

Mother Doesn't Always Know Best

Jesus and Mary at the Wedding at Cana

Warm-Up

What is the fanciest wedding you have ever attended? What special things were done to make each guest feel special? What is your expectation when you attend a wedding?

-or-

How did weddings differ from today in the first century?

Things to Teach for Enrichment

1. The components of this story are rich in symbolism. Take a look at two of them:

The Wedding: The wedding ceremony and ensuing marriage are used as a metaphor for God and His relationship with the Church liberally in Scripture. See Matthew 22:1-14, 25:1-13; Mark 2:19-20, Isaiah 54:4-8, Isaiah 62:4-5, Ephesians 5:23-30, Revelation 19:7-10.

The Wine: Often depicted by the prophets as a sign of the messianic age being ushered in. See Jeremiah 31:13, Hosea 14:7, and Amos 9:13-14. Jesus used it to symbolize his blood to be shed on the cross: Matthew 26:26-29 and Luke 22:20. Wine was also used as a metaphor for God's wrath: Rev 14:10, Matt 20:22 and 26:39.

2. Another symbolic idea in this account is in the abundance supplied. The 180 gallons of wine were more than any wedding party could exhaust. No need on earth can surpass what God is able and willing to give. Jesus miraculously supplied bread and fish to thousands, but there were enough leftovers to fill twelve baskets (Mark 6:42-44). The Syro-Phoenician woman discovered the overflow of God's mercy would prove sufficient for the Gentiles (Matthew 15:21-28). Paul describes the grace of God as lavish (Ephesians 1:7-8), and later describes God as "able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us..." (Ephesians 3:20).

Spend some time sharing ways that God has demonstrated His abundance to you.

3. Read the account of the Syro-Phoenician woman and compare the events to those at the Wedding of Cana. Note the similarities. How does looking at these two encounters together enlighten you as to how Jesus responded to Mary?

Syro-Phoenecian Woman

Matthew 15:21-28

Request: have mercy on me, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon possessed.

Need stated.

He did not answer her a word.

Hesitancy to help.

Disciples implored him: Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us.

I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.

Reason for refusal.

She begs again: Lord, help me!

It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

Yes Lord, but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their master's table.

Faith in who God is, who Jesus is. Grace is abundant enough, expressed.

Your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish.

Grants request.[/wpcol_1half] [wpcol_1half_end id="" class="" style=""]

Mary at the Wedding at Cana

John 2:1-11

They have no wine.

Need stated.

Woman, what to you to me?

Hesitancy to help.

My hour has not yet come.

Reason for refusal.

Whatever he says, do it.

Faith in Jesus' character, no matter what he does, expressed.

Fill the waterpots with water. Draw some out and bring it to the headwaiter.

Grants request.[/wpcol_1half_end]

4. Many people mistakenly think that Jesus came to heal the sick, cast out demons, and cure the deaf and blind. While He did do these things, they were not His primary purpose. Jesus did miracles to prove the validity of His teachings and ministry. The miracles were a means to an end, not the end in themselves.

The miracles Jesus performed were not meant to cause faith. They were meant to affirm faith (Mark 16:20). In fact, Jesus refused to perform miracles until faith was expressed!

See Mark 6:5-6, Matthew 12:38-39, Mark 9:20-25, Luke 23:8-9, and John 2:18-21.

Miracles were limited in their impact. People saw them and believed in Jesus' power, but the effect was not long lasting (see John 2:23-25, 6:66). The servants at the

wedding were close-up witnesses of the miracle, but there is no record that the event caused them to believe.

The disciples, on the other hand, saw the miracle and were affirmed in what they had already believed: in John 1:41, 49 both Andrew and Nathaniel stated they knew Jesus was the Messiah. After the miracle, John confirms its effect on them: “This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him” (John 2:11).

5. Jesus came to usher in a better way, which blew the Pharisaical idea of earning God’s approval to smithereens. See Mark 2:21-22. Paul reiterated this concept in Romans 3:20-26. In what ways is the gift of grace superior to our own efforts?

6. Wine was a common commodity and used for both practical and medicinal purposes. The wine Jesus provided was superior not only to the water it once was, but superior to the wine already drunk by the wedding guests. He saved the best for last; compare this idea to Hebrews 1:1. The coming of the Son was the cumulative event in the history of God’s salvation.

7. Jesus took water and turned it into the finest of wines. God has a history of taking something unimpressive and turning it into a thing of glory. He took a nation of Hebrew slaves and used them for His glory: see Deuteronomy 7:7-8 and Jeremiah 31:33-34. He used fallible, weak men to reveal Himself to the world: see Matthew 26:55-56 and Acts 2:37-41. He used the foolishness of the cross to demonstrate His power: see 1 Corinthians 1:18. Paul’s weakness became a strength when surrendered to the Lord: see 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

What implications does this have for your own transformation? See 2 Corinthians 3:18, 4:16-18, Philippians 1:6, and Romans 12:1-2.

8. Jesus was very conscious of God’s time table of events, insisting his “hour had not yet come.” God will achieve his purposes according to His own time schedule. Read 1 Peter 3:8-9. How are our idea of time and God’s idea different? How should this affect our understanding of troubling circumstances?

9. Read John 4:47-54, 11:21-27, 38-44. What pattern is repeated that we saw in the wedding at Cana in these two events? Why did he initially refuse, then do a miracle anyway? What do you think made the difference?

10. While a shortage of wine was embarrassing to the host and inconvenient to the guests, it was not a life-threatening crisis. Yet God stepped in and solved the problem. Do you hesitate to bring your “small” issues to Him? Sometimes we think of God as something like a CEO, answering phones at his desk, deciding which requests are deserving of His intervention, and which can be ignored. But God is never too busy or distracted to work in our lives.

Read the story of the recovered ax head in 2 Kings 6:1-7. What implications do this and the miracle at Cana have for God's willingness to help you find your keys, return your pet safely home, etc.? Is there any request "too small" to bring before God? On the other hand, in light of who He is, are any of our requests "big" to Him?