

We at Camp Swamp are excited to announce our theme for the summer: **WITH**. The story of God's rescue of the Israelites in Exodus is one of the earliest stories kids learn in Sunday School class but our familiarity with it often robs us from recognizing the power of the story and the truths about God. We will study the unlikely heroes in chapters 1 and 2, God's patience with Moses in chapters 3 and 4, God's challenge of the polytheistic worldview of Egypt in chapters 7 through 11, God's unforgettable deliverance in chapters 11 and 12, and the unexpected escape in chapters 13 and 14. Throughout the week, we will remind campers of God's faithful presence in our lives today, even when we can't see it as clearly as a burning bush or a pillar of fire. With the backdrop of the story of Moses describing some intense circumstances, we will guide our older campers in wrestling with the problem of suffering and setting our minds on how God calls us to understand His presence with us in it. We will meditate on the poems of the Psalms and the prophet Isaiah, with beautiful language describing God WITH us in all circumstances, especially when we are feeling totally alone, overwhelmed, afraid or misunderstood. And we have, through Jesus, Emmanuel (God with us), the promise of Matthew 18:20 – "I am with you always, to the very end of the age"- and the gift of the Counselor.

Monday class: "Unlikely Heroes"

(class focus: doing what is right even when we are afraid and remembering God is WITH us)

Younger kids Bible classes (ages 9-11):

Q: Think of your favorite superheroes: Who are they?

Q: What are the qualities about them that make them superheroes?

Q: If you were a superhero, what quality would you want? {We will go around the room and share what our superhero name would be and our superpower – make this active, let them move around with this.}

{For this next set of questions, have the kids turn and talk to each other about their ideas and then have them present them as a team}

Q: What about your favorite regular human heroes? What are the qualities that make them heroes? Do you think heroes get afraid?

Let's consider a story about an unlikely hero in the Bible.

Exodus 2:1-10 {assign readers: narrator, Pharaoh's daughter, Miriam/sister}

Think about the law that the king (Pharaoh) made that allowed people to kill Hebrew baby boys. It was a terrible law that made the Hebrews very afraid and was caused by hatred and prejudice. And think about this mom described in v 1-3 – **what are her options?** {help the kids to use their imaginations about what the mom can do}

Q: When Pharaoh's daughter sees this baby in the basket, what are her options? {help the kids to use their imaginations about her options}{follow the edict by killing the baby, show compassion on the baby by rescue the baby but make him her slave (he is a Hebrew after all), show compassion on the baby by rescuing him and make him her son)

I would propose that this woman is an unlikely hero and maybe more than we usually realize. Let's consider her story: here we have a woman with some power in this oppressive system that has decided to kill baby boys in this minority group; her dad is the king who enforces this law; she is benefiting from the way things are because her dad is in charge. She has **power and privilege** in

this place. Sometimes we have power because we have earned it; sometimes we are born into an advantage.

Q: What are her advantages? *{prompt them to use their imagination: she is royalty, she is rich and has servants, her dad is the most powerful man in the country}*

She has a unique opportunity to use her power/privilege/advantages to not only benefit herself but others. I would propose that she uses the power she does have to do what is right even when there are consequences for her choice. Sometimes when we have power or advantage, we have more to lose when we stand up and do the right thing...

Q: What are our advantages? *{help the kids to think about it. Here are some prompts to get them thinking: able to attend school/access to education; live in a home/have access to running water, electricity, food; able to come to camp (some kids travel for twenty-four hours by train to come to a camp like this)}*

Q: What are ways we use our advantages to help others?

Q: If you were in her shoes, what would be scary about standing up to the king/pharaoh in this story?

Q: What kind of reaction might the princess received for standing up against the king's order? *talk about standing up to the king of Egypt – taking into her home/care a male Hebrew when her dad had told everyone to kill those babies!*

Q: What situations are scary for us? *{give prompts to the kids as examples: getting a cavity filled, trying out for a part in a play, going up to bat in a game, When we are in situations where we look stupid/awkward/clueless, situations where we are excluded, situations that have serious consequences (could get hurt, get in trouble, lose privileges)}*

Q: What do we do sometimes when we are scared? *{give them options: try to blend in with friends, tempted to lie or compromise the truth, tempted to quit, feel overwhelmed or anxious}*

Q: What makes it hard to do the right thing when we are afraid?

Let's read a song in the Bible that is helpful to remember when we are feeling afraid:

Psalm 23:1-6

Here is a thought to consider – even when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are WITH me; your rod and your staff they comfort me.

God wants us to remember that He is WITH us when we are the most afraid - we are never alone even when we feel scared.

Q: Why is it hard sometimes to remember that God is WITH us when are afraid? *because we cannot see him, feel him, hear him in the same way we can with other humans*

Q: What are some things we can do to remember that we are never alone?

{have the kids split into small groups for the last question and have them share their groups answer after they have discussed it}

Q: From our lesson today, what is one word that would sum up what we learned today? Is there a picture or a symbol that would remind you of the lesson from this story?

Middle/Older kids (12-18 yo)

Q: Think of your favorite superheroes: What are the qualities that make them superheroes?

