

Crossing the Red Sea

(Exodus 13 - 14)

Pre-Session Warm Up

Do you ever wonder why certain things happen to you — especially hard things? One minute everything seems to be going fine, then suddenly everything seems to be out of control! The Hebrews were finally leaving Egypt and everything seemed fine — for a while!

Opening Prayer

This morning, Lord, we want to give You our full attention. Open the eyes of our understanding and speak to our hearts in a special way. Teach us more about how awesome and loving You truly are. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear (Psalms 46:1-2a)

Lesson

The children of Israel were slaves in Egypt living under the authority of the cruel taskmasters of Pharaoh. God wanted to deliver his people from this bondage, but Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, was stubborn.

We learned over the past few weeks how God finally convinced Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave. He sent ten horrible plagues. The last plague was when the angel of death came into the land and killed the firstborn child in every family.

God had the angel of death pass over the homes of the Hebrew families who had sprinkled blood on the door posts of their homes. But, can you imagine that night for everybody who didn't obey God's command? Everywhere people must have been crying. Even the Pharaoh must have cried. His son was dead, too.

Finally, Pharaoh was willing to obey God and let the people leave Egypt. The Israelites must have been very excited and thankful. But, they knew there was no time to waste, either. Pharaoh might change his mind again. They knew if they were going to get out of Egypt, they had better get going at once.

Can you imagine the chaos of two million people packing and getting ready to move to a new land! All of their possessions had to be loaded onto donkeys and camels and into carts or into backpacks. They had to gather their belongings as fast as they could and begin the journey to the Promised Land.

Exodus 13:17-18

When Pharaoh finally let the people go, God did not lead them along the main road that runs through Philistine territory, even though that was the shortest route to the Promised Land. God said, "If the people are faced with a battle, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led them in a roundabout way through the wilderness toward the Red Sea. Thus the Israelites left Egypt like an army ready for battle.

God doesn't always work in the way that seems best to us. Instead of guiding the Israelites north along the direct route from Egypt to the promised land, he took them south by a longer route to avoid fighting with the Philistines. God knew they weren't prepared to face another nation in a war.

If God does not lead you along the shortest path to your goals in life, don't complain or resist. Follow him willingly and trust him to lead you safely around unseen obstacles. He can see the end of your journey from the beginning, and he knows the safest and best route.

Exodus 13:21

The LORD went ahead of them. He guided them during the day with a pillar of cloud, and he provided light at night with a pillar of fire. This allowed them to travel by day or by night.

God gave the children of Israel a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire so they would know day and night that God was with them on their journey to the promised land. These pillars were what guided them and gave them a sense of security of God's presence.

What has God given us so that we can always know our way in life? (The Bible.) Look to God's Word for reassurance of His presence. As the Hebrews looked to the pillars of cloud and fire, we can look to God's Word day and night to know He is with us, helping us on our journey in life. The Bible is like a compass and a map — it shows us the way we are to live our lives.

Pharaoh thought that the people were only going out to the wilderness for one day to worship their God. But when he found out they had packed up everything and were moving out for good, he regretted letting the people go.

Exodus 14:5-6

When word reached the king of Egypt that the Israelites had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds. "What have we done, letting all those Israelite slaves get away?" they asked. So Pharaoh harnessed his chariot and called up his troops.

Pharaoh pulled his great army together and went after the Israelites, which really scared them!

Exodus 14:10-12

As Pharaoh approached, the people of Israel looked up and panicked when they saw the Egyptians overtaking them. They cried out to the LORD, and they said to Moses, "Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren't there enough graves for us in Egypt? What have you done to us? Why did you make us leave Egypt? Didn't we tell you this would happen while we were still in Egypt? We said, 'Leave us alone! Let us be slaves to the Egyptians. It's better to be a slave in Egypt than a corpse in the wilderness!'"

Trapped against the sea, the Israelites faced the Egyptian army sweeping in for the kill. This seemed like a hopeless situation with no way for them to escape. The Israelites thought they were doomed.

After seeing the power of God performing the 10 plagues, wouldn't you think they would know by now that God had the power to protect them? No! Their response was fear and despair!

The situation the Israelites were in certainly seemed hopeless. Where was their trust in God? Instead of trusting God, they complained bitterly to Moses. Why did Moses bring them to this scary place? Had He brought them out here just to be killed by their enemy?

The children of Israel are just like you and me. God has given us these examples in the Bible so that we can learn to trust Him the first time. By remembering God's faithfulness in the past, we can face hard times with confidence rather than with fear and complaining.

In their complaining, they were forgetting something very important about God: nothing that happens is ever out of God's control. Israel had to learn that God is able to protect them.

Moses encouraged the people to watch the wonderful way God would rescue them.

Exodus 14:13-14

But Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the LORD rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. The LORD himself will fight for you. Just stay calm."

The people were scared. They grumbled and complained. But Moses had a positive attitude.

