



STORIES AND RITUALS

LESSON 4

Stories & Rituals: The Bible in Broad Strokes

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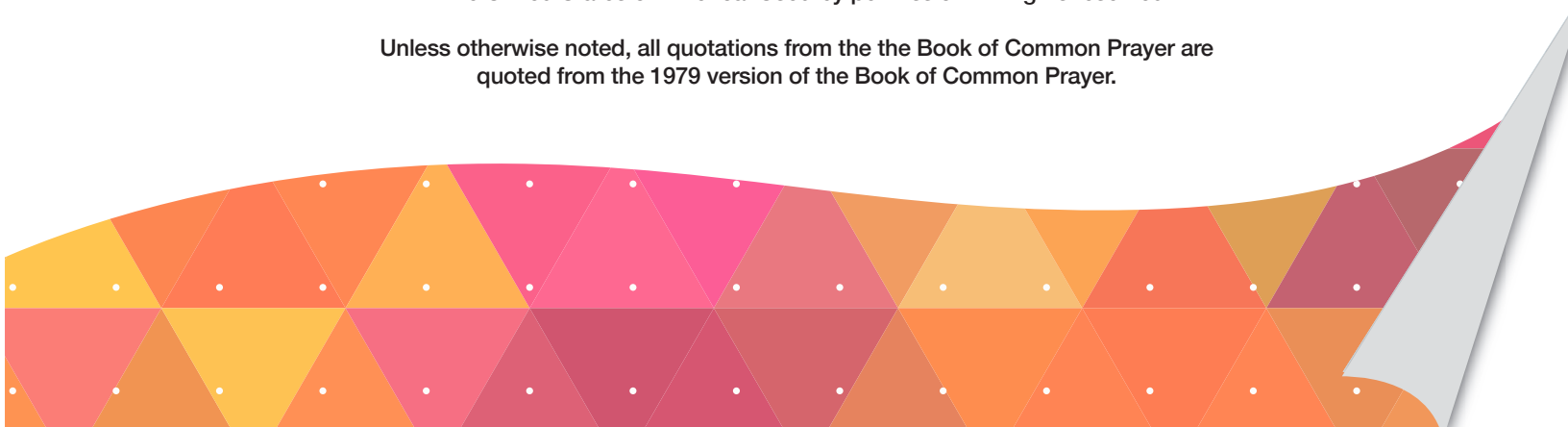
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Passover

Texts: Exodus 11-12

Big Idea: God will defend and protect us.

Lesson Objectives

Participants will:

1. Identify the need for defense and protection in the world by protecting another person.
2. Recognize God's protective nature by hearing a re-telling of the story of the first Passover.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of God's protection by creating symbols that represent protection seen in their own lives.

ACTIVITY (TIME)

Dive In (10 minutes)
Group Check-In

Community Builder (15 minutes)
Circle of Defense

The Story (15 minutes)
Passover

The Ritual (15 minutes)
My Shield

Dig Deeper (10 minutes)
Passover Traditions

Wrap it Up (5 minutes)
Closing Prayer

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Nothing

- Nothing

- Copy of Lesson Sheet 4.1

- Soft, instrumental music (optional)
- Method for playing music (optional)
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Copy of Lesson Sheet 4.2

- Smartphones or other devices that can do an Internet search
- Paper (optional)
- Pens (optional)

- Nothing

LESSON OVERVIEW



What's the Story?

Today your group will explore the story of the first Passover in Exodus 11-12. At the start of this story, we discover that the Israelites are enslaved in Egypt. Moses is called by God through the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-22) to face the Pharaoh and free the Israelites from their slavery. When Moses goes, Pharaoh does not listen to him. So, God sends a series of ten plagues on Egypt. The final of these plagues is the death of every firstborn in Egypt. However, God did not send this plague to the Israelites; instead, God passed over their homes after instructing them to paint the blood of a lamb on their doorposts. After this plague, Pharaoh told the Israelites to leave Egypt, and they were freed from slavery.

This story is important in the Biblical narrative, particularly in the movement of God's people toward the Promised Land. The events of the first Passover caused the Israelites to leave Egypt and their enslavement. After this final plague, God's people were able to leave Egypt and travel toward the land promised to Abram and his descendants by God. After four hundred years of being enslaved, the Israelites could finally leave behind their painful past and move toward a future in the place that God promised to them generations before. The importance of this story continues to be remembered even today through Passover celebrations that are an important part of Jewish faith and culture.



