

NO WAY OUT?

by Rod Miller

KEY VERSE:

Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today. (Portion of Exodus 14:13)

FAITH STORY:

Exodus 14:1-15:21

FAITH FOCUS:

Just when the Israelites think they are going to escape, they see that Pharaoh is coming after them. Seeing Pharaoh's chariots, they cry out in despair to Moses. God tells the people, through Moses, to trust God for their salvation. God then tells Moses to stretch out his staff, and God parts the water for the Israelites to pass through. When the Egyptians follow, the sea returns and drowns them all. The Israelites then praise God for saving them.

SESSION GOAL:

To help the students trust God for deliverance in the face of troubles and challenges.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

- The students will express the feelings of hopelessness and joy in the Bible story.
- The students will commit themselves to trust God in their troubles.
- The students will name the actions of God in the Bible story.
- The student will be able to see salvation as both physical and spiritual.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Paper
- 2 Pens or pencils
- 3 Bibles
- 4 Chalk board or other writing surface
- 5 Find a song of victory to sing or listen to together on a CD. Bring whatever you need to do this activity.
- 6 Be prepared to share a story or two of something good coming out of what seemed to be something bad.

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5–7 minutes)

Gather the students in the center of the room and give them these instructions: "I will be asking you a set of questions. Depending on your answer, you will go to one side of the room or the other."

Here's the first question: *Would you rather eat a hamburger or a hot dog?"*

Indicate one side of the room for the hamburger, the other as hot dog. Continue to indicate the sides of the room as you give the following questions: (You may use this list or make up your own questions.).

- 2 *Would you rather have a big nose or big ears?*
- 3 *Would you rather drop a cement block on your foot or hit your thumb with a hammer?*
- 4 *Would you rather have your eyes gouged out or your tongue cut off?*
- 5 *Would you rather be burned at the stake or drowned?*
- 6 *Imagine that you are on the bridge 80 feet a river and a semi-truck is heading toward you at 75 mph. You have a choice—jump off the bridge or get hit by the truck.*
- 7 *Your best friend is trapped in a burning car that could explode at any second. Would you try to rescue him/her and risk your life, or would you run for help?*

CONNECT: (5 minutes)

Bring the group back together.

Ask questions such as: *Was it hard to choose between the options? How did it feel? Have you ever been in a situation in life where there didn't seem to be a good choice? How did it feel? What did you do? Have you ever heard of the phrase: Stuck between a rock and a hard place?*

Let's go to the Bible and meet a group of people who had this problem and see how they reacted and what happened.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (15–20 minutes)

Divide students into groups, assigning one of the following scriptures to each group.

Ex. 14:1-9; 10-18, 19-25, 26-31, 15:1-21. Double up on the passages if you have more than 5 in your class.

Ask each group to do these things with their passage:

- identify what action is taking place by whom.
- identify the feelings of the people in the passage.
- develop a one-sentence summary of the verses
- demonstrate an expression of the feelings in the passage, using their faces and bodies.

When the groups are ready to share, go through the passages and make a list on the chalkboard of the actions of God, the Egyptians, Moses, and the Israelites in the story. Some examples:

14:1-9 Summary: God leads the people to make it appear that they are lost; Pharaoh changes his mind and pursues them.

Feelings: Egyptians: expressions of victory, raise fists in air.

14:10-18 Summary: The Israelites cry out in fear but Moses tells them to stand still and watch.

Feelings: Expression of despair and fear for the Israelites, but Moses is calm.

14:19-25 God parts the sea and the Israelites pass through on dry ground, but as the Egyptians pursue they get stuck in the mud.

Expression of fear and panic by the Egyptian's; uncertainty by the Israelites.

14: 26-31 God brings the waters back on the Egyptians, killing them and saving the Israelites.

Feelings: Expressions of power, destruction, terror, or escape.

15:1-21 Israelites celebrate God's victory.

Feelings: Expressions of joy.

Utilizing the Insights from Scripture at the end of this lesson, share with the class how this event is the salvation event of the Old Testament.

APPLY: (5–7 minutes)

Talk with the students about salvation and deliverance as defined in the Insights from Scripture.

Ask: *Does God still do "physical salvation" like we saw in this story of the Red Sea, or is salvation only spiritual today?*

Divide the class into pairs. Ask each pair to identify a situation in their community or the world community that seems hopeless, and then decide what they feel God wants to do, and how God wants people to respond. Share as a group. Some examples of situations that feel hopeless would be: terminal diseases, abusive parents, birth defects, wars, natural disasters, people unable to get out of poverty.

RESPOND: (7–10 minutes)

Give students paper and pens and ask them to write down a situation they are facing where neither of their choices seems good. (If they have trouble coming up with a situation, tell them to recall one from the past or think of something they may have to face in the future.) Ask them to write what they feel God would want to do in that situation, and their response to that.

Next, ask students to think of a situation where it didn't seem like anything good could come out of it, but it did. Share the story or two that you prepared. Discuss their stories.

Sing or play the "song of victory" that you brought to class.

INSIGHTS FROM THE SCRIPTURE:

Imagine how the children of Israel must have felt. To grasp their feeling of desperation as they are trapped between the sea and the Egyptian army, let's look at some of their thinking. In their view of the world and creation, water is seen as chaos or evil (Gen. 1:1). So, they had death in water on the one side, and either death or a return to slavery on the other side. The options were not good! Powerless, they turned on Moses and let him have it. But Moses knew there was hope in what appeared to be a hopeless situation. Moses called them not to despair but to trust in God's deliverance/salvation. (In Hebrew, salvation and deliverance mean the same thing.)

In ancient times all wars or battles were considered Holy War as the victory was determined by the battle of the gods. Humans fought on earth to encourage or "help" their gods above. God is demonstrating, in this salvation event of the old people of God, that the battle is God's, and God's alone, as evil is defeated in both the Egyptians and the sea. This is also demonstrated in the death of Christ on the cross and his resurrection—that salvation or deliverance from evil is God's work, not human's.

After deliverance the people praise God because he has shown himself to be the most mighty and powerful god. Moses and Miriam give God the credit for the victory as he has shown in the events at the sea.