

SESSION

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The Wedding at Cana

Catechist Overview

Marriage is essential to human nature, a fundamental truth we recognize in our celebrations of marriage. This truth is written into our very bodies as male and female. In fact, marriage is so important as a sign of God's love that the Bible begins with the story of the first marriage (between Adam and Eve) and ends with a prophetic vision of the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. And in the middle, Jesus begins His public ministry at the wedding at Cana, announcing to the world that He had come to

bring God's promised salvation to His People. **God's plan for marriage is a sign of His love for the world.**

In this session, students will learn about Jesus' first miracle at the wedding at Cana and reflect upon God's plan for marriage. Parents are provided with background information and tips to discuss sensitive topics.

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The Wedding at Cana

Opening



Prayer

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.



Materials

- **Encounter God's Word:**
The Wedding at Cana
- **Respond in Faith:** Male and Female He Created Them
- **Proclaim:** Purposes of Marriage
- **Catechist Resources:**
Church Teaching on Human Sexuality and Principles for Understanding Sex and Gender (on pages A4-13 of this guide)



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Read the Scripture once. Then read it a second time, this time watching and listening for any words or phrases that jump out at you, or especially stir your heart. In the margins, write down notes and questions you have about this Scripture.

[illegible]

There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "**Woman**, how does your concern affect me? **My hour** has not yet come." His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the

In context **"Woman"** is not a disrespectful way for Jesus to address His mother. Jesus obeyed the Commandments perfectly and always honored His parents. We can understand Jesus to be announcing that Mary, His mother, is the "woman" foretold by God in the *Protoevangelium* (Genesis 3:15), whose offspring would crush the head of the serpent and defeat evil and death.

brim. Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it.

And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from – although the servers who had drawn the water knew –, the **headwaiter** called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs at Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

Jesus says "**my hour**" to refer to the beginning of His public ministry.

The **headwaiter** is the one in charge of the other waiters at a restaurant or party.

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- How did Jesus respond to Mary's request? Do you think Jesus was being respectful of His mother by this response? *Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." Jesus' response is not disrespectful, though it may seem that way at first glance. We can understand Jesus to be announcing that Mary, His mother is the "woman" foretold by God in the Protoevangelium (Genesis 3:15), whose "seed" would crush the head of the serpent and defeat evil and death. In other words, Jesus' response is an announcement that the time of salvation promised by God from the very beginning is at hand.*

- What did Mary tell the servers? Why is what she tells them significant for us? *"Do whatever He tells you." Mary is a powerful*

intercessor for us today. She will take our prayers and concerns to her son and petition Him on our behalf. And Jesus, being the loving son that He is, will honor His mother's request.

- What miracle did Jesus perform? How did He do it? *Jesus changed water into wine. He directed the servants to fill six stone jars with water and then draw some out to take to the head waiter. By the time it has reached the head waiter, it has become wine.*
- What does the Scripture text tell us is the reason for this first miracle of Jesus'? *So that His glory might be revealed and the disciples would believe.*
- Why do you think Jesus would begin His public ministry with a miracle at a wedding? *Allow for reasoned discussion. Lead students to the understanding that by first revealing Himself to the public as the Messiah, the Son of God and Savior, in the midst of a wedding, Jesus was announcing that the time had come for God's relationship with His people to be restored. God is like a loving bridegroom and His People are His bride.*



A. Ask your students, by a show of hands, who has been to a wedding. Then have your students work with a neighbor to brainstorm as many important parts of a wedding as they can think of and keep a list on a piece of paper. After a few minutes, ask for volunteers from each pair to share their answers. Keep a list on the board. *Responses might include a white dress, a veil, flowers, a priest, the Wedding March or other wedding music such as Canon in D, tuxedos, the best man and maid of honor, and so forth.*

B. Next, ask your students why they think we place such importance on weddings and celebrate them in such a spectacular way. Allow a few minutes for discussion, accepting reasoned responses.