We may not get chased by an army, but we may still feel trapped at times. Instead of giving in to despair, we should adopt Moses' attitude to trust in the Lord.

Exodus 14:21-22

Then Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the LORD opened up a path through the water with a strong east wind. The wind blew all that night, turning the seabed into dry land. So the people of Israel walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on each side!

There was no apparent way of escape, but the Lord opened up a dry path through the sea. When things were at their very worst, God

showed the people in a most amazing way that He is Ruler over all. Even the waves of the sea are under His command.

Sometimes we find ourselves caught in a problem and see no way out. Don't panic; God can open up a way of escape for us!

Nothing that happens is ever out of God's control. He controls all of nature and everything that touches your life and He will allow only what is best for you. You may not understand why some things happen or how they will work out, but you can trust that God is working out His plan. Remember today's memory verse: *God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear* (Psalms 46:1-2a)

The Egyptian army followed Israel into the divided sea...

Exodus 14:23

Then the Egyptians—all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and charioteers—chased them into the middle of the sea.

Let's see how God disables the Egyptians...

Exodus 14:24-25

But just before dawn the LORD looked down on the Egyptian army from the pillar of fire and cloud, and he threw their forces into total confusion. He twisted their chariot wheels, making their chariots difficult to drive. "Let's get out of here—away from these Israelites!" the Egyptians shouted. "The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt!"

If a chariot lost a wheel, it would go around in circles!

Exodus 14:26

When all the Israelites had reached the other side, the LORD said to Moses, "Raise your hand over the sea again. Then the waters will rush back and cover the Egyptians and their chariots and charioteers."

Exodus 14:28

Then the waters returned and covered all the chariots and charioteers—the entire army of Pharaoh. Of all the Egyptians who had chased the Israelites into the sea, not a single one survived.

The God who created the earth and water performed a mighty miracle at exactly the right time to demonstrate his great power and love for his people.

Exodus 14:29-31

But the people of Israel had walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, as the water stood up like a wall on both sides. That is how the LORD rescued Israel from the hand of the Egyptians that day. And the Israelites saw the bodies of the Egyptians washed up on the seashore. When the people of Israel saw the mighty power that the LORD had unleashed against the Egyptians, they were filled with awe before him. They put their faith in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

God had saved His people again! Safely on the other side of the sea, Israel could see that God had been in complete control, working out His plan for them all along! They shouldn't have doubted that God would lead and guide and protect them. They should have remembered how God had always been there for them in the past and trusted that He would help them!

We must always trust and obey God and then give Him all the praise and thanks He deserves when He delivers us out of danger.

All the people were so thankful to be safe from Pharaoh's army, Moses' sister wrote a beautiful praise song to God. [Teacher, turn to the song in Chapter 15 and share some of it with the class.] Worship is a great way to express our thankfulness to God. Let's do that right now as we close in prayer...

Closing Prayer

Lord, we want to praise You this morning for always being in control of every situation, even when we don't see the whole picture. Help us to trust You when we are scared or afraid. We love You, Lord, and thank You for leading us and guiding us through each and every circumstance in life. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Use the following review questions in a game of your choice:

1. What finally convinced Pharaoh to obey God and let the people go? (The 10th plague – the killing of the first born.)
2. Why did the Israelites have to pack up and leave Egypt in such hurry? (They knew that Pharaoh might change his mind again.)
3. Why didn't God lead the people on the shortest route to the Promised Land? (He took them south by a longer route to avoid fighting with the Philistines. God knew they weren't prepared to face another nation in a war.)
4. In what form did God go before the people by day and at night? (By a pillar of cloud in the day and by a pillar of fire by night.)
5. Why did God lead them by these pillars day and night? (So they would know that He was with them day and night!)
6. What has God given us so that we can always know our way in life? (The Bible)
7. How can the Bible help us on our journey in life? (It is like a map and a compass — it shows us the way to live our lives.)
8. Why did Pharaoh chase after the children of Israel? (He regretted letting his slaves go.)
9. Why did the Israelites complain to Moses? (They were afraid of the Egyptian army closing in on them.)
10. Why did the situation seem hopeless to the Israelites? Why did they think they were doomed? (They were trapped against the sea with the Egyptian army coming in from behind.)
11. After watching God's powerful hand deliver them from Egypt, why were they fearful? (They didn't trust God.)
12. What helps us to have confidence in God when we're in the midst of a trial? (By remembering God's faithfulness in the past. And by remembering that God is always in control.)
13. When there was no apparent way out, how did the Lord open up a way of escape? (He parted the Red sea.)
14. What did God do about the Egyptian army? (He took off the wheels of their chariots and then closed the sea over them.)
15. What did Moses and the people do to express their Thanksgiving to God? (They sang a beautiful praise song.)
16. What is today's memory verse? (*God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear* (Psalms 46:1-2a).

