

The Plagues of Egypt

(Exodus 7:14 - 8)

Introduction

What does it mean to be stubborn? A person who is stubborn is strong willed and refuses to listen and obey. They are hard to handle. Have you ever been stubborn? [Teacher, let the children respond.] Why do you get that way? Stubbornness is a form of self-centeredness. A stubborn person wants something their own way and is unwilling to even listen to suggestions about doing it another!

We've been learning about Pharaoh and how he refused to listen to Moses and Aaron when they told him that God wanted his people to leave Egypt and go out to the wilderness to worship Him.

God wants us to set aside willfulness and self-pleasing actions for the sake of building others up for their good.

Let's try to learn some lessons from Pharaoh's mistake this morning!

Opening Prayer:

Lord, soften our hearts this morning and help us to see how wrong it is when we are stubborn about getting things our own way. Help us to be more "others" centered and realize that when we are stubborn we can cause other people a lot of trouble. Stubbornness can blind us to the truth. So, Lord, help us to not be selfish, but humble. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. (Philippians 2:3)

Lesson

God had chosen Moses and his brother, Aaron, to lead His people out of Egypt into the wilderness to worship God. But Pharaoh wouldn't listen to Moses. He didn't believe in God; he thought that he himself was a god. He thought he was the most powerful being in all the universe! So he refused to acknowledge the existence of God.

Exodus 7:14-16

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is stubborn, and he still refuses to let the people go. (15) So go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes down to the river. Stand on the bank of the Nile and meet him there. Be sure to take along the staff that turned into a snake. (16) Then announce to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to tell you, "Let my people go, so they can worship me in the wilderness." Until now, you have refused to listen to him.

Because Pharaoh refused to believe in God and do what He commanded, the Lord wanted to prove His mightiness to Pharaoh.

First plague: bloody water

Exodus 7:17-18

So this is what the LORD says: "I will show you that I am the LORD." Look! I will strike the water of the Nile with this staff in my hand, and the river will turn to blood. (18) The fish in it will die, and the river will stink. The Egyptians will not be able to drink any water from the Nile."

God dramatically turned the waters of the Nile into blood to show Pharaoh who He was. Wherever there was water, it turned into blood: rivers, lakes, streams, even water in pots and pans in people's kitchens. All the fish in the water died and the water smelled so bad the people couldn't drink it.

Egypt is a large country, but most of the people live along the banks of the Nile River. The river makes life possible in a land that is mostly desert. It provides water for drinking, farming, bathing, and fishing. You could say that the Nile is the people's life source!

How do you think the Word of God is like the Nile? [Teacher, let the children respond.] The Word of God is like living water to us. It is our spiritual source of life. Without the Word of God we would die. Just like we need to drink water every day to survive, we need to drink from the Word of God every day. [Teacher, discuss how we can “drink” from the Word of God.]

Without the Nile’s water, the people of Egypt could not exist. Imagine Pharaoh’s fear when Moses turned this precious river to blood!

You would think this would get his attention, but NO! Pharaoh was stubborn and didn’t believe God did this. So he called some of his magicians and they also turned water into blood.

Exodus 7:22-23

But again the magicians of Egypt used their magic, and they, too, turned water into blood. So Pharaoh’s heart remained hard. He refused to listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had predicted. (23) Pharaoh returned to his palace and put the whole thing out of his mind.

Pharaoh was unimpressed. So, God sends a second plague.

Second plague: frogs

Exodus 8:1-2

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go back to Pharaoh and announce to him, ‘This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so they can worship me. (2) If you refuse to let them go, I will send a plague of frogs across your entire land.

Exodus 8:3-4

The Nile River will swarm with frogs. They will come up out of the river and into your palace, even into your bedroom and onto your bed! They will enter the houses of your officials and your people. They will even jump into your ovens and your kneading bowls. (4) Frogs will jump on you, your people, and all your officials.”

When Aaron pointed the rod toward the river, the land was covered with frogs. They were everywhere! But once again Pharaoh called his magicians and they made frogs come up on the ground.

But Pharaoh didn’t like having the frogs around. So, he told Moses he would let the people go, if he would just ask God to get rid of the frogs. (It’s funny he didn’t ask his magicians to get rid of them! I guess they could only copy or imitate God, they couldn’t come up with anything new on their own!)

So, Moses asked the Lord to get rid of the frogs...

Exodus 8:13-14

And the LORD did just what Moses had predicted. The frogs in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields all died. (14) The Egyptians piled them into great heaps, and a terrible stench filled the land.

But, when Pharaoh saw that the frogs were gone, he hardened his heart and refused to let the people go, just as the Lord predicted.

