

5 Manna and Quail

Scripture

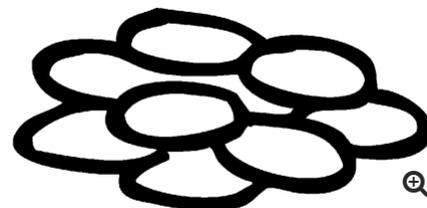
Exodus 16

Focus

God provided for the Israelites' daily needs.

Faith Nurture Goals

- Wonder how God's people could forget about God so quickly.
- Tell how God taught the people to depend on God's care each day.
- Describe ways God cares for us each day.
- Thank and praise God for providing for us.



Leader Reflection

Preparing to Tell God's Story

Someone has said that you can take the slaves out of Egypt but that it's much harder to take Egypt out of the slaves. If there's one thing that characterizes the people of Israel on their journey from slavery to the promised land, it's grumbling. This pattern began already at the shores of the Red Sea, when they accused Moses of bringing them there to die. No sooner had the songs of celebration died down than "in the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron."

Instead of being overwhelmingly thankful for their deliverance from slavery and excited about their journey to freedom, the Israelites could never see beyond the needs and fears of the moment.

The Israelites had to learn to trust in God even in the inhospitable and barren environment of the wilderness. And this is one of the main lessons we need to learn in our Christian life: trusting God to provide for our needs. Whether we're little children afraid of thunder or strangers or adults afraid of cancer or of losing our jobs, the lesson is the same.

Notice how God answers the people's grumbling with grace and generosity: "I will rain down bread from heaven for you" (16:4). God's answer will far exceed the people's request. They will "see the glory of the Lord" (16:6-7).

We see that glory in the Lord's lush provision of the delivery of meat at twilight, as quail fly in and cover the ground; and of bread in the morning, as the manna (the word means "What is it?") appears on the ground.

One often neglected aspect of the gift of manna actually gets a good deal of press in the story: while God provides an abundance of quail, the gift of manna is more measured. Each household gathers only as much as they need. If they greedily hoard too much, it becomes infested by maggots.

This measured allotment becomes even more important with regard to the Sabbath. People are told to gather for six days only. But on the sixth day they are to gather double what they need; this time it will stay fresh for use on the Sabbath.

In this way the gift of manna displays God's economic principles. The first is that enough is enough---greed and hoarding demonstrate a lack of trust in God. The second is the Sabbath principle: we tend not to think of this as being an economic principle, but it is. Sabbath economics teach us that everything needs a rest: land, animals, and people. It isn't, after all, our work that saves us but our trust in God.

We pray, as Jesus taught us, "Give us this day our daily bread." This prayer, and the way of life it suggests, are anchored in the experience of the Israelites in the desert. Each day they receive from God their daily bread, and each day we receive what we need from the hand of God.

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

Materials: Story prop to wear (such as a scarf to drape around your head/shoulders and sandals)

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 "Manna and Quail" 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.

Re★formed

God continues to care and provide for the Israelites. God is a God we can trust! As it says in the Heidelberg Catechism, "and so help us to give up our trust in creatures and to put trust in you alone" (Q and A 125 on "Give us this day our daily bread").

Story: Manna and Quail Exodus 16

(Put on your clothing prop) Hi! I'm Rachel *(or Ben)*, and I've got quite a story to tell. I've been traveling in the desert for a few months with my mom and dad and a lot of other people. I don't know if you've ever been in a desert before, but let me tell you—it's hot! The burning sand works its way into your sandals and between your toes. The hot sun beats down on your head, and you're thirsty all the time!

Tip

Add interest by dressing up like a young girl or boy might have dressed at the time—sandals, scarf draped over the head for protection from the sun, etc.

So maybe you can understand why, after several weeks of wandering in the desert, we all got a little crabby. It was no fun to be hot and miserable all the time. Besides, about a month after we left Egypt our food was pretty much gone. My dad and some of the other men tried to do a little hunting. But there aren't many animals in the desert. There aren't many streams to drink from either. So I could see why folks were a little upset.

Imagine how you would feel if you looked in your fridge and cupboards and saw nothing at all there—not even one little crumb of food. *(Pause for responses.)*

Remember now, out in the desert there were no grocery stores or trees full of fruit. There was pretty much nothing! So it isn't so surprising, I guess, that many of the people were worried. I heard my parents talking with our neighbors one night. They were saying things like this:

"We're not going to make it."

"We're going to die out here in the desert."

"A couple more days and our food is gone—right down to the crumbs!"

"Moses brought us out here to die, that's for sure!"

I started feeling scared. What about God? I wondered. Wouldn't our God keep us safe? God freed us from being slaves in Egypt. So why wouldn't God also feed us in the desert?