C. Then, explain to your students that Christian marriage is a covenant between one man and one woman. A covenant is a solemn promise that creates family bonds. A covenant is permanent. The family bonds created by a covenant can never be destroyed or removed, even if the members of the covenant fail in their promise. Just as God entered into covenants with mankind throughout salvation history in order to reveal Himself to prepare us to receive His gift of salvation and make us members of His family, man and woman enter the covenant of marriage as a sign of God's love and to form a new family in love oriented towards the salvation of the husband and wife and the procreation of children. There is something essential about marriage to human nature that, whether we fully understand it or not, we recognize in our celebrations of marriage. This fundamental truth is written into our very bodies as male and female.



Male and Female He Created Them

Read about the creation of the first man and woman in the first marriage. Then, answer the questions and complete the chart.

Genesis 1 tells us that God created human beings in His image and likeness as male and female. He commanded the first man and woman (Adam and Eve, though not yet named) to be fertile and multiply and fill the earth. Genesis 1 reveals that an essential part of being made in God's image is our maleness and femaleness and the unity of the sexes.

Genesis 2 takes a deeper look at this unity. God told Adam it was not good that he was alone, and that He would make a helper for Adam. God brought all the animals to Adam for him to name and find a companion. Of course, while human beings share certain characteristics with the animals, none are like us, made in God's image. Adam recognized that he was unique out of all creation. Upon this realization, God created woman from Adam's side, revealing that man and woman are equal in dignity and close to one another's hearts, rather than the false notion that woman is somehow less than man.

When Adam met his wife for the first time, she inspired him to speak in poetic verse, bringing forth the best of man in recognition of the beauty before him:

"This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;
This one shall be called 'woman,'
for out of man this one has been taken.

Adam proclaimed that at last there was one like him, a person unique out of all creation who shares his same dignity and vocation to love and holiness.

Thus, in marriage, man and woman become "one body," united together to fulfill God's command to fruitfulness. These are the dual purposes of marriage:

- the union and good of the spouses (the unitive purpose) is oriented toward ...
- the primary purpose of the procreation and raising of children (the procreative purpose).

Anything that prevents or diminishes these purposes is contrary to God's plan for marriage. Oriented as it is towards the procreation of children, marriage is an integral part of what it means to be human.

The union of Adam and Eve is the primordial, or original and fundamental, sacrament. It is a visible sign of invisible spiritual truth, specifically, God's love. Thus, the love between a husband and wife in marriage reflects the love of God. God's love for us has four parts:

- **God's love is a free gift to us.** We cannot earn or lose God's love. It is always freely offered to us without condition.
- **God's love is total and self-giving.** God gives Himself to us completely. He loves us so much that He assumed a human nature and gave His life for us on the Cross.



Trinity Stained Glass, Song Vinh Church, Vietnam

- **God's love is faithful.** God will never withdraw His love from us. Even when we are unfaithful to Him when we sin, He remains near to us and showers us with His grace.
- **God's love is fruitful.** God created all things – including each of us – out of love and holds all things in existence because He loves us.

The love shared between a husband and wife reflects God's love. Scripture tells us "Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8). The opposite of this statement is true as well: "Whoever knows love knows God for God is love."

1. Summarize in your own words the unitive purpose of marriage.

2. Summarize in your own words the procreative purpose of marriage.



Heart of the Lesson:

In fact, God's plan for marriage is a sign of His love for the world. Marriage is so important as a sign of God's love that the Bible begins with the story of the first marriage (between Adam and Eve), and ends with a prophetic vision of the wedding feast of the Lamb of God – Jesus – in heaven who is triumphantly united to His Bride, the Church. And in the middle, Jesus begins His public ministry at a wedding, announcing that He had come to bring God's promised salvation to His People.

D. Optional: Read aloud to your students Genesis 1:26–27 and 2:18–25 from your Bible, or have a student or students read it aloud.

E. Have your students turn to **Respond In Faith: Male and Female He Created Them** and have them read about the creation of the first man and woman in the first marriage. Then, have them answer the questions and fill in the chart. You may have students work with a partner to complete the chart.

