

GOD CARES ABOUT THE OPRESSED

by Dave Shirk

KEY VERSE:

"I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the Israelites, 'I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians.'" Exodus 6:5-7

FAITH STORY:

Exodus 6:1-11, & 12:33-42

FAITH FOCUS:

God heard the Israelites' cries for deliverance from slavery in Egypt and sent Moses to Pharaoh to ask for their release. Pharaoh refused to let them go, so God, through Moses and Aaron, brought a series of ten miraculous plagues on Pharaoh and the Egyptians. The Israelites are not harmed by the plagues. After the tenth plague, Pharaoh and the Egyptians gave the Israelites anything they want to take with them, and plead with them to leave. God delivered them from slavery as promised.

SESSION GOAL:

To help students understand that God cares about the oppressed.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, students should be able to identify oppressed people in their community and list ways that they can show those who are oppressed that God cares for them.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1** Bibles for every student
- 2** Chalk or dry board
- 3** Something to throw on the floor for students to pick up (wadded up newspaper balls, wrapped candy, small stones, etc.)
- 4** Large container or garbage bag
- 5** Timer or watch with a second hand
- 6** News magazines and newspapers
- 7** Scissors
- 8** Basket

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5–10 minutes)

Dump the paper wads/candy/stones on the floor. Tell the students to pick them up and put them into the container (or bag) while being timed. When they are finished tell them that they were not fast enough—they will have to try again. Dump the items again. Time them again. Dump the items a third time and tell them that this time they must pick up all the items in half the time that it took them the second time. Start timing and pressure students by telling them to hurry.

CONNECT: (5 minutes)

Ask the students how it felt to do that activity. *How did it feel to be expected to do something that seemed unreasonable?*

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (20 minutes)

- 1 Ask a student to read Ex. 6:5-7, then say Now let's look at the steps God took to deliver his people from oppression.

Divide the class into groups of 2-3 students. Depending on the size of the class, assign each group one or two plague stories to study as found in Exodus 7:14-25, and chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11. Give them the option of drawing the plague(s) on newsprint or acting them out or pantomiming them. (If pantomiming, the class could guess which plague it is.) Ask the students to picture themselves in that plague(s), using all their senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch). In addition, ask them to answer these questions. 1) How long did the plague last? 2) What was Pharaoh's response? 3) How were the Israelites affected by the plague?

Note to teacher: While the students are doing this activity, put items from the Focus activity in a basket. You will use this for the Respond activity.

- 2 Read Exodus 6:1-11 & 12: 33-42 with the class. Ask these questions:

a) What is the key reason for deliverance in verses 5 & 6?

(The covenant with their forefathers.)

b) What are other reasons?

(God heard, so God could be their Redeemer, so that they would know that he was their God, etc.)

c) Why didn't the Israelites listen to Moses?

(Because of their broken spirits and the cruelty of their slavery.)

d) What happened after the tenth plague?

(The Egyptians begged them to go and even gave them wealth to take with them.)

e) How do you feel about:

- The Egyptians in the plagues?
- Pharaoh changing his mind so often?
- God, who is bringing the plagues on Egypt

APPLY: (10 minutes)

Hand out newspapers and magazines to the small groups. Ask students to find examples of people in the papers and magazines who are oppressed (politically, socially, spiritually, economically) and cut them out. Gather back in one group and have the students share their clippings. As a group, discuss ways that they, as God's representatives, can show care and love for people who are oppressed. (Some examples might be to speak out on their behalf, write letters to Congress, offer help personally, spend time with them, refuse to speak negatively about them, etc.)

RESPOND: (5–10 minutes)

Invite students to consider doing one thing in the next week for someone who is oppressed. Invite those who are willing to do one thing to take one of the items from the basket home as a reminder of what they have committed to do this week.

Close with a prayer.

Insights from Scripture: In Exodus 4, Moses returned to Egypt, and with his brother, Aaron, went to the elders of the Israelites and told them that God would

deliver them. The elders believed them and bowed down and worshipped God. In chapter 5, Moses and Aaron tell Pharaoh to let the people go. Pharaoh becomes angry and makes the people's burden heavier by not supplying straw to make bricks. They now had to gather it themselves, plus make the same amount of bricks. The Israelite supervisors accused Moses and Aaron of bringing hardship on them. Moses cried out to God and even questioned his calling as a leader of the Israelites. Our lesson today covers Exodus 6 through 12. In these chapters God assures Moses that he will deliver Israel from their cruel taskmasters with mighty acts and an outstretched arm. Moses and his spokesman, his brother Aaron, obey God's commands, and go to Pharaoh, demanding the release of Israel. When he refuses, God sends a series of plagues on the Egyptians. Pharaoh's magicians were able to duplicate the miracle of Aaron's rod turning into a snake, the first plague of water turning into blood, and the second plague—the outbreak of frogs. But the magicians could not make gnats. They told Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." It is at this point that the magicians realize that they are up against a divine power and not just human magic. Pharaoh is still not convinced and refuses to listen to Moses. From the third plague through the tenth plague, each plague grew progressively worse. Note that none of the plagues was in evidence in Israel's residences in Goshen. With the tenth plague that struck down the first-born of each Egyptian family, Pharaoh and the Egyptians finally allow the Israelites to leave, and even give them much wealth to take with them. The last part of Exodus 12 and the beginning of chapter 13 give instructions for celebrating the deliverance—Passover, the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and the consecration of the Firstborn. The end of chapter 13 and chapter 14 tell about the beginning of the Israelites journey to the Promised Land.