

Hey everybody. Welcome to Christ Fellowship. What a great morning for worship. Amen? I want to welcome you to Christ Fellowship. My name is Rick, and if you are a guest with us for the first time, we are so glad that you have joined us. We always believe that God brings first time guests here, not by accident, but we believe God has brought you here because He wanted you here; because He desires for you to be here; because He wanted to speak into your life. God always does that through His Word, which is why we are so committed at Christ Fellowship to teaching through the Word of God. Just so you know, we are right now on a journey through the gospel of John. We are going to wrap up a little mini-series in the gospel of John that we have entitled "Water to Wine". You probably know a little bit about that story. We talked about it last week. But I want to ask you to go ahead and open your Bibles to John, chapter two. If you don't have a Bible with you, don't worry about it. It will all come up on the screen and you can follow along with us that way.

I want to set this up by sharing this with you. Back in 2002, we cleared some obstacles as a church that had been blocking us for years; barriers that had been keeping us from doing what God had called us to do. Folks, almost immediately after we cleared those barriers, it looked like God opened up the flood gates and people started coming like in waves. In fact, I'll never forget, for the first time we had traffic issues. Specifically, we had parking problems. With that in mind, I want you to slip into this situation, because there was a young couple who lived about two miles from our campus. At that time we only had one campus. But this young couple, they were fighting through a very, very bitter divorce, and a custody battle over their three and a half year old boy. Mind you, by this point they had split up and he was living about two miles from this campus, and she was living, I think, in Jacksonville.

Stay in the story, because there was a gentleman in our church named David, and David invited the husband to come to Christ Fellowship, and David told me that this husband was deeply, deeply depressed, because he was going to lose custody of this child. But check this out: On this one Sunday morning, the husband decided to attend Christ Fellowship. In fact, he called David and said, "I have my boy with me today", and he thought it might be the last time he would have

the boy with him. But he called David and said, "I have my son with me today and we're coming to church today." But folks, when he got here to Christ Fellowship, he was unable to find a place to park, and at that time we didn't have ample parking nor did we have volunteers out there to help people park and to greet people. Apparently, he drove around and around and could not find a spot, and in his depressed state, he quickly gave up, and he subsequently drove back home and wrote a note telling how he had come to Christ Fellowship but was unable to park. Then he continued to write a suicide note, and he shot himself and he shot the little boy.

I've got to tell you, for me that was one of the most discouraging moments for me as your pastor. But listen, not only was it a discouraging moment for me, but it was also a defining moment for me, because I realized at that point how critical, how crucial volunteers are at Christ Fellowship. I mean, think about it: We had one day to reach out to that man. That's the way it is a lot of times Christ Fellowship. People come here and they are coming only one day. We've got one shot at them, but I as your pastor, did not have volunteers out there ready for him. I mean, had there been greeters out there, had there been parkers out there, it would have at least got him from the parking lot into the auditorium where he could have heard the gospel. Don't get me wrong: I could cop out and say, "Well, he should have kept driving. He shouldn't have gave up so early." Listen, when people are struggling like that man obviously was, they are at war; and sometimes not just with their own minds, but many times they are at war with an unseen enemy, an enemy that is literally hell bent on their destruction both physically and spiritually. So, we cannot as a church make people swim upstream to meet God. Many times we get one chance at people. This is it, and we have to be ready.

I want to tell you, I have often thought of what might have happened with that man and his boy if somebody had been out there to help them park. I have often wondered what might have happened had somebody been out there to greet them as they walked in and had said to them, "Welcome to Christ Fellowship", and spoke into that man's depression. "We're glad you are here. You are going to meet God today." I've often wondered what might have happened with that little boy had he made it over to Praise Island, and experienced children worshiping; and

came out and said, “Daddy, I had such a wonderful time at church today.” I’ve often wondered what might have happened, what might have happened had he made it into this auditorium and heard the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have often wondered what might have happened.