F. When they have finished, call on students to share and discuss their responses.

G. Then, explain to your students that we learn from the story of our creation in Genesis that God made us male and female in His image and likeness. Human sexuality is all that makes a person male or female, which includes our physical characteristics, spiritual awareness, and the ability to participate in procreation. When we understand the purposes of marriage – the union and good of the spouses (the unitive purpose) oriented towards the procreation and raising of children (the procreative purpose), we can evaluate moral acts related to human sexuality according to whether it upholds or disrespects these purposes, the way in which marital love reflects God's own love, and the virtue of chastity. Catholic moral teaching on these matters reveals a deep understanding of human nature and the purposes of human sexuality and guides how we use the gift of human sexuality.

Activity Continues

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Now, fill in the first row of the chart with examples from Scripture of how God's love is free, total and self-giving, faithful, and fruitful. Then, fill in the second row of the chart with examples of how the love shared between a husband and wife in marriage reflects each of these characteristics of God's love.

God's Love			
Free	Total and Self-Giving	Faithful	Fruitful

Marriage			
Free	Total and Self-Giving	Faithful	Fruitful

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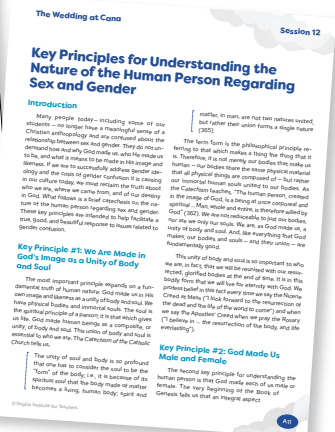
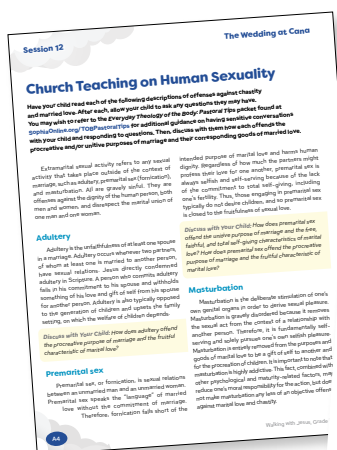
Walking with Jesus, Grade 8

Note: Two catechist resources are provided for this session. Because they include sensitive topics related to human sexuality such as masturbation, contraception, pornography, and transgender ideology, these resources are to be sent home for parents to read, in order to prepare them to teach their children about how Catholic moral values guide how we use the gift of human sexuality.

You may also refer parents to the Everyday Theology of the Body: Pastoral Tips packet found at SophiaOnline.org/TOBPastoralTips for additional guidance on having sensitive conversations with students on a variety of topics related to human sexuality.

A webpage devoted to transgender issues and responding to transgender ideology is available at SophiaOnline.org/Transgender.

You may also encourage parents to read the **Respond in Faith: Male and Female He Created Them** reading from this session to help prepare for their conversation with their children.



Purposes of Marriage

Have a family discussion with your parents about what you learned from today's session.

1

Tell your parents about why Jesus chose to reveal Himself as the Messiah for the first time at the wedding at Cana.

2

Explain to your parents about the dual purposes of marriage.

3

Discuss with your parents examples of how God's love and marriage are free, faithful, total self-giving, and fruitful.

In the space below, write down any questions your parents had, and/or any new insights you gained from your family discussion.

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A. If possible, have parents come pick their children up in the classroom. Call on a student to provide a quick summary of the session's activities. Let them know that on the ride home or at dinner they should teach their parents what they learned from today's session. They should use **Proclaim: Purposes of Marriage** to guide their conversation.

