



4 The Exodus

Scripture

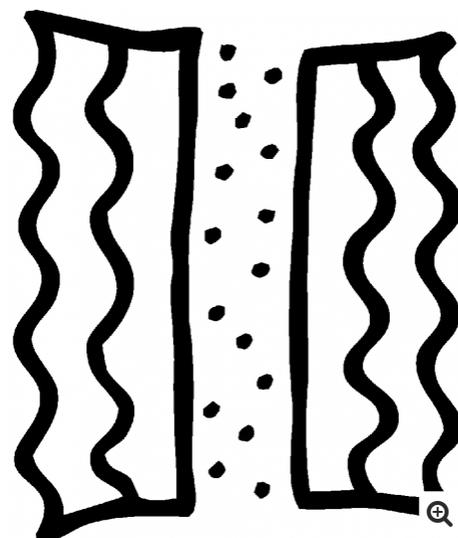
Exodus 12-14

Focus

God set the people of Israel free.

Faith Nurture Goals

- Describe God's promise to the people when they left Egypt.
- Tell what the story shows about God.
- Praise our mighty and powerful God.



Leader Reflection

Preparing to Tell God's Story

The Bible includes two primary salvation stories, and they're deeply related to each other. The story of the exodus is the Old Testament salvation story, and, of course, the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus is the New Testament salvation story. Just a hint of how they're related--when Jesus is transfigured on the mountain with Moses and Elijah in Luke 9, the disciples discuss with Jesus his coming "departure" (Greek *exodus*) in Jerusalem (Luke 9:30).

The story has been building to this decisive moment through eleven chapters telling of Israel's enslavement; the call of Moses; the plagues; and, finally, the deaths of Egypt's firstborn sons. The actual exodus is also saturated in ceremony and drama.

On the eve of Israel's departure, God institutes a memorial meal that will commemorate this moment of salvation for ages to come. The Passover, with its slaughtered lamb, serves the same commemorative purpose on the eve of Jesus' crucifixion.

Strangely, God does not lead the Israelites away from Egypt and toward the promised land by the most likely and natural route. Instead of heading due east, God leads them south, along the Red Sea. When Pharaoh, unsurprisingly, changes his mind and begins to chase them with his army, the Israelites recognize that they're stuck, almost literally, between the devil (Pharaoh's army) and the deep blue (Red) sea.

Realizing their apparently hopeless situation, the Israelites cry out to Moses, "Was it that there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die?" His back to the sea and seeing the dust of approaching chariots, Moses finds the faith for his most shining moment: "Do not be afraid. . . . The Lord will fight for you!" Then Moses raises his rod over the roiling sea, and its waters spread apart so the Israelites can pass through on dry ground.

This is a jubilant story of deliverance, but it's also gruesome. Pharaoh's armies plunge into the sea after the Israelites, the waves cascade over them, and horses and their riders drown in the writhing waters. In the morning their bodies are strewn along the shore. It is then that Miriam and the women sing: "I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea."

This Old Testament story of salvation prefigures our own salvation in Jesus Christ. We were enslaved to sin and death. Jesus came to be our Savior, but things looked hopeless when he was condemned and nailed to a cross. On Easter God opened the grave, and Christ's resurrection spells the defeat of the enslaving powers of sin and death. We too are redeemed through water--- the waters of baptism---and God has now set us on our way to the ultimate promised land.

Nowhere do we experience this parallel more graphically than at the Lord's Supper. "This is my body . . . this is my blood." No lamb here, because the very Lamb of God has already been sacrificed for us, and his blood covers us and our households from the curse of sin and death. Like the Israelite children, our own children may ask, "What does this ceremony mean to you?" (12:26). Our answer: It is the new covenant Passover. The Lamb of God was sacrificed on the cross to free us from our sins and give us eternal life.

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](#)

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 Exodus" 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.

Re★formed

The exodus demonstrates a truth that is central to a key Reformed perspective: that salvation is all God, from beginning to end.

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 Exodus Exodus 12-14

God had a plan to rescue his people from slavery. God sent Moses to Pharaoh, who was controlling God's people, asking again and again that Pharaoh allow the Israelites to be free. As Pharaoh refused again and again, our powerful God sent ten plagues to change Pharaoh's mind.

The very last plague—the one that broke Pharaoh's hard, hard heart—was that the firstborn sons of every Egyptian family died in their sleep. But there's more to that story. Because God was going to send the angel of death through the land of Egypt, God had Moses give the Israelites very specific instructions. Listen carefully.

Moses told the people to

- take the blood of a lamb and use it to paint the top and sides of their door.
- roast a lamb with bitter herbs and eat it along with bread made without yeast.
- eat this last meal in Egypt, standing, with their coats and sandals on and their walking sticks—called staffs—in their hands.

These are very unusual instructions. I wonder why God commanded them to do each of these things. *(Pause for responses.)*

Why do you think God wanted the people to eat bitter herbs with that meat—was there something bitter about living in Egypt? *(Pause for responses.)*

That night as the Egyptians slept, God sent the angel of death throughout the whole land of Egypt. In every house the oldest son died—except for the Israelites' houses that had blood painted on the doorposts.

When the Egyptians woke up and discovered what had happened, there was crying in every Egyptian house throughout the land—in Pharaoh's house too! Pharaoh begged Moses to take the people and get out of Egypt! He even encouraged the Israelites to take all their flocks and herds with them. The Egyptian people were so eager for them to leave that they gave God's people their gold and silver, their jewelry, and their expensive clothes. And if God's people asked for other things, the Egyptians gladly gave them those too—that's how eager they were for God's people to leave.

Moses told the people that it was time to go, and a long line of people and animals—many of them loaded down—began to move step by step out of Egypt.

