



## 3 The Ten Plagues

### Scripture

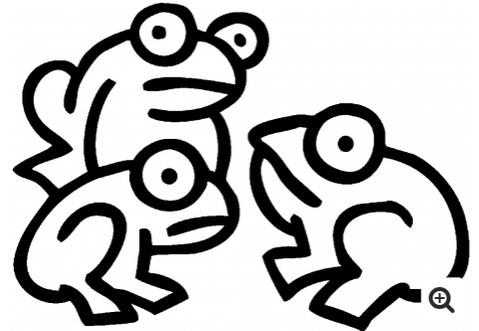
Exodus 7-12

### Focus

Our powerful God changed Pharaoh's mind by sending ten plagues.

### Faith Nurture Goals

- Wonder about the effects of the plagues on the people.
- Consider why God sent so many plagues.
- Express gratitude for God's power and protection of God's people.



## Leader Reflection

### Preparing to Tell God's Story

I'll bet you can't wait to teach about the ten plagues---blood, locusts, gnats, disease, and death, all visited on the Egyptians! Why does the Bible spend so many chapters describing these plagues and their consequences?

The first thing to bear in mind is that this isn't just a contest between Moses and Pharaoh, but ultimately a contest between the living God, the "I am," and the false gods of Egypt. In Egyptian religion, nearly all natural phenomena were somehow worshipped, from the sun to the river Nile, the cattle, the crops, and even the pharaoh himself. Most of the plagues have something to do with some aspect of natural life the Egyptians worshipped. It was God against the gods of Egypt, something like the contest on Mt. Carmel with Elijah pitted against the prophets of Baal.

This contest began when God sent Moses to Pharaoh with a simple request---well, more like a demand---to let the Israelites go to worship their God in the wilderness. Pharaoh adamantly refused, as we might expect. But after the first plague, in which the Nile turns to blood, Pharaoh caves . . . for a while. But as soon as the plague was withdrawn, the Bible says that Pharaoh "hardened his heart" and refused to let the people go.

It's interesting that, after a few plagues come and go and Pharaoh continues to change his mind, the narrative begins to say "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" (9:11). It wasn't until Pharaoh showed the fierceness of his rebellion against God that the Lord further hardened Pharaoh's already callous heart. Why?

The Lord wanted both the Egyptians and the Israelites to see that this was not a matter in Pharaoh's hand, or even in Moses' hand. God himself would win this victory and liberate his people.

Another important aspect of the story is that while these plagues devastated the Egyptians, the worst of these scourges, toward the end of the line, left the Israelites untouched. God was making it abundantly clear to the Egyptians that his hand was on and with his people and that they belonged to him.

Prior to the last plague, Moses forewarns Pharaoh that all of the firstborn of the Egyptians will die during the course of one terrible night. But while there will be wailing in every Egyptian household, he goes on, among the Israelites "not a dog will bark at any person or animal. Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel" (11:6). After this final, terrible plague, Pharaoh concedes to let the people go . . . at least for a while.

As horrendous as this seems, we need to remember that Pharaoh had commanded the death of all the Israelite infant boys and that Moses had stood before him only because God had spared him from the holocaust. This was God's answer. Now that Pharaoh had declined to accept God's command over and over again, he would suffer the same plague of death he had visited on the Israelites.

## Steps

### Step 1 Breathe

*Use this time to focus your attention on God.*

**Do this with me: calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.** (*Demonstrate a few deep "in and out breaths" with eyes closed.*)

### Step 2 Tell and Wonder

**Files:** [Story Symbols \(full unit\): Year 2 Unit 3](#)

#### Re★formed

It's important to recognize that God is a God of both love and justice. These are not polar opposites but two sides of the same coin. Love without justice is flimsy. Justice without love is cruel.

**Let's enter God's story together. Here's the story symbol for the part of God's story that we'll be spending time in today. I wonder what clues it gives us about the story we're about to hear?** (*Show the story symbol. Accept any answers without giving away whether or not the kids have guessed correctly.*)

**Listen closely as we read the story together to see which story our symbol represents.**

*Read "The Ten Plagues" aloud, pausing throughout to allow children to answer the wondering questions.*  
NOTE: *It's always a good idea to read through the story beforehand so you'll be able to tell it well.*

*You can also read the story from a children's Bible or a simplified translation of Scripture like the New International Reader's Version (NIRV). Remember to pause throughout to allow time to wonder.*