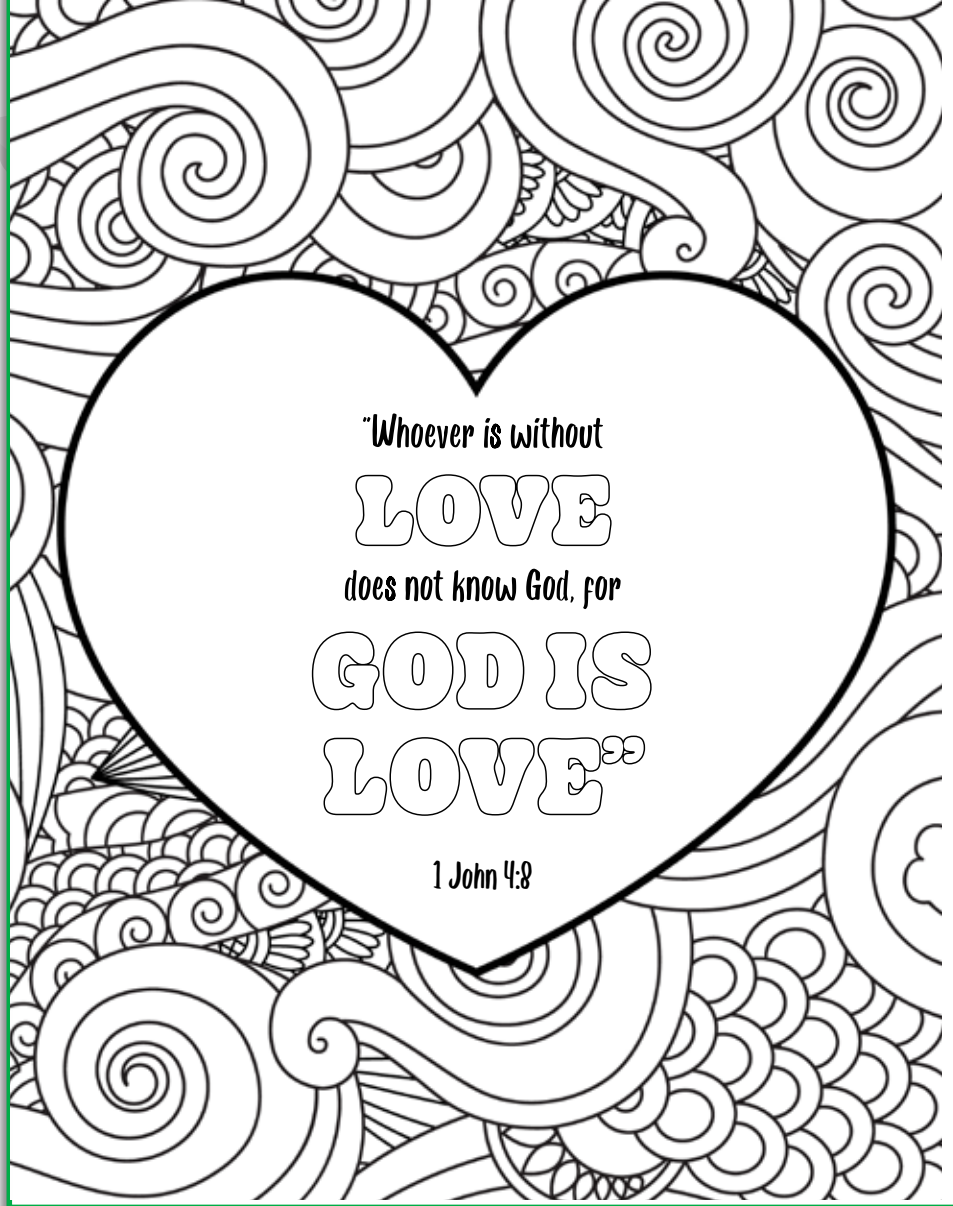
Proclaim Suggested Answers

1. Jesus revealed Himself as the Messiah for the first time at the wedding at Cana because marriage is an important sign of God's love. The Bible begins with the story of the first marriage (between Adam and Eve), and ends with a prophetic vision of the wedding feast of the Lamb of God – Jesus – in heaven who is triumphantly united to His Bride, the Church. And in the middle, Jesus begins His public ministry at a wedding, announcing that He had come to bring God's promised salvation to His People and God's relationship with His people was to be restored. God is like a loving bridegroom and His People are His bride.
2. The dual purposes of marriage are the union and good of the spouses (the unitive purpose) oriented towards the procreation and raising of children (the procreative purpose). We can evaluate moral acts related to human sexuality according to whether it upholds or disrespects these purposes, the way in which marital love reflects God's own love, and the virtue of chastity.
3. See the **Respond in Faith: Male and Female He Created Them** activity for specific examples.

Activity Continues

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B. Distribute copies of both **Catechist Resources** on pages A4-13 of this guide and encourage parents to read them together, and then share them with their children. Encourage moms to talk with daughters, and dads to talk with sons.



Prepare for the Next Session

- Read over the session plan.