Well, we will never know what might have happened, but I can tell you what could have happened. A miracle could have happened. He could have heard the gospel and received Christ as his Savior, and Christ could have transformed that man’s life. Christ could have transformed the life of that child. We know that Christ could have potentially transformed that entire family, had he made it in here. So here is my proposition today. This is what I want you to walk out with. God wants to transform people’s lives in Miami. Amen? In fact, He wants to give them the miracle of everlasting life. But don’t miss this: God uses volunteers to make those kinds of miracles happen. Put another way: Volunteers play a strategic role in the miracles that happen at all of our campuses across Dade County week in and week out, and the miracles that happen through Christ Fellowship outside the walls of our campuses.

Now, you might be saying, “Rick, what do you mean by miracles? What do you mean by that, and how do we as volunteers make those miracles happen?” Well, that is what we are going to find out today as we go back to John, chapter two, and wrap up this series, “Water to Wine”. I want to give you two thoughts today. How many of you have your listening guides? Wave them in the air. I would encourage you to fill in the blanks and take notes as we make our way through this narrative. Three thoughts: Here they are. Number one: Jesus has miraculous power. I’ll tell you what we mean by miraculous as we unpack this narrative. Let’s pick it up beginning with verse one, and try to get a running start from last week.

John 2:1: “On the third day, a wedding took place at Cana, in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there. (2) Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.” As we said last week, He went. Not only that, but He had a good time. Don’t forget, God is not a kill-joy. If you go with God, you’ll have to kiss fun goodbye. If you go with the God thing, you are going to miss out on the fun. God actually likes it when we have fun. Anyway, let’s keep going. Verse 3: “When the wine

was gone, Jesus' mother said to Him; 'They have no more wine'." Now, stop right there and let me review from last time. To begin with, for this couple to run out of wine at their own wedding seems like not a big deal to us. But in that culture, to run out of wine at your own wedding was just unacceptable. The hospitality in the ancient Middle East was considered a sacred duty, and for them to run out of wine at their own wedding would have been an embarrassment for them. It would have been a public disgrace for them. It would have been a public humiliation for them. So this situation was setting up to be disastrous for this young couple. But watch what happens. Let's just run forward in the narrative.

Look at verse 9:"And the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine." Everybody say "turned". Everybody say "turned". Stop there because the word "turned" there is a translation of the Greek word ginomai, and ginomai carries the idea of transformation. In other words, one thing is transformed into something else. To put another way, something is altered from one state of existence into another state of existence. Folks, that is precisely what happened. Jesus is there, and Jesus spoke a command to water. Wouldn't you love to have been a fly on the wall? He is talking to the water, and He commands the water and the water, the H₂O, to transform into something chemically different, mainly wine. In other words, Jesus didn't put some grape juice in and stir it up. No. He spoke, and when He spoke to the water, the water was transformed, and it was chemically altered into something that it was not. Here is what you need to know about it.

Water to wine is a miracle. Now, water to wine is transformational, yes, but it is far wider than that. It was miraculous. You know, we tend to throw the word miracle around as if anything out of the ordinary is a miracle. But that is not the case. In fact, a miracle is an event that suspends physical law; that overrides the laws of physics. It is not a miracle in the strictest sense of the word unless it does that. You know, you will hear somebody say something like this: "I prayed for a thousand and five hundred dollars, and I went to the mailbox and there was a thousand and five hundred dollars sent to me from a friend. It's a miracle!" It is not a miracle. It is definitely an intervention of God, but it is not a miracle in the sense of the word. A miracle in the physical