**Story: The Ten Plagues** [Exodus 7-12](#)

*Tell the kids that today's story is written in rhyme and that you'll need their help telling it. When you hold up your finger, they will respond by saying:*

**Pharaoh, Pharaoh, you gotta know—  
Now's the time! Let my people go!**

*Practice together a few times before you begin. Remember to hold up your finger at the end of each verse.*

*Open your Bible to Exodus 7. Show everyone the name of the book and the chapter. Point out that the story is four chapters long—chapters 7-11. It's long because God has plans to do many exciting things. Lay the open Bible on your lap and begin.*

*The story follows:*

Way down deep in Egypt land,  
God saw the Israelites and made a plan.  
He chose Moses to be the man  
to help King Pharaoh understand.

**Pharaoh, Pharaoh, you gotta know—  
Now's the time! Let my people go!**

Pharaoh said, "No! The people can't go,"  
Moses made Pharaoh's hand turn white as snow.  
Moses' stick became a snake so he could show  
"My God means business—just to let you know!"

When Pharaoh laughed, Moses lifted his stick  
and the river turned red, smelly, and thick.  
The fish all died, and the people cried, "Quick!  
Do something, Pharaoh; we're gonna get sick!"

**Pharaoh, Pharaoh, you gotta know—  
Now's the time! Let my people go!**

Now Pharaoh said, "Yes, your people can go.  
Get rid of this blood—we need water, you know!"  
So God made the water all sparkly and clean.  
Pharaoh's mouth smiled, but his eyes still looked mean.

Pharaoh said, "Moses, the people must stay!  
I'm changing my mind. Now just go away."  
Moses lifted his stick and he told him, "Okay,  
God will send frogs to visit today!"

**Pharaoh, Pharaoh, you gotta know—  
Now's the time! Let my people go!**

### Tip

If you have older children in your group, consider having them read the story today to keep them engaged in the poem. It may be helpful to give them a copy of the story the week before so that they can practice what they'll be reading.

There were frogs in the palace and in Pharaoh's bed;  
frogs in the ovens, and frogs on the bread!  
"Enough! I can't take it," yelled Pharaoh. "No way!  
Get rid of these frogs and I'll do what you say."

But as soon as Moses got down on his knees  
and said to his God, "Take these frogs away, please,"  
old Pharaoh smiled evilly. Calmly he said,  
"The people must stay—the frogs are now dead!"

**Pharaoh, Pharaoh, you gotta know—  
Now's the time! Let my people go!**

So God sent gnats to cover the land;  
they clouded the sky and blackened the sand.  
"Get rid of this nightmare," the people cried out.  
"Take your people—get going!" they heard Pharaoh shout.

But just when God took those insects away,  
Pharaoh spoke up, yelling "Everyone stays!  
I need all my slaves to mix dirt into clay.  
I'm afraid the Lord's people aren't leaving today!"

**Pharaoh, Pharaoh, you gotta know—  
Now's the time! Let my people go!**

Once more God told Moses, "I'm changing the plan—  
from now on the plagues won't affect Israel's clan.  
My people, my chosen, will suffer no harm.  
They can rest free from fear and secure from alarm.

**Pharaoh, Pharaoh, you gotta know—  
Now's the time! Let my people go!**

Next God sent flies—they covered the streets.  
They bit the Egyptians and spoiled all their meat.  
"Pray to God," Pharaoh cried. "Make the flies disappear."  
But once they were gone, Pharaoh's face wore a sneer.

"I am so sorry, Moses," he said with a smirk.  
"But I still need these folks to do all this hard work!"  
With his stick in the air and his head lifted high,  
Moses told mighty Pharaoh the cattle would die.

**Pharaoh, Pharaoh, you gotta know—  
Now's the time! Let my people go!**

"It's time you learn who you're dealing with here,"  
Moses said to the king. And he soon made it clear

### Tip

Some of your kids may wonder what gnats are—you can explain that they are tiny, biting bugs that are in the same insect family as flies and mosquitoes.

that the powerful God of the east and the west  
would keep on sending plagues until Pharaoh said yes.

Each time a new plague came down hard on the land,  
Pharaoh pleaded with Moses to give a command.  
"If you'll just stop this one plague, your people can go."  
But when it was over he shook his head no!

**Pharaoh, Pharaoh, you gotta know—  
Now's the time! Let my people go!**

God sent plagues on the cattle; they died in their sleep.  
God sent huge oozy boils that made people weep.  
God sent big, pounding hail that stripped every tree—  
But still Pharaoh refused to set God's people free.

