

Moving From Striving To Thriving and Jiving Do Whatever He Tells You

John 2:1-11

Introduction:

Jesus came that you may have life and life in abundance. Jesus wants you to have an abundant life. He wants you to move from striving to thriving and jiving. Yes, believe it or not he wants you to be blessed, to thrive in life and to have His complete joy inside you. His yoke is easy, His burden is light and he wants you thriving and jiving. But how do you experience this abundant life and what does it look like? Today I want to show you through Jesus' first miracle of turning water into wine how your life can be sweetened and enhanced, how you can be transformed from something ordinary into something sweet and how you can have a life that is joyful and spreads joy. Today I want to show you the way to move from Striving to Thriving and Jiving.

In John 2 we read of a wedding at Cana in Galilee where Jesus' first miracle or sign is to take place. The miracles of Jesus are signs displaying the glory (beauty, wonder and power) of Jesus and the wonder of His amazing love which transforms, rescues and restores. Jesus and his disciples were invited to this wedding. Jesus' mother was there. Then the wine runs out and Jesus' mother tells Jesus: "They have no wine." Jesus asks what this has to do with him and says to his mother: "My hour has not yet come."

What is his hour? His hour normally refers to his death on the Cross and the events that follow. ¹ (John 13:1 and 17:1). No one including his mother is able to fully understand what he means by his hour has not yet come. It's a cryptic saying that his mother does not fully understand. His mother not fully grasping what Jesus is getting at turns and says to the servants:

Joh 2:5 (ESV)

"Do whatever he tells you."

I love that. Almost ignoring Jesus' comments she's showing who's really boss here. If she was Scottish she may have said something along the lines:

*"Your hour has not come yet aye? I'll tell you if your hour has come or not yet son.
It's your hour right now to help these friends of mine."*

So looking away from him she speaks to the servants and says: "Do whatever he tells you." What was Jesus thinking right then? He knew he needed to honour his mother and father. I can almost imagine a chuckle and smile thinking, I love her strength and cheek. What did she expect Jesus to do? What did she think he would tell the servants? It was his first recorded miracle so we are not sure if she expected

¹ **Joh 13:1 (ESV)** "Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end."

Joh 17:1 (ESV) "When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you"

a miracle or not. Maybe Jesus had provided miraculously before for his poor mother when times were tough but we do not know that and do not have it recorded. We just know she said 5 words to the servants. By telling the servants “Do whatever he tells you” she was indirectly saying to her boy:

“Do something here and tell the servants what to do. We are waiting!” You gotta love that!

5 simple words. That’s all that is recorded. The key to the miracle to follow lies in these 5 words. If these 5 words are not issued and understood the miracle will not take place. The miracle of sweetening and enhancing relied on these 5 words. The miracle of transformation from that which is ordinary into something which is sweet and delicious depends on these 5 words. **Do whatever he tells you. Say – Whatever!**

In Exodus 15 we read of more thirsty people. Israel moves from the Red Sea and spent 3 days in the wilderness and found no water. They come to Marah and are unable to drink the water because it’s bitter. Moses cried to the Lord. A miracle is about to take place and it would depend on these 5 words again. **Do whatever He tells you** - Moses. If you do whatever He tells you a miracle will happen. Sweetening and enhancing miracle will happen if you do whatever He tells you. Transformation of bitter to sweet will happen if you do these 5 words. Thirsty will be changed to satisfied by these 5 words. He takes the log and throws it into the water – and bitter water is transformed into sweet. This is a picture pointing to the CROSS which can turn bitter waters sweet. In Exodus 15 a RULE is made from this incident recorded in v26:

We can summarise v26 in 5 words: **Do Whatever He Tells You.**

“If you will diligently listen (SHEMA) to the voice of the Lord your God and do that which is right in His eyes, and give ear to His commandments and keep all his statutes....” BLESSING will come.

The Hebrew word used here is Shema ² interpreted diligently listen. SHEMA means to hear and pay attention and respond and act. The 5 key words basically

² [H8085](#) (Strong)

שמע

shâma'

shaw-mah'

A primitive root; to *hear* intelligently (often with implication of attention, obedience, etc.; causatively to *tell*, etc.):

Total KJV occurrences: 1158

For thousands of years, every morning and evening Jewish people have prayed these well-known words as a way of expressing their devotion to God. They are called the SHEMA.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

(Deu 6:4-5)

The first word of the SHEMA is hear or listen which in Hebrew is pronounced as SHEMA. Shema is a very commonly used word in the Hebrew Bible. But Hebrew authors use the word SHEMA to mean more than just letting soundwaves enter your ear. It means and is used for “pay attention” so SHEMA means hear and pay attention to but there is more. It includes response. Asking God to SHEMA in Hebrew is asking God to hear and to respond, to hear and act. It’s similar when God asks people to listen. When God asks His people to

summarise the meaning of SHEMA. DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU - means HEAR, PAY ATTENTION AND RESPOND. To do whatever HE TELLS you, you need to hear, pay attention and RESPOND. So the key to an abundant life once again is SHEMA. Hear, pay attention and respond. Jesus said His sheep hear his voice.