Q: What about ordinary human heroes? What are the qualities that make them heroes?

Q: Do you think ordinary human heroes get afraid? Can you still be a hero if you are afraid?
(does it depend on what you do when you are afraid?)

Let's consider some stories about ordinary human heroes in the Bible.

Read Exodus 1:15-22 {assign readers: narrator, king/pharaoh, midwives}

Q: What was the king/pharaoh ordering the midwives to do? (*kill the baby boys*)

Q: what could happen to them if they did not follow what Pharaoh said to do? (*he could put them in prison, take away their homes/possessions, kill them or people they loved – and there was nothing these women could do to stop him*)

Q: what did these women do? (*they refuse and they provide an excuse for why they are not able to comply with the edict*)

I would propose that these ordinary women – Shiphrah and Puah are heroes. Let's consider their stories: the Bible names them but they are women who were part of the oppressed minority, they had no power to stop the king, and they did what they could in a terrible situation. They did what was right and would not kill these babies even under the threat of bad things happening in their disobedience. Their bravery may stand out even more, because they had **no power or privilege** but stood up against the king's orders.

Q: what does the text tell us about God's response to their actions? (*He knew that they did it because they fear Him and He rewards them*)

Q: What does the king/pharaoh order when his plan to have the midwives kill the baby boys does not seem to work? (*he sends out an order to all the people to kill the Hebrew baby boys in the river*)

Q: What do you think that looked like? (*use your imagination – so if you were a Hebrew mother or father holding your baby boy, someone could just grab your child out of your arms and throw him in the river – and there is nothing you can do*)

Q: what would it feel like to be Hebrew parents with this order from the king?

Now let's read **Exodus 2:1-10** {assign readers: narrator, Pharaoh's daughter, Miriam/sister}

Think about the edict out there about people killing Hebrew baby boys – and you are this mom described in v 1-3

Q: what are her options? (*She decides to put him in this basket in the river– consider this an act of faith – putting her child in God's hands*)

Q: when Pharaoh's daughter sees this baby, what are her options? (*follow the edict by killing the baby, show compassion on the baby by rescue the baby but make him her slave (he is a Hebrew after all), show compassion on the baby by rescuing him and make him her son*)

I would propose that this woman is an unlikely hero and maybe more than we usually realize. Let's consider her story: here we have a woman with some power in this oppressive system that has decided to kill baby boys in this minority group; her dad is the king who enforces this law; she is benefiting from the way things are because her dad is in charge. She has **power and privilege** in this place. Sometimes we have power because we have earned it; sometimes we are born into an advantage.

Q: What are her advantages? {prompt them to use their imagination: she is royalty, she is rich and has servants, her dad is the most powerful man in the country}

She has a unique opportunity to use her power/privilege to not only benefit herself but others. I would propose that she uses the power she does have to do what is right even when there are consequences for her choice. Sometimes when we have power or advantage, we have more to lose when we stand up and do the right thing...

Q: What are our advantages? {help the kids to think about it. Here are some prompts to get them thinking: able to attend school/access to education; live in a home/have access to running water, electricity, food; able to come to camp (some kids travel for twenty-four hours by train to come to a camp like this)}

Q: What are ways we can use our advantages to help others?

Q: If you were in her shoes, what would be scary about standing up to the king/pharaoh in this story?

Q: What kind of reaction might the princess received for standing up against the king's order? *talk about standing up to the king of Egypt – taking into her home/care a male Hebrew when her dad had told everyone to kill those babies!*

Q: What situations are scary for us? {For example, when people are bullied and we are bystanders, when people say racially charged or sexist comments/jokes and we let them slide even when we are uncomfortable, when we allow others to say homophobic things because we are unsure of what to say in response, peer pressure, etc...}

(consider other situations where we look stupid/be embarrassed, are excluded, have serious consequences, could get hurt)

Q: What do we do when we are scared? *(try to blend in, compromise and do what's easy, quit/give up)*

Q: How should we handle our fears when we have a choice to make, and we are afraid how others might respond to us doing the right thing?

Q: What stands in the way of us being brave when we feel scared?

Let's read a song that is helpful to remember when we are feeling afraid: Psalm 23

This song gives us advice on how to deal with our fears. It reminds us that “even when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are WITH me; your rod and your staff they comfort me.”

Q: What does it mean that God is WITH us?

Q: Why is it hard sometimes to recognize/remember that God is WITH us when are afraid? *(because we cannot see him, feel him, hear him in the same way we can with humans, because we are more afraid of the world than we are of God)*

Q: What are some things we can do to remember that we are never alone?

Challenge: identify a situation or relationship where you have an advantage/privilege and choose to use your power for the good of others. Think about ways you can make the week special for younger campers/first timers/those on the outside. And for situations where you think you have no advantage/privilege, what will you choose? Think about how this translates for home...how will you be a hero?

