



*Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
of North America, Metropolitan PHILIP, Primate*
DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
Carole A. Buleza, Director

**2008 Creative Festivals Lesson Plan:
Grades 4-5**

THEME:

At the beginning He made them male and female. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh."

Matthew 19:5

GOALS:

To help students understand the theme well enough to express it in art, poetry, creative writing, or photography.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will be able to answer questions about the Sacrament of Marriage and the Service of Holy Matrimony.
2. Students will complete a K-W-L (Know, Want to Know, Learn) chart to tell what they know about Orthodox Christian marriage
3. Students will discuss what they consider some of the most important parts of the Orthodox wedding service and why.

TIME: 45-50 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Bibles with Old Testament and New Testament
- 3-6 Large butcher-block sheets for a K-W-L Chart
- Markers
- Copy of the Service of Holy Matrimony (If desired, copies of key sections of the service for each child)
- Sheet listing Scripture citations for each child

OPTIONAL MATERIALS:

- Photos or video of an Orthodox Christian wedding service
- Teaching Pics
- Actual objects used in the Service of Holy Matrimony:
 - Candles
 - Rings
 - Crowns
 - Gospel Book
 - Hand Cross
 - Common Cup and wine

FOR THE CATECHIST:

Suggested Readings:

John 2:1-11. The Wedding at Cana, with notes, *Orthodox Study Bible*, pp. 214-215.

Ephesians 5:22-33.

Marriage, *Orthodox Study Bible*, p. 449.

Sr. Magdalen. Children in the Church Today. Chapters 1-3, pp. 7-32.

Service of the Holy Matrimony, *Service Book*, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocesan, pp. 166-182.

Ford, David and Mary. Introduction, *Marriage as a Path to Holiness. Lives of Married Saints*, pp. xxi-iv.

The Way, The Truth, and The Life, pp. 75-78.

It is suggested that you begin the lesson with a Scriptural basis of the theme in the Book of *Genesis* and focus on how man is made in the image and likeness of God, male and female. You have the difficult task of imparting to preadolescents the belief that as Christians we are temples of the Holy Spirit, which demands that we seek purity and holiness in our lives. You may be able to expand on seeking purity

and holiness before marriage as your students discuss *I Corinthians* 3:16.

Since it is also suggested that you take on the task of using a K-W-L chart, you have to be ready for almost anything. Consider how you want to respond to questions of family life in marriage. Be sensitive to students whose families are not intact. You might want to speak with your parish priest regarding any sensitive situations. You won't want to offend any child (or parent) or appear judgmental. You won't want to make any child feel inferior hearing what the Church teaches about families and marriage knowing that his or her family does not meet the model of the ideal family or marriage. However, we do need to present the tenets of the Church.

You'll want to examine your own feelings about divorce, homosexuality, and pre-adolescent sexuality in general. You may want to decide beforehand how you will respond to questions about sexuality and homosexuality, all the while maintaining the Church's stance on these questions. (You may want to use the book, *The Way, The Truth, and The Life* for reference.) Avoid discussion of abortion and birth-control.

Remember that we do not usurp parental authority, and it is parents who must decide when to speak with their children about matters of sexuality.

Do encourage students to value their bodies and minds as gifts from God, their Creator. Would we want to tarnish a precious gift? Encourage them to remember that as Orthodox Christians they have the wonderful opportunity every minute of their lives to have a loving relationship with Christ. With reception of the Eucharist they take in

His Body and Blood. He is part of them. They are part of Him. You might remind students about being part of the Body of Christ.

You will be presenting material about marriage as a sacrament and about the actual Service of Holy Matrimony. If you are able to have a video of a wedding service for the lesson, you might want to play parts of it as you discuss sections of the wedding service. You may want to include a list of vocabulary words and definitions for students to take home if they will complete their Festival entries at home. If students are unfamiliar with the Gospel account of the Wedding at Cana, there are questions in the lesson that you can use to help facilitate understanding.

As you work with students to record their responses on the Learn chart, you may want to prompt them to include information presented in this lesson. As time permits, you may want to include a short discussion about the question, "What do you think is the most important part of the marriage service?" Of course, students will need to offer reasons why.

You may wish to provide actual objects used in the wedding service so that students can see firsthand the large candles, crowns, the common cup, the Gospel book, hand cross, and photos of wedding rings.

May you present your lesson reflecting the joy of Christian marriage.

THE LESSON PLAN

OPENING:

Gather students around the icon corner to say The Lord's Prayer.

INTRODUCTION:

Announce the theme and explain the requirements for the Creative Festival entries.

Ask students to locate the Theme from *Matthew* 19:5 in their Bibles.

Comment on the context in which it appears: Jesus is talking about divorce and actually quoting from the Old Testament. Ask students to cross-reference this incident in Mark 10:1-9. Focus on verses 6-9.