Do Whatever He Tells You was the key to the miracle of water into wine. It was the key for Moses from bitter water to sweet. And these 5 words are the key for you to experiencing the ABUNDANT LIFE Jesus wants you to have. These 5 words are the key to your transformation also. The key to you experiencing life in abundance. The key to you experiencing a sweetening and enhancing of your every-day life. The key to you turning the bitter existence of life into a sweet one. The key to experiencing complete joy which is different from a happiness which depends on circumstances.³

When the servants do whatever He tells them what is the result?

They are told to fill the jars with water. What jars? Six stone water jars each carrying 20 or 30 gallons. Each jar held around 90-140 litres. Or each jar holds around 120 to 190 bottles of wine. Six jars would hold around 1000 bottles of wine. What were the six jars? They were there for the Jewish rites of purification. The water used in these jars was normally used for the ceremonial washing of hands as well as for the cleansing of drinking utensils.

It has been discovered⁴ that in those days in the houses of the elite were bathtubs for regular washing and ritual baths for purification rituals. They had different purposes. The ritual baths or water jars were there not for regular bathing to become physically clean but for washing rituals to become spiritually clean or holy.

listen it's the same as asking them to Listen and Obey. That's the fascinating thing about Shema. In ancient Hebrew there is no separate word for obey – meaning to carry out the wishes of someone. In the Bible, if you wanted to say: I will listen and do what you say – you would use the single word – SHEMA. In Hebrew listening and doing are 2 sides of the same coin. So in the Bible, if people were actually listening they would ACT and DO as requested. Hence the phrase, you have ears but are not listening. So in the end, Listening in the Bible is about giving respect to the one speaking to you and doing what they say. Real listening takes effort and ACTION.

³ “Anne Robertson, a Methodist pastor, writer, and executive director of the Massachusetts Bible Society, explains how the Greek origins of the words happiness and joy hold important meaning for us today. She explains that the Greek word for happiness is Makarios, which was used to describe the freedom of the rich from normal cares and worries, or to describe a person who received some form of good fortune, such as money or health. Robertson compares this to the Greek word for joy which is chairō. Chairō was described by the ancient Greeks as the “culmination of being” and the “good mood of the soul.” Robertson writes, “Chairō is something, the ancient Greeks tell us, that is found only in God and comes with virtue and wisdom. It isn't a beginner's virtue; it comes as the culmination. They say its opposite is not sadness, but fear.” Brown, Brené. *The Gifts of Imperfection* (pp. 79-80). Hazelden Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁴ “*In the houses of the elite, both bathtubs for regular washing and ritual baths for purification rituals have been discovered, demonstrating the distinctive uses. The primary purpose of these washing rituals was to become spiritually clean or holy, rather than physically clean.*” <https://drivethruhistoryadventures.com/stone-jars-ritual-washing-water-wine-miracle-cana/>

The inclusion of the detail of the six stone water jars – that were used for Jewish washing rituals – may provide the key to understanding and interpreting this miracle of water to wine. Mark 7:3,4 tells us about the washing traditions of Jews and Pharisees at the time:

Mar 7:1-4 (NIV)

“The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus **2** and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. **3** (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. **4** When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)”

The people had come to believe they could become pure and holy by washing with water. But Jesus taught the Pharisees that it's not dirt that makes them unclean or unholy but what comes from the heart. We read in

Mar 7:18-23 (TPT)

*“He answered them, “Are you as dull as the rest? Don't you understand that you are not defiled by what you eat? **19** For the food you swallow doesn't enter your heart, but goes into your stomach, only to pass out into the sewer.” (This means all foods are clean.) **20** He added, “Words and deeds pollute a person, not food. **21** Evil originates from inside a person. Coming out of a human heart are evil schemes, sexual immorality, theft, murder, **22** adultery, greed, wickedness, treachery, debauchery, jealousy, slander, arrogance, and recklessness. **23** All these corrupt things emerge from within and constantly pollute a person.”*