What's the "Big Idea?"

Today's lesson focuses on the big idea that *God will defend and protect us*. God never abandoned the Israelites while they were in slavery, and God protected the Israelites while the angel of death swept through Egypt. Furthermore, God continued to protect and defend God's people while they began their exodus journey. God lives out the covenant to be faithful to humanity by defending and protecting us from bondage and harm. This message is important in today's world because we also face things that enslave or entrap us, and we seek for defense and protection in our everyday lives, too. This defense and protection can come from God.



What's the Symbol?

In ancient and medieval times, shields were important parts of armor. They were used to protect the soldier from objects and people who could hurt them in battle. In today's culture, the shield is still seen as a symbol of protection. Today's ritual (described below) will explore this imagery in a practical context.



What's the Ritual?

Today's ritual will invite participants to think about what or who protects them daily. Then, they will illustrate these things on their own shield. The group will share their shields and use them to thank God for protecting and defending us. These shields can be used as a constant reminder of how God's faithfulness protects us from harm.



Setting Up Your Space

Set up your "altar" area. Cover a large table with a piece of fabric or linen. On the altar place a cross and some candles. Make a sample shield for the ritual and display it somewhere on the altar for everyone to see. Have crayons, markers, or colored pencils nearby (you may wish to display them on the altar, too) for the ritual.

DIVE IN (10 MINUTES)

Group Check-In

Materials:

- Nothing

During the session:

- Open your session with a quick prayer. Use this one or a prayer of your own:
Holy Lord, open our eyes, ears, and hearts to see your love and faithfulness in the world around us. Help us see your love for us in your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
- **Let's start our time together by sharing some of the great and not-so-great things that have happened to us this week. What were the high points and low points of your week?**
Go around the group and invite everyone to share.

COMMUNITY BUILDER (15 MINUTES)

Circle of Defense

Materials:

- Nothing

During the session:

- **Have you ever had to protect or defend something? What was that experience like?** *[Answers will vary.]*
- **Let's see if we can successfully protect and defend each other.**
- Have the group stand in a circle.
- Pick two people from the group: one will stand in the middle of the circle, and one will stand outside of the circle and be "it."
- The group who makes up the circle around the person in the middle should stand close together and link arms, creating a tight circle.
- "It" must try to tag the person in the middle. They must do this by reaching through the circle. The people in the circle can move around to keep "it" out, but they cannot unlink arms.
- If "it" tags the person in the center, the round is over. Pick two new people and play another round. Continue playing until your time is up, or until everyone in your group has had the chance to be the person in the middle.
- **If you were in the middle of the circle, did you feel protected? Why or why not?** *[Answers will vary.]*
- **If you were protecting the person in the middle, was it easy or hard? Why?** *[Answers will vary.]*
- **Have you ever protected someone before? What was that experience like? Has someone ever protected you?** *[Answers will vary.]*



THE STORY

(15 MINUTES)

Passover

Materials:

- Copy of Lesson Sheet 4.1

Before the session:

- Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 4.1.
- Practice reading through the story several times so you are familiar with it.

During the session:

- Tell the story on Lesson Sheet 4.1.
- After the story, ask: **What is this story telling us about God?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: God defends us; God protects us; God delivers us from oppression.]*
- **What is this story telling us about humanity?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: We sometimes face things that enslave or entrap us; we are in need of a God to protect us.]*
- **What is this story telling us about the world?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: There are many different things in the world that “oppress” us and make us feel enslaved.]*
- **The Israelites were trapped in slavery and oppression, and they waited a long time to be freed. However, they were protected and defended because they were God’s chosen people, and eventually they escaped slavery.**



THE RITUAL

(15 MINUTES)

My Shield

Materials:

- Soft, instrumental music (optional)
- Method for playing music (optional)
- Copies of Lesson Sheet 4.2
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Before the session:

- Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 4.2 for each person.
- Create a sample shield to display on the altar and to show during the ritual.

