

Miracles

Suggested lesson plan for

Year 4_Unit 5

Aims: To consider why people in biblical times believed in miracles; to explore how a scientific way of thinking affects our understanding of miracles; to think about the purpose of miracles

Outcomes: recognising that people in biblical times did understand (through observation) how the world worked and believing in miracles was not a result of ignorance; understanding that the importance of a miracle is what it can tell people about God; understanding why people may be less likely to think of things as miraculous today than people did in ancient times

What is a miracle? [class discussion]

Has the class discussed a definition? If so, ask the children to recall it, then discuss the reasons why they agreed this was a good definition of a miracle.

Compare the class' agreed definition with a dictionary definition of 'miracle'. Are there differences? If so, do the children still think their definition is a good one? Why?

How would we recognise a miracle?

A miracle is something out of the ordinary.

Christians understand a miracle as being not just something unusual or extraordinary, but as being something that in some way serves God's purposes or tells believers something about God.

Jesus' miracles [class discussion]

What things did Jesus do that were considered miracles?

What was out of the ordinary about them (why were they miracles)?

What's most important: the miracle itself or what it says about God?

2 or 3 of Jesus' miracles – what do they say about God and/or Jesus?

- feeding of the 5000 (Matthew 14.15–21): God provides for his people (and, Christians believe, for all creation) and God's generosity (NB: if the class has previously discussed the possibility that Jesus' example got the people to share then also talk about generosity & caring for one another as a mark of being part of God's people [eg. "love your neighbour as yourself", Matthew 22.36–40])

- walking on the water (Matthew 14.22–33): Says something about who Jesus is – Spirit of God ‘moving on the water’ in creation (Genesis 1.1–2); Jesus, like God, has control over the things of nature
- healing miracle (Luke 8.43–48 [woman with bleeding] OR Matthew 20.29–34 [Jesus heals some blind men]): God’s care for people and desire to make people well and help them flourish

Before and after ‘science’

Did people believe in miracles because they didn’t know how the world worked?

While some things seen as ‘miracles’ might now be explained by science BUT

if people didn’t know how the world worked, how would they recognise something that was ‘out of the ordinary’?

People in ancient times *did* have a good understanding of how the world worked, based on what they saw and experienced (different from scientific experiment), so they knew when they were seeing/experiencing something extraordinary, something that didn’t fit – a miracle. *[example of boat floats, person floats if lying down but sinks if trying to stand on water – Jesus walking on the water. The disciples would have known this was unusual and not how the world worked, hence a miracle].*

Are people today less likely to believe in miracles now than people in ancient times? If so, why do we think that is? *[class discussion]*

- Does science explain everything?
- Because we do know so much, we want to find a ‘scientific’ explanation for everything that happens – we don’t like not knowing or not understanding.

Something to think about

Science allows us to do things that in ancient times would have required a miracle (like curing many kinds of diseases). Christians believe that our ability to discover things and understand how the world works, and make use of that, is part of what it means to be ‘made in the image of God’ (Genesis 1.26). Christians, then, might think of our ability to do science as a way of God enabling us to do miracles for ourselves.