Emphasize that the theme is not about divorce, but *about marriage*. In both Gospels quoted here, Christ speaks about God having created them "male and female and that for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife...."

The day's lesson will focus on what God has said in the Bible about being male and female and about marriage and what the Orthodox Church teaches on the *sacrament of marriage* and why. Write the word sacrament on the chalkboard or on a placard.

Spend a few minutes talking with students about any weddings they have attended.

CONTENT:

Use of a K-W-L Chart

To find out what students already know about marriage, work with a K-W-L Chart on Marriage in the Orthodox Church. Ask students to contribute what they know about marriage on the KNOW chart. List only statements that are true for Orthodoxy. Gently refuse a response that does not apply to an Orthodox interpretation of marriage.

Next, ask students what they want to know about marriage and record their responses on the WANT TO KNOW chart. Assure students that you and they together will work to answer all their questions.

You might also say,

"In our society we do not usually hear or read about *Orthodox* wedding services. Often we hear, see, or read in stories only about how weddings are celebrated by Roman Catholic or Protestant Christians. Since the Orthodox view of marriage differs in many ways from the views of western Christians, it is truly important to learn what the Orthodox Church teaches and how people are married in the Orthodox Church. For this reason, you will be studying about the sacrament of marriage. Even though you may already know a great deal about marriage in the Orthodox Church, there is still much to learn."

As you see what students already know, you can review aspects of the Orthodox teaching about marriage accordingly.

Here follows basic information that can be used to answer what students want to know about marriage and also what they

need to know for a fuller understanding of the Theme:

Biblical Basis for Marriage Between a Man and a Woman

Help students to understand what exactly is being said in the line of scripture being used for the Theme. Refer them to Genesis and the citations listed on the worksheet. Ask them to look up the passages to see what God has declared about having created human beings male and female. (You can assign a citation to each student who will look up the citation and report to the group.) As each line of scripture is read aloud, ask students to tell whether it relates to the words of the Theme. Pose these questions:

1. What does God say human beings are created to be? (They are created in the image of God, either male or female.)
2. What does God say about a man being alone? (It's not good to be alone; he should have a helpmeet [helpmate], someone to be with.)
3. What does God say the man and his helpmeet should do? (Be fruitful and multiply. Students may know that this means to have children.)
4. Why should a man leave his father and mother? (To be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh.)

Explain to students that these passages tell us:

- God has created human beings to be either male or female
- Man should have a helpmeet - not good to be alone
- Woman was taken from man - bone of his bone; flesh of his flesh

- Man and woman should marry- man shall be joined to his wife...become one flesh
- Man and woman should have children - be fruitful and multiply

These words from Genesis tell us that God has blessed marriage between *a man* and *a woman*.

Jesus did not invent marriage. But for Orthodox Christians, marriage is a *sacrament*. Jesus taught us that marriage is an expression of God's love for mankind and of Christ's love for the Church.

Pause here for a short discussion of the citations from *I Corinthians* and *I Peter*. Ask students to consider why St. Paul says we are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit) dwells in us. (As baptized, confirmed Orthodox Christians, we have received the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Each time we receive communion, we receive the Holy Spirit....We have seen the True Light; we have received the Heavenly Spirit....")

You could ask students, "If the Holy Spirit lives inside us, then how should we take care of our body, soul, and mind?" (Lead students toward answers of not harming our bodies or anyone else's body, being respectful of others, not making fun of other peoples' bodies, not taking drugs, smoking, or using alcohol, obeying God's commandments, being prayerful, having good thoughts, not watching bad movies or reading bad books, etc.) Emphasize the importance of doing this because we love God and we want to lead lives of holiness and purity so we may become "like" God. And when we talk about loving God and

God loving us, we can also think about this in connection with marriage.

Marriage as a Sacrament

In an Orthodox Christian marriage, through the working of the Holy Spirit, what is begun on earth does not end in death but is fulfilled and continues most perfectly in the kingdom of God. That is why Orthodox do not say “till death do us part.” Marriage doesn’t end when we die. Marriage can continue on into eternity, into the Kingdom of God.

Christ at the center of Orthodox Christian Marriage

Our Orthodox Church marriage service shows that Christ is the focal point, the center of Christian marriage. As we look at the marriage service, we will see how this is true.

Speak for a few moments about the lack of awareness in our society about Orthodox marriage and wedding services. For example,

We do not play “Here comes the bride...”

Marriage is not “till death do us part.”

There are no vows spoken, nor do we write any of our own vows.

There is never any “doing it our way” in the service—it’s already rich in meaning and prayers for just about everything possible to pray for or want.

People remark frequently about how beautiful the service is when they are present at an Orthodox wedding.

Tell students that as you go through the sections of the service, you will point out the many rich meanings and symbolism

to help them understand what God wants for us in marriage.