Tuesday class: “Unfailing Patience”

(class focus: looking at God’s responses to Moses fears and doubts and remembering that God meets us where we are in fear and doubt)

Younger kids Bible classes (ages 9-11):

{Play the improv game “excuses excuses.” Review the instructions below before you start the game so that you are familiar with the format. Read the underlined instructions aloud to the class}

Here is the scenario for our game: someone is late to the morning meeting before breakfast. We are going to have two teen workers helping and they will play a late person and Mr. Steve, and everyone in the class is a helper. Before the game starts, the late person leaves the space and everyone else comes up with an excuse for why they would be late. Then once the group has decided, the late person comes back in and has to guess why they themselves are late. However, the helpers can only use charades to communicate the excuse when Mr. Steve’s back is turned. At any moment, Mr. Steve can turn around the “catch” the helpers mid-gesture, so they must stop giving clues until he turns away again.

Give them five minutes to act it out.

(<https://www.childsplayinaction.com/excuses-excuses/> : to watch an example)

Let’s transition to our story for today, when Moses gave God some reasons to not take on a responsibility He was given.

Exodus 3:1-4:17 *{assign readers: Moses, God, narrator}*

Q: What responsibility does God give Moses in this story?

Q: What are some of the things that Moses says to God about why Moses does not want to do this job? *{remind the campers to look back at the text for Moses’ reasons}*

Q: Why do you think Moses says these things? *{give the campers options: he was scared, unsure, didn’t think he could do it, wanted someone else to do}*

{For this next set of questions, have the kids turn and talk to each other about their ideas and then have them present them as a team}

Q: What does this story teach us about Moses? *(Moses seems pretty aware of his reasons and he is willing to tell God what he thinks and is feeling. When he is not feeling up to the job, he has some sort of speech impediment, he is feeling nervous and insecure, wants someone else to do, he tells God in honest and real words.)*

Q: How does God respond to Moses questions and doubts and fears and insecurity about taking on this responsibility? *{Help the kids use their imagination. If they need options, remind them to walk through each reason Moses gives to God – God reassures Moses, He tells Him the truth, He gives Him a sign that He is with him, He gives him a friend to go with him}*

Q: What does this story teach us about God?

Q: Have you ever considered that God shows you the same patience and kindness as He shows Moses in this story? That God believes in you more than you imagine? That God never gives up on you? You can have all kinds of questions and doubts and fears, and God still wants to be close to you and work with you. You do not have to be perfect or have it all worked out in your head.

Q: Have you ever shared with God where you are? Have you shared the doubts and fears you are having or talked to Him about suffering/hard times you are facing?

It is okay to not know how to be close to God or how to talk to God. It is okay to realize that maybe we don't understand God and how He works.

Q: Have you ever asked God for a sign to show you that He is with you? Have you ever looked for “glimmers” (God-sightings) that remind you that God is real, He is present, and He is good? {Give examples of “glimmers”: nature, answered prayers, good friends}

Here is a verse to consider when you feel overwhelmed/anxious/afraid/confused about something in your life: God is WITH you.

Isaiah 41:10

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Q: How do you think God might strengthen you? *Gives us prayer, parents we can talk to and get help on knowing what to do*

Q: What did he do with Moses? *(Reassured him when he felt insecure and unable to do the job, gave him a friend/companion to do it with him, who helped him and supported him in doing the right thing.)*

Q: Are there any ways that you have seen God give you any companions or other ways to help you?

{have the kids split into small groups for the last question and have them share their groups answer after they have discussed it}

Q: From our lesson today, what is one word that would sum up what we learned today? Is there a picture or a symbol that would remind you of the lesson from this story?

Middle/Older kids (12-18 yo)

Let's read a story about Moses when he gave God lots of reasons why he could not take the role that God was giving him.

Exodus 3:1-4:17 – let's act this out – someone plays Moses, someone plays God, and someone plays narrator.

Q: So, what role does God give Moses?

Q: What is Moses' response to this role? Giving REASONS why he cannot/should not do it.

Let's start with reason #1 posed as a question: who am I? **Q: when have you felt that way about something you were asked/told to do – who am I to do this thing?** Tell me about it.

Q: What is God's response? *It does not matter who you are, for I am WITH you – and I will give you a sign – when you have finished the job you will end up back here with all the Hebrews with you.*

Let's look at reason #2 posed as another question: who are you? **Q: when have you asked this question about God after reading/hearing about something God tells you to do?** Tell me about it.

Q: What is God's response? *He introduces himself and reminds him of His history with this people – Moses' people – and wants Moses to tell the people that God has seen all that has happened to them. He reminds Moses of his credibility, his faithfulness. God lays out what will happen – which probably seemed pretty unlikely to Moses – we will plunder the Egyptians?*

Let's go to reason #3, yet another question: What if no one listens to me? **Q: When have you had that fear that you will fail, or it won't work if you do it?** Tell me about it.

Q: What is God's response? *He shows Moses some signs – and keep in mind that these are not magic or party tricks, but this is message to the people that God has indeed seen their suffering – He gives Moses three things to use to convince the people – He has seen the snake – Pharaoh, he has seen the death - blood in the Nile – all those dead babies over all those years.*

Let's look at reason #4: I can't do it because... I don't speak in a way that anyone will listen. **Q: When have you felt that way – where you listed all your reasons, at least in your head, why you can't do something?** Tell me about it.

