



On your marks

The miracle of water into wine is recorded by John in his gospel as the first of Jesus' special signs. As such, it is not only the story of what happened at a wedding Jesus attended not far from his home town of Nazareth but it also reveals something important about who he really is.

Mary, as well as Jesus' first disciples, were invited to the wedding, so it may have been that of a relative. The host would have been severely embarrassed by any shortage of wine, particularly as these occasions would have normally lasted several days back in the Jewish culture of the day. So, Jesus not only rescues the party - although secretly - but he also teaches his friends (and interestingly the servants) that he has come to bring in a new and extravagant experience of God's love for all. Six water jars full of vintage wine would be a lot!

Mary's words in this story are very special and some of the very few recorded from her in the gospels. This could be the focus if you use part of this outline for a Mothering Sunday service - namely, here is a mother giving the best advice ever - 'do whatever Jesus tells you'.

Get set

You will need:

- a picture of the wedding at Cana (search for 'images' on the Internet)
- cardboard
- table
- plastic glasses, bottles/pots/bowls/jugs, straws, water, red grape juice (wine)
- craft materials
- digital camera (optional).

You can find the story in John 2:1-11. There is a retelling of the story in [The Barnabas Family Bible](#) (page 132).

Go!

Opening up the story

Very briefly talk about the start of Jesus' ministry: his baptism, temptations and how he started work, preaching and healing. Say that today's story is the very first miracle that Jesus did.

- Does anyone know what it might be?

Using a picture of the wedding at Cana (or simply of wine) and pieces of cardboard, slowly uncover the picture a little at a time so that they can guess what you are revealing.

As a way into the story, play a game in which each person in the group has to collect water using a straw and deposit it in a bottle at the other end of the room – place the bottle in some other container (for example, a washing-up bowl) to guard against spillage. At the opposite end of the room provide a supply of water in a large jug.

In turn, each person should suck up some water into the straw, put their finger over the end of the straw to 'hold' the water and carry the water carefully in this way across the room to deposit it in the bottle.

- How long does it take?

In the story, there were six jars, each of which carried between 20 and 30 gallons of water, which is about 1000 bottles of water that became wine!

Telling the story

Tell the story, using the children as actors and using wine glasses, a table and six large pots/washing-up bowls/big saucepans or similar as props. You might want to take photos for a display, if you have permission.

There are plenty of parts for the children to play:

- the groom and the bride
- the man in charge of the drinks (the steward)
- the guests
- the servants
- Jesus
- the disciples
- Mary
- the messenger who must have told Mary that the wine was running out.

Prepare some small prompt cards for each of the different actors involved with some key sentences to say. Now give the group time to put the whole drama together, encouraging them to imagine themselves into the parts and to use some additional, appropriate dialogue.

Suggestions for the prompt cards:

- Groom - *This is my wedding day. I want everyone to have a good time.*
- Bride - *This is the happiest day of my life.*
- Messenger - *Excuse me, Mary, but we're down to our very last bottle of wine. Do you think you can help?*
- Mary - *I'll talk to Jesus. (To Jesus) My son, they need your help. They've run out of wine and the party will be ruined. (And to the servants) Do whatever he tells you.*
- Disciples - *Why is Mary talking to Jesus? I wonder what Jesus is going to do?*
- Jesus - *It's not really the right time and place for a miracle. I don't think I should get involved.*



- Servants - *What a strange thing to be asked to do. We'd better take a glass to the steward.*
- Steward - *Wow, this wine is really good. Fancy leaving the best to last.*
- Guests - *This is a great party. I wonder what Jesus and the servants are doing? Wow, the wine tastes better now than it did at the beginning.*

Talking about the story

In turn **hot seat Mary, a wedding guest, the bride and a disciple to find out what they thought of the miracle. Try to establish how disastrous it would have been if there had been no wine for the party.**

Discuss together what this story tells us about who Jesus is.

- Why do you think Jesus kept his actions secret from the host and guests at the wedding?
- What might you say to those who say that this story could lead some people to think that Jesus had just come to do party tricks or, worse, to encourage people to drink too much?
- This story is quoted at the beginning of every marriage service that uses words from the Church of England prayer book. Why do you think this is and what might it mean to a bride and groom today?

Playing with the story

Make a big poster display of this story together.

Choose a masterpiece painting of the marriage at Cana and divide a copy of this into squares. Ask each child to copy an enlarged version of that square on to a piece of card or paper, and then reassemble them on your display as your own version of the picture. You might want to include digital photos of the scene the children acted out earlier.

Alternatively, using two large glass templates, ask the children to glue on mosaic paper pieces of blue (for the water glass) and red (for the wine glass).

Reflecting on the story

Create a focal point - of a glass of water and a glass of wine. Say that Jesus loves to change disasters into miracles, to change really bad times into really good times.

Prepare two small cups for each person in your group: one cup should contain a small amount of water while the other should contain a small amount of a red liquid - such as red grape juice. Encourage the group to think of the different things that they want to ask God to change for the better. As each person says something, pause for a moment and then everyone should pick up and sip some of the water and then some of the other drink.

Encourage everyone to go on praying for those people or places that are going through a bad time, asking Jesus to turn those situations into great times instead.