Tell students the correct name of the service is Service of Holy Matrimony. Ask why they think the word holy is used in this title. (Marriage is a sacrament, and each Orthodox Christian is asked to work toward holiness throughout his or her life. The married person is asked to be holy just as a single person or monk or nun is asked to be holy, and married people can work together to help *each other* lead holy lives.)

The Structure of the Service of Holy Matrimony

Explain that there are two main parts: **the Betrothal and the Crowning**. (During this part of the lesson plan you will highlight the objects that are used during the service and explain their significance.)

The Betrothal

The priest gives a large, white, lit **candle** to the groom and also one to the bride.

The candles are a symbol of the Light of Christ. A Great Litany is said where we pray for everyone throughout the world, including the couple to be married.

Exchange of Rings. With the **rings** that the priest places on the fingers of the bride and groom, he announces that the servant of God is *betrothed* to the handmaid of God and the handmaid of God is *betrothed* to the servant of God. The groom’s ring is placed on the bride’s finger. The bride’s ring is placed on the groom’s finger. Then, the bride and groom exchange the rings and put their own ring on their fourth finger of their right hand. (Although today, because of the influence of the Western

churches, many people wear their wedding rings on their left hand.) There are some different meanings to the rings:

- An unbroken circle that means their love goes on forever
- Faithfulness to each other
- The exchange of rings is a sign that the strengths of one person make up for the weaknesses of the other person.

Married people wear a wedding ring to show they are married.

The Marriage Service.

The priest says, “Blessed is the kingdom!” Emphasize this opening exclamation in the Crowning. Divine Liturgy also begins with this exclamation. It is used because marriage is eternal in the kingdom of God.

The Crowning. The priest takes the **crowns**, blesses the groom and bride three times with the crowns, and places them on their heads. (Russian-style gold crowns are held over the heads by the best man and maid of honor.) Then the priest exchanges the crowns three times and says,

“O Lord our God, crown them with glory and with honor.” You might want to demonstrate this triple exchange for students.

The crowns have three meanings:

King and queen of their little kingdom on earth, their household
Martyrs’ crowns
Crowns of the life in the Kingdom of God.

You can explain how St. John Chrysostom talked about marriage as the “little kingdom.” The bride and groom

would become king and queen of their own little kingdom on earth ruling over their family.

The martyrs who were killed for professing their faith in Christ receive crowns in the kingdom of God. Martyr also means witness. The bridal pair will witness to Christ throughout their life together. In addition, each will also have to make sacrifices for the good of the other person.

The married couple who live a holy life hope to attain their own crowns in the Kingdom of God. The Christian husband and wife receive Holy Communion together and share in God’s Kingdom of Heaven even now, and they can continue to do so even after death to this life, because of Christ’s Resurrection.

Prokeimenon, Epistle, and **Gospel**
(Point out similar structure in Divine Liturgy.)

Comment about the verse from Psalm 20:

“Thou hast set upon their heads crowns of precious stone.

They asked life of Thee and Thou gavest it them.”

Ask the students what image comes to mind when they hear “crowns of precious stone.” (Crowns of a king and queen...the couple can be king and queen of their little kingdom.)

Comment on the Epistle: St. Paul is telling us that marriage should be like the marriage of Christ and His Church. The bride is reminded to be subject to her husband just like the Church is subject to Christ. The groom is reminded that he should love his wife as much as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for Her.

Comment on the Gospel reading of the Wedding at Cana: Why does the Church use this Gospel reading? (Christ performed His first miracle at the wedding in Cana; it's a prefigurement of the Eucharist which the bride and groom will share throughout their married life together. In the Eucharist we are united to Christ and His Church.)

(If students have no background with this Gospel account, you may read it and use the questions appended with this lesson.)

The Common Cup. Some say drinking the wine from the same **cup** reminds us of the good wine Jesus made at the wedding in Cana, when He changed water into wine—saving the best wine for the last. Others say the bride and groom drink from the same cup to show they will share everything in life together, whether good or bad.

Isaiah's Dance (Sometimes called Isaiah's Joy). Some translations of the hymn sung here use, "O Isaiah, dance thy Joy." Other texts use, "Rejoice, O Isaiah." You might check with your parish's usage. If you have a wedding video, show this part of the service, pointing out the **Gospel book** on the table and **the cross** the priest carries as he leads the newly-married couple around the table three times. Both Gospel and cross show us that Christ should be at the center of the married couple's life. The walk itself symbolizes the couple's first steps as husband and wife in a procession that reminds them their marriage in Christ and His Church is forever and never-ending, even into the Kingdom of God.