Q: What is God's response? *I gave you your mouth and I will tell you what to say – I am WITH you) – God will not give us something to do it that we cannot do. He believes in you more than you can imagine.*

Let's see about reason #5: I don't want to do it – please send someone else. **Q: When have you felt like Moses – I don't want to do it!!?** Tell me about it.

Q: What is God's response? *God gets a little mad, but He gives Moses someone to go with him on this job, God gives Him something to meet Moses' needs and help him do the job.*

Q: Why do you think Moses gives these reasons?

Q: What does this story teach us about Moses? *(Moses seems pretty aware of his reasons, and he is willing to tell God what he thinks and is feeling. When he is not feeling up to the job, he has some sort of speech impediment, he is feeling nervous and insecure, wants someone else to do, he tells God in honest and real words.)*

Q: How does God respond to Moses questions and doubts and fears and insecurity about taking on this responsibility? {Help the kids use their imagination. If they need options, remind them to walk through each reason Moses gives to God – God reassures Moses, He tells Him the truth, He gives Him a sign that He is with him, He gives him a friend to go with him}

Q: What does this story teach us about God? (his patience, his willingness to listen to Moses' fears and self-doubt, his presence with us)

Q: Have you ever considered that God shows you the same patience and kindness as He shows Moses in this story? That God believes in you more than you imagine? That God never gives up on you? You can have all kinds of questions and doubts and fears, and God still wants to be close to you and work with you. You do not have to be perfect or have it all worked out in your head.

Q: Have you ever shared with God where you are? Have you shared the doubts and fears you are having or talked to Him about suffering/hard times you are facing?

It is okay to not know how to be close to God or how to talk to God. It is okay to realize that maybe we don't understand God and how He works.

Q: Have you ever asked God for a sign to show you that He is with you? Have you ever looked for “glimmers” (God-sightings) that remind you that God is real, He is present, and He is good? {Give examples of “glimmers”: nature, answered prayers, good friends}

Let's finish out with **Isaiah 41:10**

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Here is a verse to consider when you feel overwhelmed/anxious/afraid/confused about something in your life – God is WITH you.

Q: How do you think God might strengthen you?

Q: What did he do with Moses? *Gave him a friend/companion to do it with him. Sometimes we don't recognize the ways He is giving us what we need and strengthening us because we have not seen the friendships and supports as actual gifts from God...*

Challenge: share with God where you are. Look for how God might be giving you a sign of His presence with you – look for “glimmers.”

Tuesday night: the problem of suffering and our call to partner with God

We have been reading about some pretty terrible things that the king was doing to this minority group – enslaving them, killing their children – and they have no recourse, no power, nothing they can do to stop it, and they cry out in their suffering to God.

What are other things that you would characterize as “suffering”?

We can think of big things: Natural disasters, kids in refugee camps, mass shootings, school shootings, war, poverty, starvation, abuse, neglect, isolation caused by addiction or mental illness, physical pain/disease.

We can think of more personal things that we experience: losing a loved one, broken relationships, bullying in school and on social media, all the pains we experience through little decisions of ours or worse, decisions of others.

Somehow we think we should not have hard times because we are God's people, we are good, we are trying to make good choices, we live in America. BUT suffering is normal and part of this broken world. You are not alone, you are not being punished by God, there is nothing “wrong” with you. We are not guaranteed protection from hard things just because we listen to God or follow Him. There are some hard things that we will avoid in terms of consequences of bad choices, but following God is not a shelter from all hard things.

Asking “why God” might not be the most helpful question – the better question is “where God.” The goal is not to have the hard things taken away; the goal is draw close to God in the middle of the hard things. He can remove the obstacles, but He would rather be with us through them. And He recognizes what suffering/hard things does for our character – He tells us that when we persevere that we mature, that we build character – and those are valuable things to have in our lives.

In the story we are studying this week, God **hears** the cries of the afflicted and he **sees** their pain. One of the nicknames for God in the Bible is the God who sees me – Hagar's encounter with Him in the desert – reassuring to know that God sees everything that we are experiencing and understands it deeply.

Isaiah 43:1-2

Here are some things to consider from this time tonight and the scriptures we will read this week. Begin to realize how near God always is to you and to those in pain. He is WITH us, in a way that we cannot always recognize. **He is not passively with us, but he is actively with us**

God **responds** to their cries and pain – **Exodus 3:7-10**
how does God respond? *he sends someone willing to partner with Him*

He wants to intervene in the suffering by using a person (parallelism– I have seen and heard them in their pain – I have come to rescue them – I am sending you)

Romans 8:28

God works with those who love Him for good

What does it mean those who love him? Jesus followers – those who listen to Him, trust Him, follow His ways, and act in a way consistent with His values

God is collaborating with those who love to bring good and healing and reconciliation

Did you know that God wants to partner with you? That He wants to work with and through you to bring love and peace and hope and healing – it's not just Moses who receives the call to partner with God – we each are receiving the call to work with Him

What might be our role?