The water in the stone water jars was used to purify ritually the people but it didn't really cleanse them from the inside or purify them completely and spiritually. Why? Because the uncleanness wasn't coming from external dirt but from the internal desires in their hearts. And washing with water could do nothing for that. Perhaps this miracle is a sign that the water jars are insufficient to cleanse people on the inside, to cleanse their hearts. Maybe this miracle will reveal a new system is needed. New wine and a new wineskin is needed. Ceremonial washing from these jars is not what is needed – what is now needed is a new Passover meal, a communion meal in which people drink wine in remembrance of the sacrificial lamb. A new covenant that will not cleanse externally but transform internally. A new covenant is needed. Only Jesus's blood shed on the Cross and the filling with the Holy Spirit could completely purify people spiritually and cleanse and transform their hearts.⁵ Jesus in the last supper would pour a glass of wine and say:

Mat 26:27-28 (NIV)

⁵ **Eze 36:25-28 (NIV)** “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. **26** I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. **28** Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.”

“Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. **28** This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

The guests at the wedding in Cana drank the best wine that Jesus had miraculously made from water. I imagine they danced with joy and celebrated with the best wine and it was all for FREE.

Maybe this is the sign, the foreshadowing. When people drink the new wine from the new wineskin, the communion wine, the best wine representing Jesus’ blood for the forgiveness of sins and salvation they will also dance with joy and celebrate with the best wine.

They will move from Striving to pleasing and obeying God to Thriving and Living with those at the wedding feast sharing the new and best wine.

Psa 32:1-2 (NLT)

“Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight!
2 Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty!”

Jesus invites all to drink this new wine for the forgiveness of sins. This new wine of communion would replace the Passover meal. This cup of the covenant represents the blood of the lamb that was shed to bring protection, freedom, victory and joy. It would replace the Passover meal which also represented the blood of actual lambs that brought them protection, freedom and victory when it was painted on the door posts of the Israelites.

The Jewish nation had ceremonial cleansing from water jars but this water could not help a corrupt and spiritually bankrupt nation. It was a nation with unclean hearts. It was a nation that had run out of wine. It was without joy and hope. Wine is used as a symbol of joy in the Bible:

Psa 104:15 (NIV)

“wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts.”

That’s a communion verse right there; wine representing Jesus’ blood, oil representing the Holy Spirit and bread representing Jesus’ body. The people had external washing ceremonies but they had nothing to cleanse them and satisfy them from within. What was needed was a sacrifice, a shedding of blood that would cleanse people’s hearts. They needed an internal power to give them new and better desires and ability. Jesus’ death on the cross would provide the sacrifice and blood to cleanse people from the inside which would lead to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to transform and empower them. Perhaps this first miracle at Cana was a sign of the new wine to come.

But the miracle of water to wine started with 5 key words. **Do Whatever He Tells You** the servants were told.

In John 15 we have the beautiful passage on Jesus as the Vine and we are the branches. In v10 we are given the key to new wine. The key to joy. The key to an abundant life:

Joh 15:10-11 (NIV)

“If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

We could summarise it with the 5 key words again. **Do Whatever He Tells You.** The verse says If you keep my commands. Or If You **Do Whatever He Tells You** – His joy will be in you and your joy will be complete. Here we have the key to joy and complete joy. **Do Whatever He Tells You or Keep His Commands.**

The Great Commission (Matt.28:19-20) is all about making disciples who prioritise these 5 key words. Disciples that **DO Whatever He Tells You.** “...teaching them to **observe [practice, implement, follow, demonstrate] everything I have commanded you...**”

We tend not to like the word command these days. And we don't like the suggestion: Do Whatever He Tells You. We don't like being commanded. We don't like being told what to do. We want to be asked politely. But Blackaby can help us here in his book:

“When we think of receiving a command from someone, immediately a military connotation comes to mind, or perhaps royalty bringing forth a decree to their subjects in their kingdom. This is not the essence or the primary intent of the word Christ used. He was not being controlling or being a dictator; He was giving them words of life...”

God's commands may be more easily understood if we look at them from the standpoint of children living in their father's house. Parents have certain expectations for their children: brushing their teeth, cleaning their rooms, showing respect for one another, doing their homework, attending church. These expectations, rules, and perhaps “commands” are not meant to be punitive but helpful in the development of good character and preparing children to be responsible adults when they are out on their own.

In fact it would be irresponsible for parents never to teach their children how to manage their money, do their laundry, cook healthy meals, respect authority, be wary of scam artists, or follow God's ways and then send them out on their own to manage for themselves.

Rather than viewing Christ's commands as coming from a master to a servant, a king to his subjects, or a general to his soldiers, we need to view Christ's commands as coming from a father to a son or daughter.