The next morning a huge group of people swarmed around Moses and Aaron, Moses' brother whom God had sent to help Moses. I could hear the angry people yelling and complaining all the way from our tent. This went on for a long time and then—suddenly—it was quiet. I hurried toward Moses' and Aaron's tent to see what was going on.

Moses and Aaron were talking to the huge crowd. "God has heard your grumbling," Moses told them. "You may think you've been grumbling against me. But you're really complaining against God. Don't you know by now that God will take care of you?"

I tried to think of all the amazing things God had already done for us. Help me remember them. *(Pause for response.)*

You're right. Just as I was trying to remember all of God's amazing miracles, I heard Moses and Aaron speaking again. "God will send meat in the evening and bread in the morning. Maybe then you will believe in

God again! But don't get greedy when the food comes," Moses warned. "Each day you may gather only as much of the bread as you need for that day, except on the sixth day of the week. Every time the sixth day comes along, you may gather enough for two days. That way you won't have to work on the Sabbath. On the Sabbath God wants you to rest, not work."

I was so excited! It sounded to me like I was about to see some more of God's great miracles. That evening as I was wondering about what God's next miracles might be, I heard a loud, whooshing sound. I ran to look outside our tent and saw the most amazing thing! Hundreds of fat, brown birds called "quail" flew into our camp and settled all around. They landed on the sand. People seemed to be able to pick them up quite easily. Well, I can tell you this—we had the most delicious supper that night! Just imagine the aroma of quail roasting over everyone's evening fires. *Mmmm, good!* That night we all went to sleep with happy stomachs!

But wait—the next morning another miracle! When I looked out the tent flap, I saw that the ground was covered with white stuff. It looked like the sky had rained bread! Parents were running around asking, "What is it?" Someone said, "It's sweet—like honey!" Someone else tried it and called out, "Try it! It's great!"

Soon people were hurrying all over filling their baskets. Someone decided to call the food *manna*. I thought that was a pretty good name because *manna* means "What is it?" I was really happy my parents filled a basket because when I tasted it I thought it tasted sweet too—just like someone had covered it with a little honey. The interesting thing is that it didn't stick around long. When the sun came up the manna disappeared—almost as though it had melted away.

Some people got greedy. I guess they either forgot or ignored God's rule about taking only enough for one day. I know because I heard people in the tent next to us holler out, "Yuck! This is awful! That manna is rotten. It's full of worms! Get it out of this tent right now!"

Well, that's my story. And it's morning again, so I've got to hurry out and help my mom gather some of that tasty manna. Got to run! Bye!" (*Remove clothing props.*)

Open your Bible to Exodus 16 as you invite everyone to listen and find out how long God sent manna to the people. Read [Exodus 16:35](#). Marvel at God's care—delivering manna to the people every day for 40 years. How amazing is that?

Step 3 Pray

Close with prayer. Ask each person to pray silently, thanking God for several specific things, people, or experiences God gives them each day.

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 #29 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. Prayer Guide

Materials: Prayer Guide printable page, one per person • scissors • clear tape

Files: [Printable : Prayers of Praise and Thanksgiving](#)

Tell your group that they will make a prayer guide for the week to help them remember to thank God each day for something or someone they need and appreciate.

Guide the kids in making the prayer guide (see printable page):

- Cut the paper into two strips, cutting on the vertical, solid line. (Or fold the paper in half if you don't have scissors.)
- Turn over the papers and tape them together on the back side. Remind the kids to make sure they have the title at the top.
- For each day of the week, invite kids to think of someone or something they are thankful for and to draw a picture of and write a word or phrase about that thing or person. Ask the kids to choose something different for each day.
- If the children wish, they may fold their papers like an accordion, making sure they put the first page on top as they fold.

Tip

If you are leading this session virtually, remember to send the printable page to parents so that the kids can work on this activity at home. At you close your time, encourage the children to find a space in their house to do their Sunday prayer right after you say goodbye.

As your group works, talk to them about God's greatness. Use the term God's glory. Point out that the miracles God did in the lives of the Israelites were miracles no one else could have done. God can be trusted. God's power and glory were shown again and again. God wanted the Israelites to be thankful, just as God wants us to show our thankfulness for God's power and glory.

When the kids are finished, have them share some of the things they wrote and pictured. Then ask them to spread out around the room, taking their prayer guides with them. Have them sit and pray silently, thanking God for what they drew and wrote on the page for today.

2. Age-Specific Activities

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

- Preschool: [Moses: Manna in the Desert](#)
- Kindergarten-1st Grade: [Manna](#)
- 2nd-3rd Grade: [Manna and Quail](#)