-to lament – to have our hearts break at hard things

-to pray – for healing, reconciliation – to know how God wants you to show up

-to show love and to respond in the way Jesus models for us – bringing light to someone's darkness – a hug, a smile, a kind word, a way to serve or just being present

Wednesday class: Unstoppable plagues

(class focus: learning about God's heart and his pursuit of the hearts of all men)

Younger kids Bible classes (ages 9-11):

Rescue relay game: active game: goal is to have everyone on the team cross the "river" to the other side. We will use something that the team has to be pass back and forth to rescue each team member. (allow 10 minutes max for this activity)

We are going to study a famous story in the Bible about ten plagues. **What are plagues?** *Sudden outbreak of disease and people are really sick and often die, natural disasters that cause a lot of destruction, when bugs/pests destroy crops, so we don't have food*

Let's talk for a minute about God's desire for the Hebrews, from yesterday's lesson. God's desire and plan was to rescue the Hebrews out of enslavement in Egypt. Let's use our imaginations.

{For this next two questions, have the kids turn and talk to each other about their ideas and then have them present them as a team}

Q: What could God have done to rescue his people? *{Help the campers use their imaginations by giving them some prompts and see where they do from there. God could have snapped his fingers and had the Hebrews magically appear in a different place, God could use the cloud of darkness to blind the Egyptians so the Hebrews could escape the land, God could kill all the Egyptians, use less than ten plagues}*

Q: Why do you think God chose this way – ten plagues over a period of time – to rescue His people?

Let's start in Exodus 7:14-24

Let's remember that Egypt is a polytheistic people, meaning that they worshipped many gods. They did not worship the God of the Bible, the Creator God that has been listening to the cries of

the people. So God begins these plagues that only affect the Egyptians and not the Hebrews. *{because there are so many plagues, we will have the campers skim the verses, with the teacher highlighting important aspects.}*

The Egyptians worshipped Hapi, the god of the Nile. **Q: what was the first plague?** (*Blood in the Nile – think about all those dead fish in the river – how stinky would it be?*)

The Egyptians worshipped Heket, the fertility goddess who was depicted with the head of a frog. **Q: what was the second plague?** (*Frogs everywhere – what would that be like? and once they are dead – it's even more smelly around there!*)

The Egyptians worshipped Geb, the god who reigned over the dust of the earth. **Q: what was the third plague?** (*Lice/gnats from the dust. What would it be like to have lice/gnats all over you?*)

The Egyptians worshipped Khepri, the god of the morning sun, who had the head of a fly. **Q: what was the fourth plague?** *Flies* **Q: What do you think it looked like to have all the flies only where the Egyptians lived and not where the Hebrews lived?**

Q: What do you think the Egyptians thought of that?

Q: What do you think the Hebrews thought of that?

The Egyptians worshipped Hathor, the goddesses of love and protection, whose principal animal-form was a cow. **Q: what was the fifth plague?** *livestock*

The story tells that some of the Egyptians listened to Moses and protected their livestock. **Q: What would you think if you were one of the Egyptians who listened and protected your animals, and all your Egyptian friends did not listen and had their animal herds destroyed?**

The Egyptians worshipped Isis, the goddess of medicine and peace. **Q: What was the sixth plague?** *Boils* **Q: What are boils?** (*painful sores*) Isis their goddess could not protect them from this disease!

The Egyptians worshipped Nut, the goddess of the sky. **Q: what was the seventh plague?**

The Egyptians worshipped Seth, the god of storms and disorder. **Q: what was the eighth plague?**

The Egyptians worshipped Ra, the sun god. **Q: What was the ninth plague?** *darkness*

And they worshipped Pharaoh and believed that he was the son of Ra, one of the main gods. They thought that a human was actually a god with special powers. **Q: what was the tenth plague?**

Q: Why does God choose these specific plagues, in these specific ways? He is showing the weakness of each of their “powerful” gods, none could even compete with God.

Q: What do we learn about God's character, in how He chose to do this?

God is giving Pharaoh and the Egyptians an opportunity to recognize God as the only true God and Pharaoh sometimes gives in and says he will do certain things for the Hebrews, but he won't acknowledge that he Pharaoh is not a god. And so the battle continues.

Q: What does this approach tell you about God? *He is patient, he wants people to see Him clearly and change their minds, He does not want people worshipping other gods.*

Think about this: if the most powerful man in this part of the world would bow down and worship the one True God instead of claiming to be a god himself, that would be amazing. God does not give up on him until Pharaoh stubbornly resists and then Pharaoh receives the consequences of his stubbornness and pride against God.

{have the kids split into small groups for the last question and have them share their groups answer after they have discussed it}

Q: From our lesson today, what is one word that would sum up what we learned today? Is there a picture or a symbol that would remind you of the lesson from this story?

Middle/Older kids (12-18 yo)

We are going to study a famous story in the Bible about ten plagues.

What are plagues? *Outbreak, epidemic, pestilence, infestation, invasion, famine, pandemic*

Let's talk for a minute about God's desire for the Hebrews, from yesterday's lesson. God's desire and plan was to rescue the Hebrews out of enslavement in Egypt. Let's use our imaginations.

