



God Saves the People

Goal: To trust that God works for people who struggle for freedom and justice.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Exodus 12:31-42

When the people of Israel were set to leave their slavery in Egypt, they did not have much time. They took the dough before it had been baked into bread. They left with unleavened cakes they made from the unleavened dough, but they had no other provisions for themselves (v. 39).

God was at work to save the people. All had to cooperate together. They all had to get ready to leave, make cakes of the unleavened bread, and depart the slavery of Egypt.

God freed the Israelites, the truth in the story's assertion of God's faithful care and liberation of those who are oppressed. The people responded to God's action by working together so they could depart in gratitude for what God was doing for them.

The Exodus story has inspired many who have experienced some form of oppression and struggled to be free—the American civil rights and South African anti-apartheid movements, Latin American liberation efforts, and the struggles of indigenous peoples throughout the world. In our world today, who are like the oppressed slaves? Who is like Pharaoh? What does freedom mean to you? How does God speak to you in your quest for freedom? How have you walked with others who are in search of freedom and justice? Where have you experienced liberation from bondage?

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Society teaches children to idolize athletes and entertainers. Children are encouraged to practice the disciplines of sports and entertainment and to emulate the best and the brightest in those fields. The church is potentially the one community that lifts up champions of justice. It is up to the church to train children to stand up against unfair practices, give to those in need, speak for the voiceless, and defend the innocent. If children know bullies, they know Pharaoh. How can you help the children stand up to the pharaohs of the world?

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Having some unleavened bread for children to taste is a great way into the story of God's people who left their homes in Egypt in such a hurry that the bread didn't have time to rise. As you tell the story, help the children understand how the Israelites helped each other as they left on their journey. Invite them to think about and name people who have helped care for them. Then invite them to name those whom they have helped to care for, either in their family or neighborhood. Be aware of the voices of all children, encouraging and waiting for each voice to be heard.

Gracious God, I am grateful for all those who work to help people be free. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 5, 5a, 5b, 5c, 20, 22

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

candle

green cloth

rope, brick, flatbread,
plate

Responding

Celebrating

SCM 5d, plain crackers or matzo, haroset or chopped apples dipped in honey, parsley, small bowl of salt water, horseradish or other bitter herb, hard-boiled egg, lamb (or chicken) leg bone, large plate

Praying

two copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1**

Extra

copies of **GN 2–3**

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

MS M L SD

Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, *(Name)*.” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite children to help set the scene and prepare the worship space. Provide a green cloth, candle, a piece of rope, a brick, flatbread, plate, and a Bible.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Ask for two volunteers to practice reading the scripture passage.

Gather the children and invite them to sit in a circle. Tell them that God called Moses to go to Pharaoh and ask him to let the Hebrew people go. Remind them that Moses was reluctant to go speak to Pharaoh. Play the following game:

- ▼ The children pretend to be finding someone to talk to Pharaoh.
- ▼ Keep up a steady rhythm of tap, snap, tap, snap, tapping their thighs and snapping their fingers as you say the words:

Group: Who wants to go and talk with old Pharaoh?

Leader: *(Name)* wants to go and talk with old Pharaoh.

Child: Who, me?

Group: Yes, you!

Child: Not me!

Group: Then who?

Child (now the leader): *(Name)* wants to go and talk with old Pharaoh. *(Continue.)*

Singing

MS

Play and sing “Freedom Is Coming”—**SCM 22**. Stand in a circle and dance to the music. Take turns dancing from one side of the circle through the middle to the other side. Have everybody change sides at least once.

Praying

Turn on the candle as a reminder of God’s presence. Invite the children to share one glad thing and one sad thing from their week. Prompt the children to respond accordingly to each share with “Praise God!” or “Hear our prayer, gracious God.”

Moses was placed in a basket by his mother to save his life and then rescued by the Pharaoh's daughter.

Moses encountered the burning bush and heard God's call to set the Hebrew people free.

The Hebrew people were slaves in Egypt and Moses was sent to set them free.



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Preparing to Hear the Story C

Encourage the children to tell what they remember about Moses. Show **SCM 5a**, **5b**, and **5c** to help them recall the stories. See the sidebar for answers. Ask the children to recall what God wanted Moses to do. (Tell Pharaoh to free the slaves.)

Wonder together what Moses did. Wonder what the children would have done if they had been Moses. Tell the children that Moses did lead the people out of Egypt, but they needed to leave quickly. Look at the items in the worship space and wonder what they represent (*rope—slavery; brick—the Hebrews were forced to make bricks for the Egyptians; and flatbread—unleavened bread baked quickly*).