The relationship makes the difference. We do not obey Christ out of obligation or out of fear. We do not obey from loyalty or duty, guilt or selfish ambition. We obey

because we know deep down inside that Christ loves us and that He has our best interests in mind at all times.

God's commands are meant to help us live a happy, wholesome life that is pleasing to Him and to those around us. What is more, living a life that is pleasing to God brings with it unimaginable rewards. "But as it is written, 'What eye did not see and ear did not hear, and what never entered the human mind—God prepared this for those who love Him'" (1 Cor. 2:9).

Christ criticized Pharisees for needlessly laying heavy burdens on people, and this was not His intention either. Christ's commands were never intended to be oppressive, unreasonable, or burdensome; "For this is what love for God is: to keep His commands. Now His commands are not a burden" (1 John 5:3).

Nor were they ever meant to weigh us down or cause us to carry a heavier load than we are able to carry; "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28–30).

There is always a best way to approach every area of our life and our relationships with others, and Christ's commands reveal to us just how familiar He is with humanity and with each one of us."

The Commands of Christ by Tom Blackaby⁶

So Just Do Whatever He Tells You. What will be the outcome? Jn.15:11 *"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."*

Like the servants at Cana we need to Do Whatever He Tells you. This is how water is turned into wine. If you do whatever He tells you a miracle will happen. A sweetening and enhancing miracle will happen if you do whatever He tells you like Moses at the waters of Mara. Transformation of bitter to sweet will happen if you do these 5 words. Thirsty will be changed to satisfied by these 5 words. When You Do Whatever He Tells You.

In order to do whatever He Tells you need to:

1. Slow Down and get more rest and stillness.⁷

⁶ http://ebooks.rahnuma.org/religion/Christianity/Christ/The_Commands_of_Christ.pdf

⁷ "On any given day, stillness can be hard. Even awkward, frustrating. We come to each day like a jar of river water that has been shaken. The water is murky, impossible to see through. But as the jar sits still—unmoved—the silt and sediment begin to settle. Clearer waters emerge. So too, in the stillness that enables solitude and silence, the mud and mire of our souls begin to settle and clarity emerges. In solitude and silence, we become aware of the inner needs and desires that we bring to the day. Then we can talk to God, our good and loving Father, about what it is we actually need for that day, asking for his wisdom, his guidance, his grace to prevail." Barton, Ruth Haley. *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* (Transforming Resources) (p. 10). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

2. Listen. Listen comes from the Hebrew word Shema ⁸ Hebrew authors use the word SHEMA to mean more than just letting soundwaves enter your ear. It means and is used for “pay attention” so SHEMA means hear and pay attention to but there is more. It includes response. SHEMA means to hear and pay attention and respond and act. The 5 key words basically summarise the meaning of SHEMA. DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU - means HEAR, PAY ATTENTION AND RESPOND. Ask Jesus – what would you have me do?
3. Listen to His Word don’t just read the Bible. The Holy Spirit is your teacher and guide and parakletos – one called alongside. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you through His Word then Do Whatever He Tells You. Something that helps you hear God’s word rather than just read it can help.⁹
4. Learn the Commandments of Jesus and pray through them daily.¹⁰
5. Help each other in community by asking each other: 1. What is God Saying to me? 2. What am I going to do about it? ¹¹
6. Be filled with the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. In Acts 2:15 Peter tells his listeners that the people are not drunk on wine but the people are receiving the Holy Spirit. In Eph.5:18 we are told not to be drunk on wine but be filled with the Spirit. The water to wine miracle points to Jesus’ blood and wine can

⁸ [H8085](#) (Strong)

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“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

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⁹ <https://www.abidingway.life/lectio-podcast>

¹⁰ http://ebooks.rahnuma.org/religion/Christianity/Christ/The_Commands_of_Christ.pdf

The Commands of Christ by Tom Blackaby - <https://tinyurl.com/3eh5p8hu>

¹¹ “Learn to be disciples by becoming life-long learners of Jesus. The key to this is learning to always listen to the voice of God and respond. We want people to know about God and the history of our faith, but we also want them to know God. As Paul says, “I want to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.” This is the foundational shape and one every Huddle returns to as we continually ask, “What is God saying to me, and what am I going to do about it?”⁸”

symbolise the Holy Spirit. We need the Cross and the power of the Holy Spirit to Do Whatever He Tells You.

7. Action. Do Whatever He Tells You.¹²

¹² **Jas 1:22 (MSG)** “Don’t fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other. Act on what you hear!”