{For these next two questions, have the kids turn and talk to each other about their ideas and then have them present them as a team}

Q: What could God have done to rescue his people? {Help the campers use their imaginations by giving them some prompts and see where they do from there. God could have snapped his fingers and had the Hebrews magically appear in a different place, God could use the cloud of darkness to blind the Egyptians so the Hebrews could escape the land, God could kill all the Egyptians, use less than ten plagues}

Q: Why do you think God chose this way – ten plagues over a period of time – to rescue His people?

Let's remember that Egypt is a polytheistic people, meaning that they worshipped many gods. You can think of it as being superstitious. They attributed to these gods certain powers and domains, and these gods were always at war with each other. And people were built to serve these gods. They worshipped **Hapi**, the god of the Nile. They worshipped **Heket**, the fertility goddess who was depicted with the head of a frog, and Egyptians would carry around amulets that looked like frogs to bring fertility. They worshipped **Geb**, the god who reigned over the dust of the earth. They worshipped **Khepri**, the god of the morning sun, who had the head of a fly. They worshipped **Hathor**, the goddesses of love and protection, whose principal animal form was a cow. They worshipped **Isis**, the goddess of medicine and peace. They worshipped **Nut**, the goddess of the sky. They worshipped **Seth**, the god of storms and disorder. They worshipped **Ra**, the sun god. And they worshipped Pharaoh and believed that he was a god – the son of Ra, like a version of Ra in a person.

I would propose that God designed a plan to (1) show that He was the one true God of the universe to the Egyptians and the Hebrews and (2) challenge Pharaoh to acknowledge that Pharaoh was not a god, and the Hebrews God was the only God. Think about it – the most powerful person in that time and place, holding himself up as a god. Consider how God interacts with him.

Exodus 7:14-24 Nile turns to blood – notice that the Egyptian magicians were also able to do the same thing through magic/secret arts.

Exodus 8:6-15 – the Egyptian magicians were also able to make frogs come out, but let's see what's different – Moses tells Pharaoh – you choose the time, and I can get rid of all those frogs – God begins to demonstrate his power and precision with time

Exodus 8:16-19 – the magicians could not do it – this is the finger of God they tell Pharaoh – there is something happening here.

Exodus 8:20-25 –plague of flies and God makes a distinction between the Egyptians and the Hebrews – power and precision –Pharaoh begins to relent but then he changes his mind.

Exodus 9:5-7 – Pharaoh continues to resist God

Exodus 9:10-12 – look at what is happening to the magicians, and Pharaoh's heart is hard.

Exodus 9:13-21 – again there is a distinction between the Egyptians and Hebrews, and there is protection for Egyptians who listened. See Pharaoh's response: **Exodus 9:27-35**

God is giving Pharaoh and the Egyptians an opportunity to recognize God as the only true God and Pharaoh sometimes gives in and gives concessions, but he won't acknowledge that he Pharaoh is not a god. And so, the battle continues.

Exodus 10:12-20 – locusts devoured everything, and Pharaoh begs for mercy, and God relents. But then look at v 20 – it says that God hardens Pharaoh's heart – what? The word here is a different word than other places in the story – and it means to give strength to someone, to strengthen their resolve. God was helping Pharaoh do what Pharaoh wanted to do – Pharaoh was not humbling himself and acknowledging he was NOT a god or how badly the people had been treated. He was uncomfortable and as soon as the pressure was off, his mind was not changed at all. Maybe he felt overwhelmed and just wanted to give in, but not because he was convinced through this encounter with God that God was God, and he was not.

Take a pause: **Have you ever considered that God does the same thing for us?** Just as God gave Pharaoh over to his own devices, He will do the same with us. (1) He will never force us into following Him; and (2) Just because He allows something does not mean He approves or supports it.

Exodus 10:21-29 – imagine what that looked like.

We have read lots of verses and I have talked a lot, so now I have questions for you.

Q: Why do you think God chose this way – ten plagues over a period of time – to rescue His people?

Q: Why does he not just destroy Pharaoh right away?

Q: What do we learn about God's character, in how He chose to do this?

God is giving Pharaoh and the Egyptians an opportunity to recognize God as the only true God and Pharaoh sometimes gives in and says he will do certain things for the Hebrews, but he won't acknowledge that he Pharaoh is not a god.

Q: What does this approach tell you about God? *He is patient, he wants people to see Him clearly and change their minds, He does not want people worshipping other gods.*

Think about this: if the most powerful man in this part of the world would bow down and worship the one True God instead of claiming to be a god himself, that would be amazing. God does not give up on him until Pharaoh stubbornly resists and then Pharaoh receives the consequences of his stubbornness and pride against God.

Q: Have you considered how much God pursues the hearts of all men? Have you ever considered how much God has been actively pursuing you since you were born?

Challenge: make a timeline of your life noting moments (good and bad) that looking back you can see God moving in those situations, trying to help you see Him as God

Thursday class: “Unforgettable Deliverance”

(class focus: remembering God’s rescue and redemption in Egypt and how God helps us remember)

Younger kids Bible classes (ages 9-11):

Q: Who has a good memory?