Hearing the Story LD LG

Have one of the children find Exodus 12. Invite the volunteers to read Exodus 12:3–42 and then place the open Bible in the worship space. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Explain that the word *exodus* means to leave or escape. Wonder with the children why the Moses story is called Exodus. Mention the similarities between the words *exodus* and *exit*.

Explain that the Hebrew people had become slaves of the Egyptians. The Hebrews escaped and became refugees—people who leave their homes to get away from persecution. Encourage the children to listen for how the Hebrews are refugees.

Read **SCM 5**, a retelling of the story, or use the story audio. If you are reading, use your voice and expressions to make the story come to life.

Reflecting on God's Grace

Distribute paper and markers to the children. Invite them to draw their interpretations of the Exodus.

Wonder with the children what circumstances cause people to leave their homes today and become refugees. Be aware that some children may be disturbed to hear that people lose their homes.

Ask the children how God is active in this story. Remind the children that grace is a love bigger than we can imagine. Suggest that God freed the Hebrew people because God is gracious and loving. Wonder how we can know that God is gracious, especially when we are afraid or unsure.

Invite the children to share their pictures.

Singing

Play and listen to “Go Down, Moses”—**SCM 20**. Ask the children to listen for how the song expresses being afraid or feeling unsure. Discuss what the children heard. Help the children learn the words and sing the song. Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God's Grace

B MS

Invite the children to imagine they are the Hebrew people, hurrying to leave slavery in Egypt. Encourage them to work together to pack a bag while they race the clock.

Collect objects from the room and stack them on the floor at one end of the room. Have the children line up at the opposite end of the room. Give a plastic garbage bag to the first person. He or she runs to the pile, stuffs all the items in the bag, runs back, and says to the next person in line, "I'm a Hebrew! I'm leaving Egypt in a hurry!" The first player then returns to the far end of the room, empties the bag, returns and hands it to the second player, who repeats the process. Play until all children have completed the relay.

To add to the urgency, say, "Hurry! Pharaoh is coming!" When the children have finished the relay, remind the children that the Hebrews became refugees. Ask:

- ▼ I wonder, "How did the Hebrew people feel when they had to get ready to escape their hardship and slavery in Egypt?"
- ▼ I wonder, "Were they afraid, happy, sad, excited, or a mix of emotions?"
- ▼ I wonder, "Where is God when people today have to leave their countries to escape hardship and oppression?"

If there are six or more children in your group, form two equal teams. Provide each team with a pile of similar items and a plastic garbage bag.



Celebrating God's Grace

FA C

Arrange foods that are associated with the Jewish passover on the plate. Explain that the Hebrew word for Passover, *Pesach*, means not only "to pass over," but also "to have compassion" and "to protect." Ask the children to name parts of the story in which someone showed compassion or offered protection.

Invite the children to sample the foods. Ask them to note which food is bitter, sweet, tasteless, and so on. Then point out **SCM 5d**, which describes the significance of each food. Invite volunteers to read the explanations of each item. Explain that Jewish people still eat these foods and celebrate the Passover. The meal helps Jewish people remember that God freed them from slavery.

Wonder what we do together as a church to remember that God wants all people to be free.



If any of the children are recent immigrants or refugees, be especially sensitive to their feelings during this session. Provide time, if they wish, to share their experiences.

If you began the coat drive last session, remind the children of it today and encourage them to bring in new or gently worn coats. Tell them that next session will be the dedication of the coats.

Praying God's Grace

LD FM

Slavery has existed throughout the history of humankind and exists even today. Every oppressed culture has longed for freedom. Lead the children in a prayer for freedom.

Wonder what it was like to be a slave for the Egyptians. Read Exodus 3:6–10 for a brief description of the kind of life the Hebrews lived.

Provide copies of **GN 1** and ask the children to take turns reading aloud the verses in numerical order. Then have the children cut the strips apart. Staple or tape the strips into circles and link into a chain. While the children are working, wonder together about how people may be oppressed or enslaved, literally or figuratively.

Form a circle and invite each child to hold some part of the chain. Offer a simple prayer about God making freedom a reality for all humankind. Close the activity by breaking the paper chain to symbolize the freedom that God brings.

Extra Activity

LD C

Wonder together what it may have been like for Moses to stand up to Pharaoh. Tell the children that standing up to bullies can be like standing up to Pharaoh.