God sent grasshoppers falling like rain from the sky.  
They ate every lick of the grain—my, oh my!  
God sent thick, inky darkness to cover the land,  
it was too dark to work—couldn't see your own hand!

**Pharaoh, Pharaoh, you gotta know—  
Now's the time! Let my people go!**

Pharaoh kept saying yes, he would set the slaves free.  
But when things improved, he'd say, "Oh, pardon me.  
I made a mistake, didn't mean what I said.  
These slaves have to stay here. I'll keep them instead!"

After nine plagues had left Pharaoh's land in a mess,  
he was still stubborn-hearted, I have to confess.  
"It's time for the worst one," God told Moses then.  
"It's time to show Pharaoh who's boss once again."

**Pharaoh, Pharaoh, you gotta know—  
Now's the time! Let my people go!**

"Listen up—it's high time," Moses said with a sigh.  
"If you don't listen now, your first sons will all die!  
That's right—your own children, your oldest-born sons  
will die if what God has said doesn't get done!"

That hard-hearted Pharaoh, he still didn't stop.  
He still didn't recognize God was on top.  
So everything happened as Moses had said—  
when the people woke up, their first sons were all dead.

**Pharaoh, Pharaoh, you gotta know—  
Now's the time! Let my people go!**

At last Pharaoh knew he just couldn't say no.  
He called out for Moses. He yelled, "Go on! Just go!  
Take your people and things and get out of my sight.  
Your God is too strong for this old king to fight!"

So God's people hurried; they scurried and raced.  
They followed God's leader right out of that place.  
God freed the people from slavery that day,  
so walking and praising they went on their way.

*Close your Bible. Invite the kids to think about the story by closing their eyes and picturing one part of it. (Some children may feel uncomfortable closing their eyes; let them know it's okay to think quietly with their eyes open.) Once everyone has had time to imagine, ask them to open their eyes and describe the scenes they saw in their minds' eyes.*

*Follow up with a time of wondering together about the story. After each of the following wondering statements and questions, pause for the kids to think and discuss:*

- **I wonder what thoughts Pharaoh had as he saw God do these amazing, powerful, unbelievable things.**
- **Do you think Pharaoh was ever afraid of what God might do next? Why or why not?**
- **I wonder why God sent so many plagues.**
- **What do you think Pharaoh's people thought about those awful plagues as they went on and on?**
- **What do you think God's own people thought about what was happening in Egypt?**
- **I wonder how God shows love and power and protection for you and me.**

### Tip

God is love and God is just. To kids this paradoxical truth may seem impossible. As you talk about this story, you might liken it to parents who love their children deeply but also have to correct them. Pharaoh needed to learn that God alone is God and that God must be obeyed.

## Step 3 Pray

*Close with a prayer in your own words, or use the following:*

**Dear God,  
Your love is so great. Your power is so great.  
Through your love and power you protected and saved your people  
from living forever in slavery.  
Thank you for giving us the Bible so we can know your great big wonderful story!  
Amen.**

See [5 Ways to Pray with Kids](#) for other ways to pray.

## Step 4 Respond

Select and do one or more of the response activities from God's Big Story card #26 or check out [5 Ways to Retell a Bible Story with Kids](#) for some fun ways to retell this story. Include older kids in the retelling by having them read the story aloud while the younger children act it out.

\*God's Big Story cards can be ordered from [FaithAliveResources.org](http://FaithAliveResources.org).

## Easy Extras

### 1. Arrival Activity: All about Egypt

**Materials:** world map or globe • pictures/images of ancient Egypt from children's picture books (check the library or the Internet)

Invite the kids to find Egypt on the map and then to flip through the picture books or look at the other images you've found online. Wonder together about what it would have been like to be a child in ancient Egypt. Imagine learning an alphabet that had pictures for letters! Wonder what it would have been like to build a pyramid in the hot sun without a crane, a cement mixer, safety boots, or a hardhat.

#### Tip

If you have time before your session, use [Penn Museum's Write Your Name in Hieroglyphs tool](#) to print out each child's name in Egyptian for today's session.

### 2. Connecto!

**Materials:** Connecto! printable page, one for every two people

**Files:** [Printable : Connecto](#)

Pass out pencils and divide the group into teams of two to play Connecto! Read the instructions together before they begin.

### 3. Age-Specific Activities

Click below to access the full age-specific *Dwell* session for this story:

- [2nd-3rd Grade: The Ten Plagues](#)