You might say, "Isaiah's Dance is when the couple 'walks' or 'dances' around the table in a joyful way because they take their first steps as husband and wife. This walk or dance shows us their marriage in Jesus Christ will never end. Their marriage is fulfilled in the Kingdom. You may not understand this right now because you are very young. But you have heard these words, and that's important. Trust that as you grow older, this will mean more to you."

The Final Blessing. The priest now asks the Holy Trinity to bless the newly-married pair with long life, fair children, prosperity, and faith, abundance of earthly blessings, and for them to be worthy to obtain the blessings of the promise (to become heirs to God's kingdom). The priest gives a prayer for dismissal and intones a "Many Years" for the newly-married couple. The bride and groom then greet their guests.

The Removal of The Marriage Crowns

In many churches, this separate service is celebrated on the eighth day after the wedding or shortly afterward. You might explain that in the Early Church the newly-married couple wore their crowns for eight days and then returned to the church to have them removed. You might ask students to consider the seriousness with which those early Christians looked upon the sacrament of marriage for them to intentionally wear their crowns that long. How different is this from peoples' attitudes today?

Also, the number eight has spiritual significance, as it is a sign of eternity, the day that has no end, the day of the Kingdom of God.

The Number Three

Students may be interested in knowing that the actions and words of the priest are done three times, and this is in honor of the Holy Trinity:

Rings are blessed three times;
rings are exchanged three times;

The priest blesses the crowns
over the bridal pair's heads three times;

The Priest exchanges the crowns
three times, each time saying

“O Lord crown them with
glory and honor.”

The newly-married couple walks
three times around the table.

“Many Years” is sung three
times.

RESPONSE:

Complete the Learn portion of the K-W-L chart.

Ask students to tell what they've learned. You might want to prompt their responses to include aspects of the lesson's content:

- Marriage is a sacrament.
- There are two parts of the marriage service: betrothal and crowning.
- “O Lord, crown them with glory and honor!”
- The crowns have three meanings.
- Actions are performed three times in honor of the Holy Trinity.
- Marriage is supposed to last forever.
- The bride and groom should love each other the same way Christ loves His Church.
- The bride and groom should always keep Christ at the center of our lives.

- The Gospel reading is the Wedding at Cana.
- Isaiah's Dance is when the couple “walks” or dances around the table in a joyful way because they take their first steps as husband and wife.
- Isaiah's Dance means their marriage in Jesus Christ will never end. Their marriage is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.
- The bride and groom sip wine from the Common Cup

A question for discussion:

What ideas about marriage in the Orthodox Church do you think are most important? (This question may help students formulate their thinking in preparation for focusing on one aspect for their project. You might want to record their ideas on a large placard or on a chalkboard.)

Refer back to students' original questions. Have they all been answered? Direct any remaining questions for individual study.

CLOSING:

Gather students around the icon corner to sing, “It Is Truly Meet” or another hymn customary for your parish, or say a closing prayer.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

The Wedding at Cana in Galilee.

As needed, read from *John* 2:1-11 about the wedding in Cana of Galilee. Remind students that this Gospel, read at the Service of Holy Matrimony, stands as a foundation for an Orthodox understanding of God's sanctification of marriage, since Christ performed His first miracle there. If students are unfamiliar with this Bible account, here are questions to ask for their understanding:

What does Jesus' mother tell him during the marriage feast?

What answer does Jesus give His mother? (In your own words- It's not time yet for me to do anything to show my Power.)

What does the Mother of Jesus tell the servants to do?

What does Christ tell the servants to do? (Fill the stone pots with water up to the brim.)

What happens to the water in the water pots? (Changed from water into wine; and the wine is so good that people remark about it—having saved the best until the last.)

You might tell students that the Church makes note of the fact that Jesus by His spoken word performed this miracle.

What did Jesus "manifest" or make known, according to St. John the Evangelist, in verse 11? (Jesus manifested His glory.)

What was the reaction by the disciples? (They "believed in Him"—understood Him to be the Son of God.)

By His presence at the wedding, Christ sanctifies the marriage.

Remind students that this gospel is read during the marriage service. Ask students, Why do you think the Orthodox Church reads this gospel during the marriage service? (It shows that Christ blessed marriage and saw it as good.)

Divorce and Remarriage

The Orthodox Church permits divorce as a concession to human weakness. The Church permits divorce and remarriage based on the authority of the words of Christ as found in Matthew 19:8-9.

Remarriage is permitted but the Church does not regard it in the same way as it does the first marriage. The service for remarriage omits the Crowning, and some of the joyful ceremonies found in the Service of Holy Matrimony are replaced by penitential prayers. Orthodox Canon Law allows a second or third marriage (and greatly discourages the third) but strictly forbids a fourth marriage.

SCRIPTURE

- Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
- 2:18 It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.
- 1:28 And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth
- 2:23 Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’
- 2:24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.
- I Corinthians: 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?
- 1 Peter 1:16 Be holy for I am holy