Provide copies of **GN 2** and **GN 3**, scissors, and glue-sticks. Invite the children to cut carefully along the dotted lines on **GN 2**, fold each rectangle at the solid lines, then close them again. Have them glue only in the gray areas on **GN 3**. Place **GN 2** on top of **GN 3** and press the two sheets together.

Invite volunteers to read each scenario, allowing time for the children to open and read about their responses. When the fourth scenario is read, have the children write or draw a response in the space provided. Allow time to discuss the children's thoughts.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Ask the children to help clean the space.

Gather the children and tell them that a litany is a prayer in which a leader makes a statement and then the people respond. Explain that “We give you thanks, O God” is the response they will give when you pause after each statement. Pause at each asterisk (*).

For calling Moses to do a hard job,*

For the help you gave Moses in doing the job,*

For calling us to do your work,*

For helping us do what you call us to do,*

For promising to always be with us.* Amen.

Close by saying, “Remember that God is always with you. Go in grace to love and serve the Lord!”

Remind the children about the free e-book and challenge them to read the story during the week.

1

The LORD said to Moses, "I'll bring one more disaster on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he'll let you go from here. In fact, when he lets you go, he'll eagerly chase you out of here." (Exodus 11:1, CEB)

2

"Tell the whole Israelite community: On the tenth day of this month they must take a lamb for each household, a lamb per house."
(Exodus 12:3, CEB)

3

"Your lamb should be a flawless year-old male. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You should keep close watch over it until the fourteenth day of this month. At twilight on that day, the whole assembled Israelite community should slaughter their lambs." (Exodus 12:5-6, CEB)

4

"They should take some of the blood and smear it on the two doorposts and on the beam over the door of the houses in which they are eating. That same night they should eat the meat roasted over the fire. They should eat it along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs." (Exodus 12:7-8, CEB)

5

"This is how you should eat it. You should be dressed, with your sandals on your feet and your walking stick in your hand. You should eat the meal in a hurry. It is the Passover of the LORD." (Exodus 12:11, CEB)

6

"I'll pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I'll strike down every oldest child in the land of Egypt, both humans and animals. I'll impose judgments on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD." (Exodus 12:12, CEB)

7

"The blood will be your sign on the houses where you live. Whenever I see the blood, I'll pass over you. No plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt." (Exodus 12:13, CEB)

8

"This day will be a day of remembering for you. You will observe it as a festival to the LORD. You will observe it in every generation as a regulation for all time." (Exodus 12:14, CEB)

9

"And when your children ask you, 'What does this ritual mean to you?' you will say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, for the LORD passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. When he struck down the Egyptians, he spared our houses.'" The people then bowed down and worshiped. (Exodus 12:26-27, CEB)

10

The Israelites went and did exactly what the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron to do. (Exodus 12:28, CEB)

A friend's parent posted a video of your friend singing online and you hear some people making fun of it. Do you do something about it?

NO

YES

like standing up to bullies!

While you're playing a game, everyone starts ganging up on one player, calling her/him names. Do you take action?

NO

YES

A classmate starts a rumor about someone at school, and your friends start talking about it. Do you take action?

NO

YES

Standing up to Pharaoh is

You're invited to a party but your friend isn't. At the party, some of the kids make jokes about your friend and laugh at him. What would you do?

?

NO: It is hard to know how to respond to bullying. Sticking up for another kid is not always easy and takes courage. If you can't say something publicly, let your friend know you support them.

YES: By speaking up and letting others know it is not cool to make fun of people, you can make a real difference. Try saying that you don't like the mean comments. Sometimes it just takes one person to stop unkind comments. Letting your friend know that he or she is not alone can also go a long way.

NO: It's easy to be confused about what to do when you see someone being bullied. If it's hard to confront a group, you can ask an adult to step in. You can also make a difference by changing the topic and getting the player out of the spotlight.

YES: By taking action, you're showing that what they're doing isn't OK. It's important to help the person who's being bullied. Ask a friend to join you in cheering on everyone as they play the game.

glue

NO: Sometimes there's no clear way to stop bullying—especially with rumors. Show anyone who has rumors being spread about them that you support them. Maybe you could do something with them to show that you don't believe the rumors. Just try not to spread rumors, even if your friends do.

YES: By shutting down rumors, you can really help that person out. Ask your friends how they would feel if people were spreading rumors about them. You could get a couple of friends to do something with the person to show your support.



