

Weddings in Jesus' Day

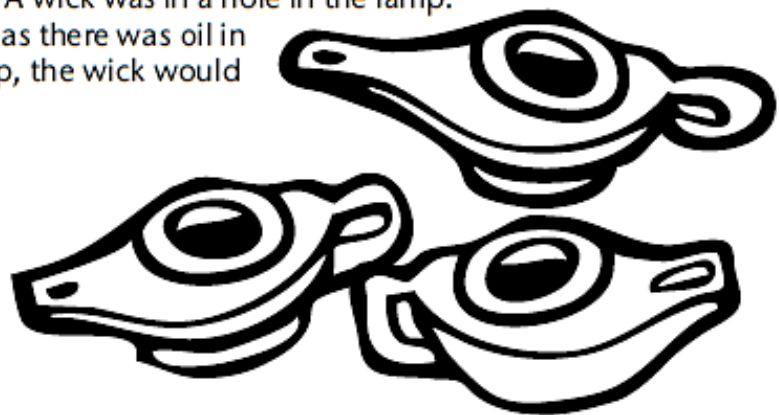
People listening to Jesus tell the parable of the Ten Bridesmaids (Matthew 25:1–13) understood wedding customs in their community. It is more difficult for readers of the Bible today to know exactly what these customs were. And, as any good storyteller, Jesus may have exaggerated some of the details to make his point. Still, it is helpful to have some understanding of these traditions, based on what we do know.

In Jesus' day, the groom's father would go to the home of a potential bride. He gave money or goods to her father to establish a marriage covenant. The bride and groom then would be engaged for a period of time. On the agreed-upon day, the groom would go to the bride's house and bring the bride back to his father's house. The wedding ceremony took place at the groom's house, followed by a big feast. A procession of people accompanied the groom to and from the bride's house. Other people waited to greet the bride and groom at the groom's house.

The bride would not know exactly when the groom would arrive, so she needed to be ready to leave at any time. In Jesus' parable the groom is delayed until midnight. The young women who are the bridesmaids are waiting outside for the groom. Their lamps are needed to light the way.

These drawings show what lamps might have looked like in Jesus' day. Most were small and made of clay. Olive oil was used for fuel. A wick was in a hole in the lamp.

As long as there was oil in the lamp, the wick would burn.



Faith Practices



Christians are called to live faithfully, with trust and hope in God’s promises. Sometimes it is difficult to know how to do this. Some activities can help us learn to live out our faith. These activities are called faith practices. When we take part in faith practices, they become easier and become part of who we are. Faith practices help us to stay in shape as Jesus’ followers. They help us to have faith in God’s promises and to stay hopeful. When we keep doing them, we are prepared for living confidently in God’s kingdom.

Faith practices take their shape from the Bible and Jesus’ teachings. Some are ancient, from the very first days of the church. Here is a list of some faith practices. Take a moment to mark your experience with each one.

Worship in my church	1 I have never done this	2	3 I have done this a few times	4	5 I do this on a regular basis
Pray	1 I have never done this	2	3 I have done this a few times	4	5 I do this on a regular basis
Read the Bible	1 I have never done this	2	3 I have done this a few times	4	5 I do this on a regular basis
Serve people in need	1 I have never done this	2	3 I have done this a few times	4	5 I do this on a regular basis
Have compassion for others	1 I have never done this	2	3 I have done this a few times	4	5 I do this on a regular basis
Forgive someone	1 I have never done this	2	3 I have done this a few times	4	5 I do this on a regular basis
Welcome a stranger	1 I have never done this	2	3 I have done this a few times	4	5 I do this on a regular basis
Be generous	1 I have never done this	2	3 I have done this a few times	4	5 I do this on a regular basis
Be patient with others	1 I have never done this	2	3 I have done this a few times	4	5 I do this on a regular basis
Take care of the environment	1 I have never done this	2	3 I have done this a few times	4	5 I do this on a regular basis

Circle two faith practices that you want to strengthen in your life. How might you do this?