

13. Challenge



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Exodus 5-11 (summary)

God sends plagues on the Egyptians



AIMS

To help the children reflect on the fact that God is in control and to think about how that relates to challenging situations they may be facing



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to introduce today's theme. The first two link with the idea of persevering to complete a challenge and the third has a more direct link to the story.

▶ Shoe Game

You will need: 2 chairs, plastic bottle with a small amount of water in it

This works with larger groups. Divide the children into two teams and have

There are consequences for people who, like Pharaoh, continue to rebel against God. Just because God has told us to do something it doesn't mean it will be easy. Sometimes, like Moses, we have to keep going, doing the right thing, even when it is really hard.



PREP FOR LEADERS

If you have time, read through the whole section from the Bible about Moses going to Pharaoh. If not, skim through it to remind yourself of the key events and read Exodus 5:1-5, Exodus 7:14-8:15 and Exodus 11:4-10.

Reflect:

- Why do you think God sent the plagues on the Egyptians?
 - Why did Pharaoh continue to be stubborn after seeing God's power?
 - When has God helped you to persevere through a difficult time?
- Take some time to pray for your group.

each team sitting in a line facing one another on opposite sides of the hall. Number the children in each team. If one team is a person short, give one member of that team two numbers.

Place a chair at each end of the hall between the lines of children and allocate one of the chairs to each team. Then place the plastic bottle in the middle of the hall. To play the game, call out a number. The child from each team who was given that number runs to their team's chair. They sit down on it and take off one of their shoes, which they throw at the plastic bottle, aiming to knock it over. If they miss with their first shoe, they can try again with the other one.

If neither player manages to knock the bottle over, they can retrieve their shoes, sit on the chair and try again. The child who knocks the bottle over gets a point for their team.

Repeat this calling a different number and make sure that all the children get a turn.

▶ Minute To Win It Challenges

Provide the children with some challenges they have to complete in one minute. Some examples are listed below, and you can find several more ideas here: birthdayinspire.com/minute-to-win-it-games To add to the drama, you could use a timer video which you can find online, for example: youtu.be/rhrh2GJ-_1l

(continued overleaf)

▶ Suck it up

You will need: 4 bowls, straws, small sweets (such as Smarties or Skittles), timer

Choose two children to compete in this challenge. Give each child a bowl of sweets, an empty bowl and a straw. They need to transfer the sweets to the empty bowl one at a time by sucking them up with the straw. See who can transfer the most in one minute.

▶ Chocolate Unicorn

You will need: Jaffa cakes, timer

Choose a child to take part in this challenge and place seven Jaffa Cakes on a table beside them. The child has to pick up one Jaffa Cake and place it on their forehead. They will need to lean back so that it doesn't fall. They then have to pick up the second Jaffa Cake and stack it on top of the first. They continue like this, aiming to have all seven Jaffa Cakes in a stack on their forehead within one minute. If the Jaffa Cakes fall they have to start again.

▶ Bucket Head

You will need: bucket, ping pong balls, timer

Choose a child to take part in this challenge. Give them a bucket and some ping pong balls. They have to bounce a ping pong ball on the floor and then try to catch it in the bucket, which they are holding on the top of their head. To complete the challenge, they need to catch three ping pong balls within one minute.

▶ Lego Building Game

You will need: Lego bricks, building plan - just design something simple based on the Lego bricks you have, timer

Give the children some Lego bricks and a plan to follow. See how quickly they can build the Lego model according to the

plan. Depending on numbers and the amount of Lego you have, you could divide the children into small groups and give each group a set to work with, or you could have a few children doing the activity while the others watch.

After the children complete their model, tell them you want them to do it again to see if they can beat their time. Mix all the Lego bricks together, or mix the set the children are using in with other Lego bricks. This time, they have to find the Lego bricks they need before they can build their model. Tell them you still want them to do it in a faster time. Expect complaints that it is not fair and make the link with the story of the Israelite slaves in Egypt.

Things were bad for them last week, but they got even worse. Pharaoh demanded that the Israelites not only had to make bricks for the Egyptians, but now they had to find the straw to make them from too, and they were still expected to make the same amount of bricks! It wasn't fair!



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

▶ Recap

Remind the children of what they heard last week.

The Israelite people were being made to work as slaves in Egypt. Then God spoke to Moses at the burning bush and told him he had to go and lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses felt very scared at first. He didn't feel that he would be able to do the task, but God promised to be with him and help him so he agreed to go.

