force: 'Read the Greek without devotion in your eyes. *Ti emoi kai soi*, what have you to do with me, is a distancing idiom every single time it appears: Jephthah to a hostile king (Judges 11:12), the widow accusing Elijah (1 Kings 17:18), demons recoiling from Jesus (Mark 1:24). Jesus follows it by calling her Woman, not mother, and by saying his hour, not hers, governs him. This is a polite rebuff: he acts when he chooses, for his own reasons, and John includes the exchange precisely to detach the sign from her influence. At minimum, Cana gives no charter for Marian intercession: John shows Jesus acting on his own sovereign initiative, under his hour and no one else's, and a text that records his distancing words cannot honestly be made the foundation of a doctrine of Marian mediation. And this fits Jesus' consistent pattern elsewhere of deflecting attention from his mother, but I understand that gets its own night.'

Ask the group: the idiom evidence is real. What do we do when the lexicon and the outcome pull in different directions?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Concede the philology without flinching: the idiom does mark disjunction, and Jesus is truly asserting that his hour, the Father's timetable, not family ties, now commands him. Any reading that erases the

distance in the phrase is sentimentality, and this study does not do sentimentality.

But interpretation reads whole narratives, and the narrative's outcome is the control: after the alleged rebuff, Jesus performs exactly what her word set in motion, at scale, and John stamps the result as 'the first of his signs' that 'manifested his glory' so that 'his disciples believed in him' (2:11). A rebuff that produces well over a hundred gallons of sign is a strange rebuff. The honest synthesis: Jesus marks the change of order (no longer son under a household, but Messiah under his hour) and then, within the new order, honors her petition. The distance and the granting are both real; the distance redefines her role, it does not revoke it.

The address seals that reading rather than undermining it. If 'Woman' were mere formality, it would be inexplicable that John's Jesus uses it again at the hour itself (19:26), in his most tender recorded act toward her. On the Genesis frame the group has now assembled, 'Woman' is elevation: she enters his hour not as biological mother pulling rank but as the Woman of the promise, and her intercession belongs to that role. Notice, too, what she models under the apparent refusal: not retreat, but 'Do whatever he tells you.' The text teaches persistence in trust under God's strange answers, which is simply what the Church means by intercessory faith (compare the Canaanite woman, Matthew 15:22–28, where an apparent rebuff likewise precedes a granted request and praised faith).

As for the deflection pattern (who is my mother; blessed rather are those who hear): agreed, it exists, it matters, and it gets its own session at full strength. Tonight's text must be allowed to say what it says: the first sign of the Gospel begins with the Woman's word, and heaven's economy was not embarrassed by it.

Send: Taking It Out

1. Mary's intercession began with noticing: 'They have no wine.' Whose quiet running-out (of money, hope, patience, faith) have you noticed lately, and what would it mean to carry it to Christ before they ask?
2. 'Do whatever he tells you.' Is there something you already know he has told you that you have been treating as negotiable? Name it to yourself tonight.

Live It This Week

- Practice noticing-intercession: each day, bring to Christ one need you observed that nobody voiced.
- Pray John 2:5 ('Do whatever he tells you') before each significant decision this week, and pause long enough for it to be dangerous.
- Write one sentence on the back of tonight's Take-Home: what my guess got wrong, and what that taught me about reading Scripture.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

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

John 2:5 (RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

Leader prays: Lord Jesus, at Cana you turned the water of the old washings into the wine of the wedding feast, and at your mother's word you worked the first sign that pointed toward the hour of our salvation. Give us her eyes for other people's empty jars, her boldness at your side, and her obedience when your answers are strange. You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Close together, as her last words become ours: Do whatever he tells you. Amen.

LEADER REFERENCE CARD

Every passage used in this session, in order:

- John 2:1–12 (the wedding at Cana, read whole)
- Amos 9:13; Isaiah 25:6–8 (the prophets' wine; live discovery)
- Isaiah 62:4–5; Hosea 2:19–20 (leader background: the Bridegroom)
- Genesis 3:15 (the Woman of the promise; resolution)
- John 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1 (the hour in John)
- John 19:26 (the second Woman address; named, not treated)
- 1 Kings 2:20–25 (Thread D callback: the refused request)
- Genesis 41:55 ('Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do'; echo discovery)
- Judges 11:12; 1 Kings 17:18; Mark 1:24 (steelman: the idiom)
- Matthew 15:22–28 (the Canaanite woman: apparent rebuff, granted request)
- Hebrews 9:10–14 (Dig Deeper: washings to feast)
- John 2:5 (memory verse)