Q: What are things we do to help us remember something important?

Let’s play a memory game.

<https://childhood101.com/short-term-memory-games/>

Let’s remember where we are in the story of the Bible. Yesterday we talked about the plagues that God used to try to get Pharaoh’s attention. When Pharaoh would not listen to God and deal with his life, God would send another event to try to get his attention. This story is mainly about the consequences of Pharaoh’s actions.

{You will need the small stone and a container of water. You will use the stone and water as an example of the ripple effect to demonstrate the ripples of decisions.}

Pharaoh refused to listen to God and His warnings about how Pharaoh was treating the Hebrews and worshipping other gods and it brought destruction on not just Pharaoh but everyone around Pharaoh. Because Pharaoh had a lot of advantage/power, the ripples of his decisions impacted more people. Good decisions have positive ripples for people around us. Bad decisions have negative ripples for people around us.

Q: Have you ever experienced that, where someone made a bad decision, and you are hurt by it? What did it feel like?

The final plague was the plague of the firstborn, the night where God separated those who bowed to His mighty power and those who would refuse to recognize Him as the Creator God. Moses warns Pharaoh of God’s response to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for their hard hearts – the death of the firstborn son. Remember that each plague had a significance to the polytheistic worldview of the Egyptians – and this was no exception. The son of Pharaoh was seen as the son of a god since the Pharaohs were worshipped as a god just like the other gods we mentioned yesterday.

God sends Moses and Aaron to tell the Israelites to have a special meal and to mark their homes as a protection against the angel of death.

Read Exodus 12:1-30

Q: Why do you think God required an action from them to protect their homes and families?

Q: Why do you think God wanted them to eat a meal to help them remember?

Consider your five senses: science tells us memory is closely tied to our senses, if it is related to your sense of smell and taste it will help you remember things. God is using the way we are made to help us remember.

Q: Why does God not want them to forget?

Let's read what God warns about forgetting.

Deuteronomy 8:6-20

Q: How will they act if they forget what God has done for them? They will start to take credit for the good things they have experienced, have access to

Q: What is the danger if they forget? They will worship other gods who are not the Creator God, they will not listen to God's laws

Q: What does God warn them will happen to them if they forget that the source of all these good things is God? End up being just like the Egyptians.

Today we remember Jesus with a meal too – the communion/Lord's Supper, based on the Passover meal that Jesus shared with his disciples right before His death.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 – to help us remember

{have the kids split into small groups for the last question and have them share their groups answer after they have discussed it}

Q: From our lesson today, what is one word that would sum up what we learned today? Is there a picture or a symbol that would remind you of the lesson from this story?

Middle/Older kids (12-18 vo)

(cross study lead by guest speaker)

Friday class: "Unexpected Escape"

(class focus: considering how God is always present even when we don't understand all that He is doing or cannot see him working in our lives)

Younger kids Bible classes (ages 9-11):

{We will play the game: one word story. Read the instructions before the class so that you are familiar with the game. Have the group take turns working together as a group to make up a story by switching off every other word. Remind everyone not to overthink and just say the first thing that comes to your mind that makes sense. It's a great opportunity to be in tune with each other and to work together as if you were one voice telling the story. Be in the moment and don't have a preconceived notion of where you want the story to go. Take it one word at a time – the fun is seeing where the story goes. If you are planning to have a character talk in the story, use finger air quotes to show that the character is speaking. If you end up having several characters who talk, use different voices for them.}

Sometimes when we read these Bible stories that we have read before, we read it knowing how it ends and forget that the people who were experiencing it had no idea how things would go and sometimes did not have any evidence or proof that things would end ok.

Think about a time in your life where it was not obvious things were going to go the way you wanted – how you would do on a test, whether you would make a sports team or creative arts group

Q: How do you feel when you are uncertain how something will go? {you can give options if the campers are not responsive: *Anxious, nervous, stressed, uncomfortable, fearful, on edge*}

Q: What happens when you start searching for clues to support the narrative/your fears that things will go poorly, or you will be embarrassed? *Can feel even more stressed, start to feel hopeless even though it is not all said and done*

{Assign parts for reading: God, Moses, Pharaoh, Israelites, Egyptians, narrator}

Exodus 13:17-18

In this story, we have some insight into why God does something that might not make sense to us when we start the story...there is a reason for the path he takes them down, even if it is not apparent to them at the time –

Q: what's the reason He gives us?

Q: If things were not going like we want or think they should go, like the Israelites in this story, why is it hard to trust that God is with us?

Exodus 13:20-22

Q: What do you think it looked like to see these pillars of cloud and fire? How tall do you think they were? How wide? What is something it might have looked like? (tornado?)

Exodus 14:1-12

Let's read this section like we don't know how the story ends

Q: If you were the Israelites and you only know what we just read in these 12 verses, what would you think is happening? How would you feel?