▶ Moses' Story

You will need: headdresses for Moses and Pharaoh (Moses' could be a tea towel tied on with

a piece of cord; you can find instructions and a template to make a Pharaoh's headdress here: bit.ly/2z3Cv1P

(Keep this to use again for the next session!), words for Moses and Pharaoh to read (see additional document: Words for Moses and Pharaoh), plague pictures (see additional document: Plague pictures)

After his conversation with God, Moses met up with his brother Aaron, who was going to help him, and they went back to Egypt. Moses managed to persuade the Israelite leaders that God had sent them and that they were going to be free from slavery. Now Moses had to speak to Pharaoh and persuade him to let his slaves go free.

(Choose two children to be Moses and Pharaoh and give them headdresses to wear and words to read. These are the words marked in bold in the script below. Prompt them to say their words at the right moment.)

Moses went to Pharaoh and he said:

The God of Israel says, "Please let my people go."

Pharaoh said: **No, why should I listen to him? I don't know God and I won't let the people go. Stop this. You're distracting the people from their work.**

So Pharaoh made the Israelites work even harder and he treated them even more cruelly.

Moses was upset by this and he cried out to God:

"Why have you brought all this trouble on your people, Lord? Ever since I went to Pharaoh things have been worse for the people and you have done nothing to help them."

God said, "Now I am going to show Pharaoh my power so that he will let the Israelites go free."

Moses went back to Pharaoh again but Pharaoh was stubborn and he refused to let the Israelites go, so God sent plagues on the Egyptian people which meant that bad things happened to them.

There were ten plagues all together. After each plague, Pharaoh was given a chance to let the Israelites go, but he kept on refusing. Sometimes he would say they could go while the plague was happening, but as soon as it stopped he changed his mind.

Talk through the ten plagues, showing pictures to the children. (See additional document: *Plagues Pictures*.)

If you print the document double-sided you will have the words below on the back of each picture so you can read them out.)

First, God turned all the water in the River Nile into blood. It was like that for seven whole days and the people struggled to find something to drink. Then God sent frogs across the whole land of Egypt. They came up out of the river and into people's houses and there were frogs everywhere! Next God sent a plague of gnats on the land.

Then he sent flies. This time there were no flies in the part of Egypt where the Israelites lived, but where the Egyptians lived the flies were everywhere. Pharaoh continued to refuse to let the people go so God sent a disease that killed many of the Egyptians' animals - sheep, horses, camels, cattle and donkeys. Next God made boils come up all over the Egyptians' skin.

Then he sent hailstones on the land. It was the worst hailstorm that had ever been seen in the land of Egypt.

Then God sent locusts which ate all the crops. After that God sent darkness on the land. For three days it didn't get light at all and the people couldn't see anything.

Even after all that, Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go, so God sent a final plague. The firstborn son in every family in Egypt died. Before God sent this plague, he gave the Israelites instructions to follow. They had to kill a lamb or a goat and smear blood from the animal round the doorframe of their house. If they followed those instructions, they would be safe and no one in their family would be killed. After the final plague, Pharaoh finally said that the Israelites could leave Egypt.

We're going to come back to that final plague in a few weeks' time to think some more about what the Israelites were asked to do, and also to look at how it ties in with the Easter story. (See Session 19 - Passover)



REFLECT & RESPOND

► Reflection

You will need: sin image (additional document: sin)

It was a battle for control. Pharaoh liked to be in charge and he didn't like the idea that God was really in charge. God showed his power by sending the plagues. He was very patient with Pharaoh and gave him lots of chances but, in the end, there were consequences because Pharaoh refused to obey God.

Last week we heard how Moses discovered who God was, and how that helped him to take on a challenging task, but Pharaoh didn't really understand who God was and that he was in control. Even after he saw how powerful God was, he didn't want to obey him. We talked last term about sin and the effects it had. One definition of sin sums up Pharaoh's attitude here. It was like he was saying, "Shove off, God! I'm in charge!

No to your rules!" Show the children the image (from additional document: *sin*) to highlight this.

Imagine how Moses must have felt. He was trying to do what God told him to do but it must have been difficult when Pharaoh kept changing his mind. Just because Moses was obeying God didn't mean that life was easy. Sometimes we just have to try and keep going, doing the right thing even when it is hard and it seems that things are not working out. Moses was able to keep going because he knew that God was really in charge, and in the end God helped Moses to succeed at what he was being asked to do.

► Prayer

Like Moses, sometimes we have to keep going in situations where it's hard. It might be difficult situations in our families, it might be things we struggle with at school, it might be problems in our friendships, but Christians believe that God is with us in those times to help us keep going, and that he is still in charge.

Give the children a moment to think about a difficult situation they are facing and then lead them in the prayer below, giving them a few seconds to mention their own situation silently to God. **"God, help me to trust that even when... you are in control." Amen.**



ADDITIONAL IDEAS

► Song – Only A Prayer Away

You will need: equipment to play music

This song links with the theme of God being in control during the difficult times and reminds the children that they can call on him to help them:
youtu.be/fq_BSFkxHys