

## February 11 – 17: John 2 – 4

### Ye Must Be Born Again

#### **The third day (John 2:1):**

The Joseph Smith Translation says “and the third day of the week” rather than the third day. In the Holy Land, the Roman names for days of the week are not used. The days of the week are simply First Day, Second Day, Third Day, Fourth Day, Fifth Day, Sixth Day, Sabbath (“Shabbat”). Days are reckoned from sundown to sundown and the Sabbath is the seventh day, which for us, is Saturday (beginning Friday night and ending Saturday night). If you were to keep the Sabbath day according to this order, how would you have to reorganize your family’s activities? How would those changes separate you from others around you in what you could do or couldn’t do? Suppose the Greeks and Romans that surrounded the Jews in towns and cities in the Holy Land kept a different schedule. How would that affect life in general?

#### **What have I to do with thee (John 2:4):**

This sounds like a rebuke from Jesus, almost like He could do nothing because His ministry had not yet begun. But the JST says the following: “Woman, what wilt thou have me to do for thee? that will I do; for mine hour is not yet come.” In other words, Christ is asking what His mother would like Him to do because He is free to serve until He performs His ultimate miracles and sacrifice. This is similar to the instance where Christ provided light for the boats of the Brother of Jared. He asked the Brother of Jared what his idea was for lighting the boats and then agreed to give him that blessing.

The ancient Jewish culture, in fact most cultures at any time in history, focused on milestone events. Feasts and celebrating were (and are) very important. Having no wine was not going to truly injure anyone, but it would be a memorable tender mercy to have wine instead of water.

Many people have claimed that the ancients had to drink wine, because water was not safe. But townspeople either used springs for water or collected rainwater in cisterns, which, unless it is fouled by a dead animal falling in, is safe for the whole of the six-month dry period. So, this is a matter of celebration and delight, not safety. Jesus turned the water to wine. Yes, this is considered His first recorded miracle, and the message might be joy. Note that not everyone even noticed this miracle, but those who were close to Jesus were strengthened by it. How many miracles happen in your life that others might not see?

#### **Christ cleanses the temple (John 2: 15 – 22):**

This must have been a confusing and bizarre experience for those who witnessed Christ cleansing the temple. He went down to Jerusalem for the Passover, and merchants were on the temple grounds, exchanging money and selling sacrificial doves and other animals. Imagine the LDS temple that you attend, if merchants were selling LDS merchandise on the grounds or even inside the entry. What would that be like?

Christ also confused the people by saying that if the temple was destroyed, He would build it again in three days. This quote from Mark helps us understand: “We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands” (Mark 14:58). Christ was referring to His own body (John 2: 21, 22), which would be the first to resurrect. Those who hated Him would use this temple reference to mock Jesus on the cross (Matthew 27: 40, 63), but when Jesus was crucified and resurrected, His followers finally understood what He meant.

Another notable thing about this story is that in the cleansing of the temple we see the wrath of Christ. God is love, but He has the potential to exercise wrath, He has exercised wrath, and He will, when He comes again in power.

### **Jesus won disciples in Jerusalem (John 2: 23 – 25):**

Jesus performed miracles in Jerusalem while He was there, and He gained followers. Still, He was able to discern the hearts of men and to know which of these followers would become sincere disciples.

### **The story of Nicodemus (John 3):**

To Nicodemus, who was a ruler in Israel, Jesus must have been talking in circles about being “born again.” With no doctrine or cultural pattern that explained spiritual rebirth, Nicodemus must have been thoroughly confused. We know he gained understanding because he became a true follower of Christ and never abandoned his faith that we know of. Ritual immersion for Jews was for purification, but the idea of being born again a new man wasn’t part of the imagery for them. When we talk about “mysteries” we usually fail to realize that baptism for spiritual rebirth IS a mystery, an image and practice no man could invent on his own.

### **For God so loved the world (John 3:16, 17):**

These are two of the most famous, loved verses of the Bible – “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

End your Sunday lesson with your family by listening to The Tabernacle Choir sing “For God so Loved the World” here -- [https://youtu.be/ihx\\_5aFK0cY](https://youtu.be/ihx_5aFK0cY)

### **Jesus goes to John the Baptist in Judea a second time (John 3: 22 – 36):**

After He left Jerusalem, Christ took some disciples and went down to the Jordan River near the Dead Sea where John the Baptist was teaching and baptizing. Christ’s disciples began to teach and baptize there also, and some observers thought there might be some conflict and jealousy between the two rabbis. John explained the identity of the Savior and gladly took a lesser role, everything he did pointing to the role of the Savior. These scriptures could lead to a discussion on authority and how as disciples we don’t serve in order to bring glory to ourselves.

### **The woman at the well (John 4: 1 – 42):**

The woman at the well is a famous Bible story, and there are many aspects of it worthy of discussion.

- The woman and the people of her village were Samaritans. Samaritans were considered mongrels by the Jews, and apostates. They carried the blood of their Assyrian conquerors and had built their own temple at Mt. Gerazim. (It had already been destroyed by the time of Christ.) Christ's calling was to Israel, and it was Israel's calling, as the Firstborn of humanity, to carry the gospel to the world.
- Christ sojourned with a woman long enough to teach her and use her as a witness and a missionary to the people of her village, who converted. What does this say about how Christ treated women, what women can do, and how He loves all people?
- Christ recited to the woman all of her many sins, but she wasn't frightened or offended. What does this say about how Christ can correct us with a pure love that enables us to repent? Can you imagine this happening during a "life review" in heaven? Could Christ review with you the mistakes you made and still make you feel loved?