During the session:

- If you have not done so, light the candle on your altar area. If you are playing music, begin playing it softly.
- **In the story of the Passover, the Israelites were defended and protected as they were held in slavery and as they left Egypt. Take a moment to think of some of the people and things that defend and protect you on a daily basis.**
- Give the group a minute to think. Then, hand each of them a copy of Lesson Sheet 4.2.
- **In ancient and medieval times, soldiers' armor included shields. Shields would stop projectiles or people from striking the person behind it. Their primary use was to protect and defend.**
- **Who are the people and what are the things that protect and defend you? Design a shield that symbolizes these things. Draw, color, or write on your shield.**
- Allow time for the group to decorate their shields. Once they finish, invite members of the group to share what they wrote or drew, if they are comfortable doing so.
- **There are many people and things that protect us every day, including our Creator.**
How might God protect and defend God's people? *[Answers will vary.]*
- **One at a time, I am going to invite you to come place your shield by our altar. As you do, say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for protecting and defending you every day.**
- Invite participants to bring their shields to the altar, one at a time.

DIG DEEPER (10 MINUTES)

Passover Traditions

Materials:

- Smartphones or other devices that can do an Internet search
- Paper (optional)
- Pens (optional)

During the session:

- **The Passover is an important part of the history of the Israelites. In Jewish homes, it is remembered and celebrated even today. Do you know how people remember the Passover?** *[Answers will vary. Some may have answers to this question, some may not.]*
- Split the group into pairs. Invite anyone who may have a Smartphone or device that has access to the Internet to pull it out for this activity only.
- **Let's look up some different Passover traditions. With your partner, search for some different traditions. After a few minutes, we'll come back together and share what we have found.**
- Give pairs time to search. Provide paper and pens for them to take notes, if desired. After about 5 minutes, bring the group together and invite pairs to share their discoveries.
- **Why do you think the Jewish people remember the Passover every year?** *[Answers will vary.]*
- **How do you remember and celebrate God's love and protection for you?** *[Answers will vary.]*

WRAP IT UP (5 MINUTES)

Closing Prayer

Invite the group to share any prayer concerns or requests they may have for the week. Close your time together in prayer. Use the following or pray your own prayer:

Loving God, just as you protected and defended the Israelites in Egypt you protect and defend us, too. Grant that we might see your hand at work in the world around us, bringing us your love and care. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Lesson Sheet 4.1

Passover

(Exodus 11-12)

After becoming an officer of the Pharaoh, Joseph stayed in the land of Egypt, and his father and brothers eventually joined him in this new land. God's people grew and prospered in the land of Egypt, and they multiplied in number.

Years later, a new Pharaoh became ruler of Egypt; one who didn't know Joseph and the good he did for God's people. Instead, this Pharaoh saw the people as a threat and enslaved them. The Israelites hoped and prayed for the day when God would deliver them from their slavery.

God revealed Himself to a man named Moses, and Moses was asked to approach Pharaoh and free God's people. Moses was nervous about completing this task, but God was with Moses the entire time. Moses warned Pharaoh of ten plagues that would come to Egypt if the Israelites were not freed. When Pharaoh refused to let God's people go, each of these plagues fell upon Egypt, and the crops and people suffered.

Nine of these plagues came and went. One day, God told Moses of the final plague. God said, "After this plague, Pharaoh will let you and the people go. At midnight, I will pass over Egypt and kill every firstborn of every family in the land. But, the Israelites will be spared from this plague, and Pharaoh and all his officers will tell you to leave." Moses told this to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh didn't listen. So, the Israelites prepared for God to pass over the land.

Each Israelite house was instructed to take a lamb, or share one with a neighbor if they were a small family. On the night of Passover, the people slaughtered their lambs and painted the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. Then, each household ate their lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. The people ate dressed and ready to leave when they were instructed to do so; they left on their clothes and sandals when they went to sleep.

At night, God passed over the land of Egypt, killing every firstborn. However, God passed over the houses painted with the blood of the lambs. The Egyptians were in great sorrow because they all knew someone who died, even Pharaoh. Pharaoh called Moses and said, "Take the Israelites and leave. Go and worship your God, away from Egypt!"

The Israelites woke up and left Egypt. They left the land quickly, for they were afraid that Pharaoh or the Egyptians would come after them. They packed their bread before it was leavened, and travelled away from Egypt. Six thousand men left Egypt that night, not including women and children.

The Israelites were given specific instructions to remember this night every year. To this day, the people of God celebrate God's protection through the night of the first Passover.

Lesson Sheet 4.2

SHIELD