sense is an event that overrides the laws of physics. To put it another way, that defies the laws of physics. For example: God parting the Red Sea. That is a miracle. Why? Because that overrides the laws of gravitational force. Jesus walking on the top of water, is a miracle. Why? Because that defies the laws of gravity. You ought to sink. Jesus creating fish and bread out of nothing and feeding fifteen thousand people with bread that is just coming out of His hand, and fish just coming out of His hand. That's a miracle, because it suspends the laws of atomic structure. You can't do that. How about this one? Jesus creating an ear in his hand, and then attaching it to the head where the ear had been severed? That is a miracle. Why? That suspends the laws of biology. What about Jesus raising the dead - a man who has been dead and his body, because of the laws of physics, is decomposing? It is rotting. Jesus calls his name and he comes back to life. That is a miracle. Why? Because that suspends the laws of physiology, of biology, and biogenesis. That suspends them all. Turning water to wine is a miracle because it suspends the laws of chemistry. The chemicals aren't there to do that.

Folks, my point is: Jesus did that kind of stuff, and here is what I want you to understand. He could only do that because He is God. Only God can override the laws of physics because God created the laws of physics. Can I remind us that the laws of physics are subordinate to God, not vice versa. He controls the laws of physics. The point of John's gospel all the way through is that Jesus is God and because He is God, He is able to do miracles. Now, with that in mind, believing in Jesus as Savior triggers a miracle. Here is that miracle. John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." - Life that is unending; life that is never terminal. Now folks, think about this: Of all the miracles that Jesus did, and does, by far His most powerful miracle is the imparting of everlasting life to those who believe in Him. Let me say that again. Of all the miracles that Jesus did and does, by far the most powerful miracle of all is imparting eternal life to you and to me and to everyone who believes in Him.

I want you to put your thinking caps on for a moment, because we live in a world that has two dimensions, physical and spiritual. Both of those dimensions are governed by laws. For example,

in the physical dimension there are laws of physics - laws of physics like gravity, entropy, thermodynamics, second law of thermodynamics, and those laws are not like written laws. They are forces, and these forces force our physical bodies to age. Do you know why you are getting old? It's because the laws of physics are working against you. These laws of physics cause your body to break down. Do you know why your skin is wrinkling and you are fighting this battle? It is because the laws of physics force the chemical compounds of which you are comprised, and we are all chemical compounds. It forces those chemical compounds to break down and to inexorably go back to the fundamental element of which they are comprised; the elements of the periodic table. So the forces of physics are forcing us to age; forcing us to decay; forcing us to disease, and eventually, forcing us to die. But it doesn't stop there.

There is also the spiritual dimension. Just like there are laws in the physical, there are laws in the spiritual dimension. One of the laws in the spiritual dimension is the law of sin, and here is what the law of sin says. Here is the law. Ezekiel 18:20: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Folks, that is like two plus two is four. That is like water runs down hill. The soul that sins will die. Romans 3:23 adds this: "For all have sinned." So do the math. We are all in the process of death, both physically and spiritually we are dying. Listen: The only thing that can stop those forces is a miracle from God. That is exactly what happened. John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Stop there, because the moment you trust Christ as Savior, it happens in here all the time and it happens outside of here, but that moment is miraculous. At that moment God supernaturally suspends the law of sin, and imparts into your spirit everlasting life. John 3:36 puts it this way: "Whoever believes in the Son of God has eternal life." By the way, what kind of verb is "has"? It is a present tense verb, meaning you already have eternal life. You are not going to get it when you die. Eternal life is in you already, as a believer. It is already in you. It is a present possession, and you are alive eternally at the level of your spirit. That is why we believe or die. Your body goes back to dust. Your spirit which has been made alive in Christ, God escorts that spirit to heaven. I always say: Death for a believer, instant heaven. No tunnels; no

lights; no weird stuff floating through freaking you out. It is just instant heaven, because your spirit is alive.

