



*Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
of North America, Metropolitan PHILIP, Primate*
DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
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**2008 Creative Festivals Lesson Plan:
Preschool to Kindergarten**

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 (check your individual diocese's rules to see if entries for this age group are accepted in all categories).

OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will learn that God blesses marriage between a man and a woman who get married in the Church.
2. Students will hear the Bible account of the Wedding at Cana where Jesus changes water into wine as recorded in John 2:1-11, and will be able to answer questions about the story
3. Students will be able to re-tell the account of the Wedding at Cana in their own words.

TIME: 45 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Icon of the Wedding at Cana
- New Testament Bible
- Retelling of the Wedding at Cana from John 2:1-11
- Photos or illustrations of husbands & wives, children
- Photo or illustration of a bride and groom
- For the Activity: Figures of Jesus and the Theotokos, tape, drinking straws or craft sticks
- Supplies for use in creating Festival entries as needed

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OPTIONAL MATERIALS:

You may wish to use the figures of Jesus and the Theotokos as visual aids to help you present the Biblical account of the wedding at Cana.

FOR THE CATECHIST:

Suggested Readings:

Orthodox Study Bible. John 2:1-11 with notes, pp. 214-215.

Sister Magdalen, *Children in the Church Today*. Foreword and Chapters 1-3, pp. 7-32.

Marriage as a Path to Holiness: Lives of Married Saints. Foreword, Preface, and Introduction, pp. ix-iv.

Obviously, the many rich layers of meaning inherent in this theme are over the heads of the average preschool or kindergarten child. However, you will want to consider presenting aspects of this theme:

- God made people to be born either boys or girls. A boy grows up to be a man. A girl grows up to be a woman.
- When they grow up, the man and woman may want to get married. The husband and wife often have children. They are a family.
- The Bible tells us that God said it is good for a man and a woman to get married and raise a family.
- Jesus was a guest at a wedding in Cana and He performed His first miracle at the wedding.
- In our Orthodox Church, when a man and a woman get married, the priest reads from the Gospel about the time when Jesus changed water into wine at the wedding in Cana.

- Our Orthodox Church tells us that God blesses marriage and is happy for a man and a woman when they get married in the Church.

The Gospel account of the Wedding at Cana in Galilee and Christ's first miracle is read at the Orthodox Christian marriage service. (John 2:1-11) The Church Fathers interpret this Gospel as the basis for much of the Church's teaching about the sacrament of marriage. This Gospel account is a worthy foundation for preschoolers and kindergarten- age children to learn about the Church's understanding for Christian marriage.

We want to present what the Orthodox Church teaches about marriage, but we must be sensitive to the conditions of our society where divorce and separation might abound—even in our parishes. We must not judge, nor make any child feel inferior because his family is not intact. As catechist, you will need to consider your immediate situation and work accordingly with prayer and compassion.

THE LESSON PLAN

OPENING:

Gather children around the icon corner to say, "Our Father."

INTRODUCTION:

Assemble the children in comfortable seating. Recite the theme. Explain that this theme has to do with families and especially about husbands and wives being married. (Most preschoolers will know about "being married.")

You might say, "This is really important for us to talk about, because Jesus had some good things to say about being married and about husbands and wives. Have any of you ever been at a wedding?" (Encourage remarks for a few moments, especially if any of the children have participated as flower girls, ring bearers, etc.) Tell the children they will later hear a story about a famous wedding from the Bible.

CONTENT:

1. Set up a framework for explaining *male and female*, for getting married, and for God's desire that man not be alone. Here are some ways to express these points to your students:

"God made the world and everything in it. God created the first man. Do you know his name? (Adam) God didn't want Adam to be alone, so he created the first woman. Do you know her name?" (Eve)

"Some people are born to be boys and some people are born to be girls." (A child may note that there are girl animals

and boy animals, etc. You could also talk about Noah's Ark, and how there were two of each animal, male and female.)

For clarity and to use the words expressed in the theme, remind children that a boy grows up to be a man and a girl grows up to be a woman. [You might show a photo of a boy and ask, "When the boy grows up, he's called a _____ (man). When the girl grows up, she's called a _____ (woman)"].

It may be helpful to emphasize that as Orthodox Christians, when a man and a woman want to get married, it is important for them *to come to the church to get married*.

2. Talk with students about Jesus who was present at the Wedding in Cana and that He performed His first miracle there.

Jesus said being married was a good thing. He went to a wedding once and even performed his first miracle at the wedding. You might explain "miracle" as something that only Jesus could do. The miracle was when Jesus changed water into wine. Our Church tells us that Jesus blesses marriage. We know this because He was at the wedding and changed water into wine.

When a man and woman get married in the Orthodox Church, they hear this Bible story about Christ who was at this wedding and changed water into wine. (This is not a Bible *story*, of course, since we believe it to be a true account, but young children may better relate to the idea of *story* than to say "Bible account" as adults do.)

Set the scene for students to hear the account of Jesus at the wedding at Cana of Galilee. You might say,

“This wedding happened a long time ago in a town called Cana. People were having a celebration because the bride and groom had just gotten married. The people called it a marriage feast. The bride and groom were there. Jesus and his disciples were there. The mother of Jesus was there, too. Imagine a lot of people sitting and eating a big meal and being very happy for the man and woman who were married. The people were drinking wine because that was their custom. They didn't have soda or tea or coffee where they lived. And sometimes, the water wasn't good to drink where they lived, either, so they drank wine. At a wedding, they would serve the very best wine they could find.”