#### **Christ returns to Galilee (John 4: 45, 46):**

Christ traveled through Samaria to get to Galilee. He had already testified that no prophet is honored in his own country, but many Jews from Galilee were returning from their Passover pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and they had seen Christ's miracles there. They were beginning to perk up and take notice.

#### **Jesus heals the nobleman's son (John 4: 47 – 54):**

As of yet, turning the water into wine was the only miracle Jesus had performed in Galilee. The nobleman's son was sick in Capernaum, and the nobleman asked Christ to heal him. Christ didn't go to Capernaum but told the nobleman that from that moment his son would be healed. The nobleman's servants reported that this indeed did occur, right from the moment of Christ's promise. You might want to discuss how this healing occurred even though the Savior was not there. Do we have other accounts in the scriptures where prophets "sent" healings instead of performing them in person?

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## CHANGED HEART OBJECT LESSON

### John 2-4

In John 2-4, we see multiple instances of Christ performing miracles and teaching those around him. He invites them to be baptized and believe, so they may be “born again” and have “living water.” This invitation requires a change of heart and willingness to learn. Here is a fun object lesson for your family to do as you ponder how Christ can change you:

(Credit for this idea goes to the Add a Pinch of Sparkle blog.)

**Materials:** ice cube tray (or something to freeze water in), little plastic hearts (any small, heart-shaped item that won’t get ruined in water will work), Ziploc bags

1. Freeze one heart in a chunk of ice for each participating kid.
2. Place ice chunks in individual Ziploc bags and give one to each kid.
3. Have them use their hands to melt the ice and free the heart.
4. When everyone’s hearts are unfrozen, talk about how we can change or “unfreeze” our hearts with the help of the Savior. You can read about Christ changing the water into wine (John 2:1-11), Nicodemus asking the Savior how one is “born again” (John 3:1-8), or even the woman at the well asking how to receive “living water” (John 4:3-26).

Resources for discussion:

- Alma 19:33 (“And it came to pass that when Ammon arose he also administered unto them, and also did all the servants of Lamoni; and they did all declare unto the people the selfsame thing—that their hearts had been changed; that they had no more desire to do evil.”)
- [“A Change of Heart”](#) by C. Richard Chidester
- [“How to Keep a Mighty Change of Heart”](#) by Dale G. Renlund
- [“A Mighty Change of Heart”](#) by Spencer J. Condie

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## LIVING WATER OBJECT LESSON

### John 2-4

In chapter four of John, we read the story of the Woman at the Well. While traveling through Samaria, Jesus stops at Jacob's well while his disciples go into the city to buy meat. He asks an approaching Samaritan woman for a drink from the well. They begin talking and Christ teaches her about living water, which will never make one thirst again, unlike the water in the well. Jesus says his living water is "springing up into everlasting life" (verse 14).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie once said living water is "the words of eternal life, the message of salvation, the truths about God and his kingdom; it is the doctrines of the gospel."

As you read and discuss this story as a family, give this fun object lesson a try:

(Credit for this idea goes to the Se7en blog.)

**Materials:** a glass of plain water, a bottle of clear soda (Sprite, 7UP, Fresca), and Mentos

1. Talk about the differences between the plain glass of water with the bottle of soda (you can unscrew the soda bottle cap so it fizzes). Note that the soda (or bubbly water) seems more alive and active.
2. Compare this to regular water and the living water Christ talks about in John 4. Explain that you can't put a cap (just like Jesus wasn't stopped by death) on the living water because it "springs up" into a fountain.
3. Drop Mentos into the soda bottle and watch as it bursts up into a mini fountain!

Note: This can be a messy activity, so depending on the size of your soda bottle and how many Mentos you choose to drop in, consider doing it in the kitchen sink or outside.

Resources for discussion:

- ["Living Water to Quench Spiritual Thirst"](#) by Joseph B. Wirthlin

- ["The Woman at the Well"](#) *Friend* article and illustrations (good for younger kids)
- ["The Woman at the Well"](#) video version of the *Friend* article
- ["Jesus Teaches a Samaritan Woman"](#) video (four minutes long)
- ["The Woman at the Well"](#) video (seven minutes long)

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## GOD'S LOVE CRAFT

### John 2-4

In John 3:16-17, we learn that God loved us enough to “give his only begotten Son” so that we may be “saved.” One of the most important ways God shows His love for us is through Jesus Christ and everything we have because of the Savior (sacrament, repentance, eternal life, atonement, etc). God also shows His love for us in countless ways and daily tender mercies (nature, family, friends, talents, etc).

Since this week involves both the study of events in Christ’s earthly ministry (John 2-4) and Valentine’s Day, it’s the perfect time to reflect on the ways we see God’s love for us in our daily lives. If your family enjoys decorating for this holiday, consider cutting out colorful paper hearts and writing one way you know God loves you on each one.

Resources for discussion:

- “No matter how serious the trial, how deep the distress, how great the affliction, [God] will never desert us. He never has, and He never will. He cannot do it. It is not His character [to do so]. ... He will [always] stand by us. We may pass through the fiery furnace; we may pass through deep waters; but we shall not be consumed nor overwhelmed. We shall emerge from all these trials and difficulties the better and purer for them.” - George Q. Cannon
- [“God’s Love”](#) informational page (has great scriptures)
- [“How I’ve Felt God’s Love”](#) article (youth share how they have felt God’s love)
- [“God’s Love”](#) by Cheryl C. Lant
- [“God’s Love for His Children”](#) by M. Russell Ballard
- [“God Is Love”](#) by the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square