When we are disobedient it is a sign that we are being self-centered. Sometimes our disobedience brings suffering upon others. Even after repeated warnings, Pharaoh still refused to obey God. He hardened his heart every time there was a break in the plagues. His stubborn disobedience brought suffering upon himself and his entire country.

Third plague: gnats

Exodus 8:16

So the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Raise your staff and strike the ground. The dust will turn into swarms of gnats throughout the land of Egypt.”

It happened like God had said and soon gnats covered the people and animals. They bit the people and made their skin itch.

This time the magicians couldn't make gnats appear. But it didn't matter. Pharaoh still wouldn't let the people leave to worship even when the magicians begged him to.

Exodus 8:18-19

Pharaoh's magicians tried to do the same thing with their secret arts, but this time they failed. And the gnats covered everyone, people and animals alike. (19) "This is the finger of God!" the magicians exclaimed to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh's heart remained hard. He wouldn't listen to them, just as the LORD had predicted.

Some people think, "If only I could see a miracle, I would believe in God." God gave Pharaoh just such an opportunity! When gnats infested Egypt, even the magicians agreed that this was God's work. But still Pharaoh refused to believe. He was stubborn. Stubbornness can blind a person to the truth.

Fourth plague: flies

Exodus 8:20-21

Then the LORD told Moses, "Get up early in the morning and stand in Pharaoh's way as he goes down to the river. Say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so they can worship me. (21) If you refuse, then I will send swarms of flies on you, your officials, your people, and all the houses. The Egyptian homes will be filled with flies, and the ground will be covered with them.

The next day there were thick swarms of flies in the palace and in every home in Egypt. Can you imagine how horrible this was? But there were no flies where the Israelites lived! God protects His people.

Pharaoh was beginning to think he better listen. He quickly called for Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh agreed to let the people go if Moses would just call upon God to get rid of the flies.

Exodus 8:31-32

And the LORD did as Moses asked and caused the swarms of flies to disappear from Pharaoh, his officials, and his people. Not a single fly remained. (32) But Pharaoh again became stubborn and refused to let the people go.

Pharaoh was a stubborn man! He saw God's great power, but he still refused to obey. But God kept giving Pharaoh many chances to do the right thing.

Last week we learned why God hardened Pharaoh's heart against the Israelites. Who remembers the reason? (If Pharaoh let the people go right away, it would have been so easy that Moses could have taken the credit for it. God wanted to prove His mighty power to both the Egyptians and to the children of Israel so that they would have no doubt that He is the only true God, master of the universe!)

Next week we will continue to learn about the rest of the Plagues that God sent. He really had to work hard to get Pharaoh to believe in Him, didn't He? Sometimes people blind themselves to the truth, just by their own self-centered stubbornness.

Closing Prayer

Lord, we don't ever want to be so hard hearted and stubborn as Pharaoh was. Next time we find ourselves being stubborn, Lord, help us to remember all the pain and suffering that Pharaoh brought on the people by his refusal to listen and obey. We would never want to be the cause of other peoples' discomfort. Help us to be "others" centered. 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 does it mean to be stubborn? (To be selfish and strong willed, to refuse to listen and obey.)
2. Why was Pharaoh stubborn? (Pharaoh himself was considered a god; he thought he was the most powerful being in the universe; he didn't believe in God.)
3. How did God try to prove His mightiness to Pharaoh? (By sending the plagues.)
4. What was the first plague? (Turning the water into blood.)
5. Why was turning the water into blood such a fearful thing to the Egyptians? (The Nile was their life source.)
6. What was the second plague? (Frogs.)
7. Why did Pharaoh ask his magicians to make more frogs? Why didn't he ask them to get rid of the frogs? (The powers of Satan can't come up with anything new on their own. All they can do is try to imitate the things of God.)
8. What did Pharaoh's hard heart and his refusal to obey God cause his people? (Lots of pain and suffering.)
9. What was the third plague? (Gnats.)
10. What did the magicians do when Moses and Aaron produced the Gnats? (They could not bring forth gnats, so they told Pharaoh that this was the work of God's hand.)
11. Stubbornness can _____ a person to the truth. (Blind.)
12. What was the fourth plague? (Flies.)
13. There were swarms of flies everywhere but where? (Where the Israelites lived.)
14. Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart against the Israelites? (If Pharaoh let the people go right away, it would have been so easy that Moses could have taken the credit for it. God wanted to prove His mighty power to both the Egyptians and to the children of Israel so that they would have no doubt that He is the only true God, master of the universe!)
15. Why is it wrong to be stubborn? (It blinds you to the truth and it can cause pain and suffering to others. It's a selfish attitude and God wants us to be "others" centered.)
16. What is today's memory verse? (*Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.* Philippians 2:3)

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