3. Proceed to read the story from John's Gospel or tell a slightly abbreviated form of the story. A simplified re-telling is appended with this lesson.

Optional: As you tell or read the abbreviated version for preschool age, you might use the figures of Jesus and the Theotokos to enhance the story.

4. Discuss how by performing that first miracle, Jesus tells us marriage is very important and part of our life in church. You might ask these questions to help clarify understanding:

- Who were the people at the wedding? (Bride, groom, guests, Jesus and His mother, the disciples of Jesus; the steward who was a head waiter; servants.)

- What happened to the wine? (The people drank it all up; they needed more wine. There was no place for them to go and get any more wine.)
- What did Jesus' mother do? (She went to Jesus and told Him there was no more wine. Then she went to the servants and told them to do whatever Jesus said.)
- Explain that water was kept in huge stone pots. What did Jesus do to the water in the stone pots? (Jesus changed the water into wine that tasted better than the wine they drank before.)
- What did Jesus tell the servants to do with what was in the stone pots? (Take some of it to the steward—the head waiter—who would serve it to the guests.)
- Could anyone change water into wine at the wedding? (No—only Jesus because He can do such special, wonderful things. Only Jesus could perform miracles.)

Jesus decided to change the water into wine to let His disciples know He was not just an ordinary human being. (We know, of course, that He is the Son of God. But the people didn't know that yet.)

- What did the people say or think when they tasted the extra wine? (They were surprised because it tasted so good--better than the wine they had drunk already.)
- What does St. John tell us about Jesus at the end of this story? (Jesus performed His first miracle. Only Jesus could do this, not just any person.)
- What does this tell us about Jesus? (He is not just an ordinary person.)

He can perform miracles. What He did made His disciples believe in Him.)

(You may not want to use the word sign instead of the word miracle since children may easily imagine this as a sign seen on a street, e.g. stop sign; or as a signboard on a store window because that's their experience of what signs are. Also, since children this age believe so heartily in magic, discourage any discussion about magic so the children don't equate performing a miracle with doing magic.)

Show students an icon of the Wedding at Cana. Ask them to point out the figures such as Christ, the Theotokos, the bride and groom, the disciples, guests, as well as the stone pots.

Marriage is the start of a Christian Family

Tell students that our Orthodox Church honors the man and woman who come to church to be married. Talk about how everyone gets dressed up in special clothes, often there's a special banquet, and a celebration. (Perhaps one of the students will want to talk about when he or she was at a wedding.)

Emphasize that Jesus is very happy that the man and the woman will live together as husband and wife and have a family. You might say,

“Jesus is very happy that the husband and wife will bring their children to be baptized and will come to church and be part of God's family. Jesus is very happy that the husband and wife will receive Holy Communion. Jesus is very happy that the children, too, will receive

Holy Communion when they come to church.”

Remind students about Jesus presence at the wedding in Cana. Our Orthodox Church teaches us that God blesses marriage because Jesus was there at the wedding and performed His first miracle there. Remind students that at the Orthodox Christian marriage service the priest reads the Bible account of Jesus changing water into wine at the wedding at Cana.

ACTIVITY:

Each student can assemble two figures: One of Jesus, and one of The Theotokos, who were guests at the wedding in Cana.

Gather students at a work space where you have placed pre-cut figures, scotch tape, and drinking straws or craft sticks. With your help, have the children attach a straw or craft stick to the back of each of the figures.

RESPONSE:

After students have assembled their figures, have them sit in a circle. Ask for volunteers to use their figures to tell about being at the wedding in Cana and what Jesus and His mother were doing there. You might prompt the children to talk about being there at the wedding feast; about Jesus mother telling Him the people needed more wine; about Jesus changing the water into wine.

CLOSING:

Gather students around the icon corner and say “Glory to Thee, our God, Glory to Thee” as a closing prayer.

[See next page for “Jesus and the Wedding at Cana of Galilee.”]

JESUS AND THE WEDDING AT CANA

There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there. Jesus was also invited to the marriage, and so were His disciples. All the guests at the wedding had drunk all the wine, so Jesus's mother went to Jesus and said, "They have no more wine." Jesus didn't say one way or the other what He would do about not having any more wine to drink.

But His mother went to the servants and said to them, "Do whatever He tells you to do."

Now six stone jars were standing there. Each jar could hold about twenty or thirty gallons of water, which meant the stone jars were very big. Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with water." The servants filled the jars up to the brim.

Then Jesus said, "Now take out some water from the jars and give it to the steward of the feast." (The steward of the feast was like the head waiter at the wedding.) So the servants took some water from the jars and gave it to the steward.

The steward tasted the water and was surprised that it tasted like wine. He didn't know that Jesus had changed the water into wine, but the servants who filled the jars with water knew what Jesus had done.

The steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said, "Every man serves the good wine first. Then when everyone has drunk the good wine, he serves the poor wine that doesn't taste as good. But you, bridegroom, have kept the good wine to the end."

This was the first miracle that Jesus did. When the disciples saw it, they believed in Him.