But check this out. At the consummation of the ages, at the return of Christ, Christ will speak and your body which will have decomposed – who knows what happens to it – that body will be supernaturally – hard to imagine for us because we are so controlled by our thoughts of physics – we can't imagine this, but that body will be raised from the dead. In other words, God will suspend the laws of entropy, the second law of thermodynamics and all those other laws that have corrupted us physically, that causes us to die. He will override all of that and raise your body back to life and then with body and spirit in tact, which is the way you are supposed to be, you were never meant to be a spirit alone, a ghost alone. You are always meant to be a body and spirit like you are now. But you are going to get a new one that will never die. With that body and soul and spirit in tact, we are destined for eternity in a newly created world. Folks, my point is this. That miracle of transformation happens every time somebody prays to receive Christ. In other words, they are transformed like water to wine, from one state of existence into another state of existence, from death to life, from eternal death to eternal life, and that takes a miracle from God to happen.

Now, having said all of that, here is the big point I want you to walk out with today. Here is what I want you to go out the door with. Volunteers partner with God in that miracle. Volunteers, you volunteers, you who are thinking about volunteering, partner with God in that miracle. With that in mind, let's go back to the wedding, back to John two. Let's pick it up. Watch what happens. "When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him: 'They have no more wine'. 'Woman, why do you involve me?' Jesus replied. 'My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servant, 'Do whatever he tells you'." Stop right there, because the word "servant" is not servant as in slave. That is not the idea. The word servant there is a translation of the Greek word "diakonos". You know, I always tell you that the Bible was first written in koina Greek and then translated into English, French, Spanish - whatever. That word "servant" translated from the Greek word "diakonos" – it's the word we get "deacons" from, by the way – and "diaconos"

simply means servers, or to put it in the vernacular, volunteers. In other words, these people were just people who showed up at the wedding and volunteered to help out; volunteered to serve. It happens at all weddings. But watch what happens while they are volunteering.

“Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants – to the volunteers – the “diakonos” – “Fill the jars with water”, so they filled them to the brim.” Now, check out what happens. These folks show up to volunteer at this wedding, but as they are volunteering, they become a major player in a miracle. In fact, watch what Jesus says. He says to the servants, to the volunteers, “Fill the jars with water”, so they filled them to the brim.” Now, think about it. Just taking the twenty to thirty gallon containers, and just taking the least volume container at twenty gallons, these are big containers, you’re talking about a hundred and sixty-six pounds per jar. I don’t know what that adds up to – times six is slightly under a thousand pounds, but they have to take these jars to wherever the well happened to be. So they have to go find a well - which is usually one per town – they go fill it up, and they have to lug these hundred and sixty-six pound jars all the way back to the wedding. My point is simply this. This was labor-intensive volunteering.

By the way, some of you volunteers know about that. The work that you do for God and Christ Fellowship is often labor-intensive. I was thinking about our set up and tear down teams at our campuses like Coral Gables, Miami Springs, and West Kendall. Do you know what happens? We have set up and tear down teams. These set up teams, while you were asleep, maybe, this morning at six o’clock, they got up and arrived at six o’clock at these sights and set up church. Hundreds and hundreds of pounds of speakers and everything that we see here has got to be set up. Guess what! When you are having lunch today with your family, they will be tearing all of that back down, putting it back into their containers and moving it back where it came from. That is labor-intensive, and may I say to our set up and tear down team, thank you, because you make miracles happen.

Let's go back to the wedding. Verse 8: As these volunteers do what Christ asked them to do; mainly to fill up the jars, watch what happens. "Then He said to them, "Now, draw out some of the water 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." Folks, here is what I love. As they were volunteering, they end up partnering with God in making a miracle happen, mainly the transformation of water to wine. But don't miss this, because you who volunteer for Christ Fellowship, you partner with God in a far greater miracle than that. You partner with God not in the transformation of water to wine, but you partner with God in the transformation of people's lives. You partner with God in the transformation of people's lives from death to life, from eternal death to eternal life. You partner with Him in a miracle. Listen, you volunteers, you may think you are just volunteering. It runs far deeper than that. You think you are just teaching a child in our children's ministry. But you are changing the course of a child's life. You think you are just doing set-up at one of our campuses. But you are setting the stage for a miracle to happen. You think you are just hosting a small group. But you are making fully devoted followers of Christ. You think you are just out there greeting people, but you are actually preparing people's hearts who are nervous about coming to church for the first time. They don't know what to expect. They don't know what they are going to get hit with. You are preparing their hearts to be open to the gospel, to be open to the worship. You think you are just aiming a camera; but you are aiming people's mind at the Word of God. You think you are just up here leading a song, playing an instrument, but you are leading people to experience worship of the Almighty God.