Picture the moving scene in your mind. *(Pause for the group to join you in imagining.)* **What do you think it looked like?** *(Pause for responses.)*

God told Moses to lead the people through the desert toward the Red Sea. During the day God went ahead of the people in a cloud that stood tall like a pillar to guide them on their way. At night God led them by a pillar of fire to light their way so they could travel when it was dark. These two pillars were always with them—cloud during the day and fire at night.

Then God gave Moses an unusual command. God asked Moses to have the Israelites turn back just a bit and camp for the night near the Red Sea. **Picture that huge group of people and animals camping by the sea. Imagine and listen to the sleeping sounds.** *(Pause.)*

When Pharaoh realized that the Israelites were really gone and thought about how that meant he had no more slaves, he forgot all about the horrible trouble that had come to his land—and he changed his mind again! Pharaoh ordered his army captains and all the soldiers to get ready. He climbed into his chariot, and off they went after the Israelites.

Picture that scene in your mind—Pharaoh and his army, riding in six hundred chariots, racing after God’s people who are sleeping by the Red Sea. *(Pause for the kids to do so.) Describe what you see and the sounds you hear.* *(Pause for responses.)*

God’s people woke up to the scary sounds of soldiers and chariots. The Red Sea was in front of them and Pharaoh’s army was coming up fast behind them. Their eyes were as big as chariot wheels, and their pounding hearts sounded in their ears like horses’ hooves. The people were so afraid! They cried out to Moses, “Why did you take us out of Egypt into the desert? Being in Egypt—even as slaves—was a lot better than dying out here!”

Moses answered them, “Don’t be afraid. Get up! You are about to see God deliver you from the Egyptians. You’ll never see the Egyptians again!”

Then Moses followed God’s very careful instructions. He raised his staff into the air and stretched his hand out over the sea. And—this is so exciting!—when Moses did that, God moved the giant, cloudy pillar to the back of the line of the people and also sent an angel to the back of the line.

As that happened—are you ready for this awesome miracle?—the great Red Sea split apart, and the water rolled back, causing giant walls of water to form on each side. God sent a strong wind that dried out the soggy sea bottom so it was as dry as the desert floor! God’s people walked through—all the way to the other side.

If you had been there, what would you have shouted to God when you were safe on the other side? *(Pause for response.)*

But wait a minute! The Egyptians saw the dry path and decided that their chariots, horses, and soldiers could go straight through to the other side too! And so they started out on that dry path between the walls of water on both sides. They figured they could outsmart God and catch the Israelites, and so they charged in after them!

But God had another plan. Remember how Moses had told the people they would never see the Egyptians again? Suddenly our powerful God performed another amazing miracle right there in the middle of the Red Sea. As Pharaoh and his army raced down that long, dry path, God told Moses to stretch his hand out over the water again. Suddenly those giant walls of water came crashing and roaring down on the Egyptians. Not one of them escaped! Not one!

When the people recognized God’s power, love, and care for them, they were awed and speechless! For a moment they stood silent, realizing the meaning of what had just happened.

Let’s read how this part of God’s story ends. *(Open your Bible to Exodus 14 and read aloud verse 31.)*

Step 3 Pray

Have the kids stand with you to pray, repeating each line after you.

Dear God,

You are awesome in every way.

You are powerful.

You are loving.

You protect and care for your people.

Thank you for using your might and power to save the Israelites.

Help us to realize how mighty and powerful you really are.

Thank you for caring for and protecting us too.

Help us to love you and serve you with joy.

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 #28 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.*

Easy Extras

1. Dry Sand Band

Materials: Dry beans or small pebbles • paper plates (2 per person) • stapler • crepe paper (optional)

Tell the kids that the Israelites stood on the shore and praised the Lord. They danced and sang praise to God, using instruments they quickly put together. Invite your kids to be the Dry Sand Band, making instruments for the celebration, which will be the last scene of the story.

Lay out the supplies and guide the kids in making tambourines.

- *Place a handful of dried beans between two paper plates.*
- *Staple the edges together.*
- *Decorate with markers.*
- *Optional: attach crepe paper streamers to the edges of the plates.*

When finished, have the kids practice holding their instruments in one hand and hitting them gently with the other to accompany the praise passage. Encourage them to try using them while twirling around, jumping,

swaying, etc.

*When ready,
tell the kids
that you will
all praise
God, using
words that
are very
much like
the*

*Israelites' when they sang praises for God's miraculous,
saving power. Ask them to repeat each line after you say it—
while using their instruments and moving in praise.*

Tip

An alternative would be to use aluminum pie plates and have the kids decorate them with stickers instead of coloring with markers.

Tip

If you have older children in your group who enjoy being helpers, pair them with the younger children to help them assemble their instruments.

You can also have older children illustrate different parts of the story and then have them show their pictures as you talk about their scene in the poem. Or, if you're meeting in person, have the kids work together to make a backdrop using a large sheet of blue paper.

**I'm singing my heart out to God—what a victory!
He pitched horse and rider into the sea.
God is my strength, God is my song,
and yes! God is my salvation.
This is the kind of God I have
and I'm telling the world!
This is the God of my father—
I'm spreading the news far and wide!**

**God is a fighter,
pure God, through and through.
Pharaoh's chariots and army
he dumped in the sea,
The elite of his officers
he drowned in the Red Sea.
Wild ocean waters poured over them;
they sank like a rock in the deep blue sea.**

**But the people you redeemed
you led in merciful love;
You guided them under your protection
to your holy pasture.
Let God rule forever, for eternity!**

(Exodus 15: 1-6, 13, 18, The Message)

2. Age-Specific Activities

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

- [Kindergarten-1st Grade: Exodus](#)
- [2nd-3rd Grade: The Exodus](#)