It seems like the Israelites look with their eyes and feel abandoned by God or think God is not powerful enough to protect them...even while there are these giant pillars of cloud helping them out, standing guard over them

Exodus 14:13-18

Q: If you were Moses, what would you think of this plan? Keep in mind he has not ever seen this done before and does not know exactly how God will accomplish this... {let's use this as a journal prompt: have them write down their ideas and then share them}

Exodus 14:19-22 – describe what this would look like – use your imagination...

Exodus 14:23-31 describe what this would look like – use your imagination...

Imagine that you could see that God was with you – because there was this giant pillar of cloud and fire, following you around, protecting you – and it was visible to you

Q: If you could see God like that, what would be different in your life? *Dealing with fear, doubt, insecurity, anxiety, feeling more confident*

Psalms 145:1-21

Q: Look at the descriptions of God in this poem: what stands out to you?

Consider the description of faithful – He is faithful in all His promises

What does faithful mean? {this word may be hard for them to understand and define so give some examples: keeping a promise even when he hurts, getting up after falling down – think about the proverb that takes about the man rising seven times after a fall, not giving up when it is hard}

Q: What about the description in v 18 – God is near to all who call on him?

Q: What are things we can do to remember that God is near to us, faithful in all his promises?
Read the Bible, remember what He has already done in our lives (big ways and little ways), let other people be close to us

{have the kids split into small groups for the last question and have them share their groups answer after they have discussed it}

Q: From our lesson today, what is one word that would sum up what we learned today? Is there a picture or a symbol that would remind you of the lesson from this story?

Middle/Older kids (12-18 yo)

Sometimes when we read these Bible stories that we have read before, we read it knowing how it ends and forget that the people who were experiencing it had no idea how things would go and sometimes did not have any evidence or proof that things would end ok.

Think about a time in your life where it was not obvious things were going to go the way you wanted: *how you would do on a test, whether you would make a sports team or creative arts group, family crisis, health crisis*

Q: How do you feel when you are uncertain how something will go? *Anxious, nervous, stressed, uncomfortable, fearful, on edge, scared.*

Q: What happens when you start searching for clues to support the narrative/your fears that things will go poorly, or you will be embarrassed? *Can feel even more stressed, start to feel hopeless even though it is not all said and done.*

{Assign parts for reading: God, Moses, Pharaoh, Israelites, Egyptians, narrator}

Exodus 13:17-18

In this story, we have some insight into why God does something that might not make sense to us when we start the story...there is a reason for the path he takes them down, even if it is not apparent to them at the time. **Q: what's the reason He gives us?**

Q: If things were not going like you want or think they should go, like the Israelites in this story, why is it hard to trust that God is with you?

Exodus 13:20-22

Q: What do you think it looked like to see this pillar of cloud and fire? How tall do you think they were? How wide?

Exodus 14:1-12

Let's read this like we don't know how the story ends – let's consider each of the characters in this story:

Q: If you were Moses and you only knew what we just read in these 12 verses, what would you think of this plan? How would you feel?

Q: If you were Pharaoh and you only know what we just read in these 12 verses, what would you think is happening? How would you feel?

Q: If you were the Israelites and you only know what we just read in these 12 verses, what would you think is happening? How would you feel?

It seems like the Israelites look with their eyes and feel abandoned by God or think God is not powerful enough to protect them...even while there are this giant pillar of cloud helping them out, standing guard over them.

Exodus 14:13-18

Q: If you were Moses, what would you think of this plan? Keep in mind he has not ever seen this done before and does not know exactly how God will accomplish this...

Exodus 14:19-22 – describe what this would look like – use your imagination...

Exodus 14:23-31 describe what this would look like – use your imagination...

Think about God's promise to Moses when we talked on Tuesday – I will be with you - Imagine that you could see that God was with you because there was this giant tornado, following you around, protecting you – and it was visible to you

Q: If you could see God like that, what would be different in your life? *Dealing with fear, doubt, insecurity, anxiety, feeling more confident*

Psalm 145:1-21

Q: Look at the descriptions of God in this poem: what stands out to you?

Consider the description of faithful – He is faithful in all His promises

Q: What does faithful mean? {this word may be hard for them to understand and define so give some examples: keeping a promise even when he hurts, getting up after falling down – think about the proverb that takes about the man rising seven times after a fall, not giving up when it is hard}

Q: How is it possible for God to remain faithful to us even when we face hard times or when we don't get what we had hoped for?

Sometimes God fulfills His promises in ways we are not expecting – we think it will look one way and God has something else in mind. Think about the way that God rescued the Israelites – not the obvious path to take but He had His reasons as a way to protect and lead His people to safety and deal with their fears, worries and insecurities. The same is true for us today.

Q: What about the description in v 18 – God is near to all who call on him?

Q: Why is it hard to think about God being near to us?

Q: What are things we can do to remember that God is near to us, faithful in all his promises?

Read the Bible, remember what He has already done in our lives (big ways and little ways), let other people be close to us, memorize His promises so that you can carry them with you in every moment.

Challenge: make a timeline of your life noting turning point moments (good and bad) that looking back you can see God moving in those situations. Sometimes we have a hard time seeing them because we are expecting something different than what God wants to do in our lives...