You volunteer in our community. You think you are just out there at that public school, cleaning up the yard, planting shrubbery, putting out bulbs; you think that is all you are doing, but you are actually showing people out there, maybe for the first time, the love of God, the compassion of God. You are showing them that Christ Fellowship actually cares about their kids. You think that you are just folding a worship folder, and putting in whatever goes inside it. You think that after the service after everybody is gone, you're just going between the aisles, cleaning up and getting things ready for the next service. But you are preparing a place for people to be able to

experience God, and for people that don't even know God to meet God for the first time. What you do is partner with God in making miracles happen. Get this: We have slightly over four thousand roles that are filled every week by volunteers in Christ Fellowship.

Here is what I want you to know. For those of you who serve and for all of you that are thinking about serving. Volunteers matter. What you do matters. Do you know what I wanted to do this weekend? The staff wouldn't let me do it. I wanted to give all the volunteers a day off. I wanted to tell all volunteers to not go to whatever you do. Just come and take a seat. But my staff was like, "Rick, you can't do that. That would be a disaster. You make a point, but it would be too costly." What I wanted to do was for you to arrive today and see no screens. I wanted you to arrive today and no worship folders. I wanted you to arrive today with the grass all grown up, and dirty toilets. I wanted you to arrive today and have nobody in the student ministry changing people's lives over there. I wanted you to show up today and nobody serving in our children's ministry. In fact, I wanted to take all of those children, who right now are having so much fun over there, and I wanted them to come in here. I wanted it to bore them to tears with me talking to them to the point that they are squirming and you are fussing and fighting with them, and they are crying. It is just total chaos up here. I wanted you to see that. I wanted you to see what it looks like when volunteers who go out and serve our community stop serving; and the miracles that happen out there every week, I wanted you to see the cessation of that. By the way, you volunteers yesterday serving Miami, you, fifteen hundred of you, one thousand and five hundred volunteers yesterday sent several thousand people Thanksgiving meals. You gave out one thousand backpacks to children, and shared the gospel with these people. You wouldn't believe the stories that we heard after that happened. But I wanted you to see all of that brought to a halt so that you could see visually that volunteers really, really do matter. Without volunteers the miracles stop. Volunteers are what make this happen.

But here is the rub with being a volunteer. Here is the part I don't like very much. Volunteers may not know their success in this life. You say, "What do you mean?" Well, let me give you an example. Let's go back to that dear man that killed himself and killed his boy. What if somebody

had been out there parking, volunteering to park him? What if when he walked in somebody had spoken into his depression and said, “We’re so glad you are here today. You are going to experience God today. Come on in.” What if his little boy had gone over to Praise Island and had a good time, and had come out and said, “Daddy, I love church. Could we come back to church? That was actually fun, Dad. Please bring me back to church.” What if that Dad had come in here and heard the worship, and seen the love of God with all of you people, and heard the gospel of Christ, and he had gotten saved? What if that had happened? We would all go “Yeah! He got saved. He was going to kill himself, but he didn’t do that. He was going to kill his little boy, but he didn’t do that.” We wouldn’t be able to celebrate that, would we? Why? We would never know that was going to happen. But you can see how it does happen.

Let me tell you something, volunteers. You don’t get to hear it but I wish you did. But I hear stories like that every week, sometimes it seems like every day where a volunteer did something that changed the course of people’s lives. You won’t believe the stories that we heard yesterday, of single moms on the streets with no food, with three or four kids. We got to feed them and we are taking care of many of them. We are going to help them. We got to share the gospel with those mothers, and several of them said they were going to be in church today, probably one of our campuses, maybe our Downtown campus. But you don’t get to hear the stories like that. I’m telling you, it happens every week because of what you do. Your work matters.

Listen, here is what I want you to realize. When we see people come down like we have, and they make a profession of faith; do you know what it looks like from your vantage point? It looks from your vantage point like I got and shared the gospel and they got saved. That is what it looks like from your vantage point. But it is a chain of volunteers that make that happen. Here how the math actually adds up folks, and I get to see this and sometimes you don’t. It works like this. Our volunteers go out into our community and serve our community; love on the people of Miami. Do you know what does? Sometimes the people that are getting served like yesterday, their hearts are moved and they get open to the gospel and the gospel is shared right there. They get saved. A miracle happens. Very often what happens is the community around looks at your love

for people, and they see the love of Christ in you. Then what happens is, somebody invites that person. “Would you come to Christ Fellowship with me?” They are like, “I’ve heard about Christ Fellowship. I’ve heard how kind those people are, and how compassionate they are. I think I will go see that.” So, they show up. They park their car. Somebody is out there to just put them in a spot so they don’t have to keep driving around. Then as they come in, somebody says “Welcome to Christ Fellowship. We are so glad you are here. We are honored to have you.” They look around and they see things done for God with excellence, with intention. They say, “God matters to these people.”

Then their child goes to Praise Island, and just like I said, their kid comes out and says: “Mom, you are not going to believe it. Church was fun. I want to go back.” That happens. The students, the teenagers say the same thing. Then they come in here and they experience worship, and they hear music that doesn’t sound like a funeral, and they enjoy the music. It’s pretty cool music. Then finally, after all of that, they hear the gospel, and they come forward. You see how it is a chain of volunteers all down the line that makes that happen. People will ask me a lot of times; pastors will ask me, “What makes Christ Fellowship tick.” They think I’ve got some magic formula, some secret. It is volunteers, folks. It is you! It is what you do that makes this church happen, that makes miracles happen here every week, at all of our campuses as well as outside of our campuses. What I am telling you is you could not live a better life. If you want your life to matter, this is how you make it matter. This is how you make it count. You are successful in life.

Our greatest fear should not be being unsuccessful in life. Rather, our greatest fear should be being successful at what doesn’t really matter. That should be our greatest fear. Being successful but at things that don’t really matter on an everlasting scale. My goal today is to help volunteers to know how important you are to what happens at Christ Fellowship. My goal also today is to enlist additional volunteers, but not because of the vision God has given to us. God has given us this huge vision to reach a hundred thousand people by 2020. If that is going to happen, volunteers are going to have to play a strategic role in that. Now, I am not trying to enlist you as a volunteer, because, “Oh my gosh! If you don’t sign up, we are not going to make it.” Listen,

we've got a lot of volunteers, and God will make this happen. It is not that, but I want you to become a volunteer so that something happens in your life, so that you start doing what you were created to do; so that you as a believer start doing something with your life that matters on an everlasting scale. God has given you ability. God has given you talent that you can use for Him. God wants to use how you are made, your gifts, your abilities, your talent, what you are excited about, your heart; God wants to take all of that and for you to use it to volunteer to make miracles happen.

When it comes to volunteering, it is not just what God wants to do through you. It is what God wants to do in you. Does that make sense? It is not just what God wants to do through you. He wants to do miracles through you. It is also what He wants to do in you. He wants to do in you a work that gives you a level of satisfaction that as you draw closer and closer to the end of your life, you can look back in your wake and say, "I did with my life what I was supposed to do; and I give of my life things that will matter when I get there."

At all of our campuses, I pray you know how important you are, what you are doing, and how much it matters across Dade County.