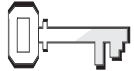


Stronger Than Egypt's Idols



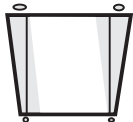
References

Exodus 3:1-10;
6:28-10:29; *Patriarchs
and Prophets*, pp.
251, 252, 257-272



Memory Verse

"You are great and do
marvelous deeds; you
alone are God"
(Psalm 86:10, NIV).

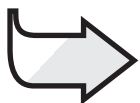


Objectives

The children will:
Know that God uses
His power to try to
reach each one of us.

Feel grateful that God uses
His power for the benefit
of His children.

Respond by thanking God for
working to reach their heart.



The Message

God is working to
reach my heart.

Monthly Theme

God reveals Himself to us.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

God, through Moses, asks Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt. When Pharaoh refuses, God sends nine plagues in succession to the land of Egypt. Each plague targets something the Egyptians worship as a god. God exhibits His love for His people by sparing the land of Goshen where they live. Through the plagues, God seeks to win both the Egyptians and Israelites to Him by demonstrating His supreme power.

This is a lesson about grace.

God worked patiently with Pharaoh, giving him ample opportunity to recognize God's power as far superior to the power the Egyptians ascribed to their gods. God's grace is also evident in His protection of the Israelites as He spares the land of Goshen. In the same way, God works to reach each one of us.

Teacher Enrichment

All the forces of nature were worshiped in Egypt. Ancient documents list more than 700 Egyptian gods, including the Nile River, worshiped as the god Hapi, and the sun, worshiped as the god Ra. These two gods were discredited at the beginning and the end of the plagues.

The beginning of the plagues is announced ahead of time by God, just as the end of each plague is within God's control. God also announces in advance when the land of Goshen, where the Israelites live, will be spared.

The plagues most likely began with the flooding of the Nile in the fall, and continued through January and February when flax and barley were in flower, and ended in March or April when wheat would have germinated.

Room Decorations

Place a door frame in the classroom with an artificial or real bush nearby. Place a lamb (stuffed toy) nearby. In other parts of the room have a picture or another portrayal of the Red Sea crossing, the Ten Commandments, and of the golden calf.

Program Overview

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students; hear pleased/ troubled	none
1 Readiness Options	up to 10	A. <i>Plagues Leapfrog</i> B. <i>Hard Hearts, Soft Hearts</i>	blindfolds, red punch, cups with lids, popped popcorn, dry rice or beans, small stick-on circles dried-out modeling clay or play dough, toothpicks, water
Any Time Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Offering Prayer	<i>Sing for Joy</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> offering container none
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story Memory Verse Bible Study	blindfold; red powdered drink mix; clear pitcher of water; small paper or Styrofoam cup; rubber, paper, stuffed frog or frogs; stuffed toy cows, sheep, etc.; stick-on circles; fly swatter (disinfect it before bringing it to class); popped popcorn or Styrofoam packing peanuts; plastic grasshoppers or other bugs; two adult males; walking stick or staff; narrator Bible Bibles, paper and pen
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	"Reaching Me" Poster	poster board or large paper, markers
4 Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Heart Treats</i>	candy hearts, tulle netting, yarn or ribbon, paper, hole punch (optional)

*Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Welcome

Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Have them begin the readiness activity of your choice.

1

Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

You Need:

- blindfolds
- red punch
- cups with lids
- popped popcorn
- dry rice or beans
- small stick-on circles (available in office supply stores)

A. Plagues Leapfrog

Divide the class into groups of four. Blindfold three in each group and give each a few grains of rice or dry beans to hold in one hand. Have them stay at one end of the room. Take the fourth person, who is not blindfolded, to the other end of the room. Beside that student place a cup with red punch, some popped popcorn, and a few stick-on dots. (Make sure the punch is in cups with lids, and be sure each group gets the same amount of popcorn and stick-on dots.) Read the following directions aloud:

This game is called “Plagues Leapfrog” because each group is handicapped by the plagues that God sent to Egypt. The three blindfolded people represent the plague of darkness. Each is holding a few grains of rice that represent the gnats, flies, or locusts. The blindfolded three must leapfrog to the other end of the room (to leapfrog represents the plague of frogs), guided by the team member who can see, but who can only communicate by mooing (to represent the plague on livestock).

Once at the other end of the room, one blindfolded person must find the red punch (represents the plague on the Nile) and feed it to another blindfolded person on the team; one must find the popped popcorn (represents the hail) and feed it to another blindfolded person on the team; and one must find the stick-on dots (represents the plague of boils) and stick them on another blindfolded member of the team. Then the three blindfolded members must leapfrog back to the starting line. You may want to get with your sighted team member and work out a code, such as one moo means go left, two moos mean go right, etc.

Debriefing

Ask: **Was the game easy or hard? How do you think playing this game might have been like living in Egypt during the plagues?** (It was confusing. No one knew what was happening. It was uncomfortable, etc.) **Why do you think we played this game (or any game we play in Sabbath School)?** (to make a point, to teach something) **That’s the same reason God sent these plagues to Egypt. He was trying to reach the heart of Pharaoh and the other Egyptians by using things they would understand. God still does that, and that brings us to today’s message:**



GOD IS WORKING TO REACH MY HEART.

Say that with me.

(Adapted from *Youth Worker’s Encyclopedia of Bible Teaching Ideas, Old Testament*, Group Publishing, Loveland, CO, 1994, pp. 31, 32.)

B. Hard Hearts, Soft Hearts

In advance, shape the modeling clay or play dough into small heart shapes, one for each child. Let the hearts dry overnight or place them in the oven on low heat.

In class, give each child a heart and a toothpick. Ask them to write the message on the heart with the toothpick. Expect them to have trouble and to complain that the clay is too hard. Allow them to drip a few drops of water onto the clay to soften it.

You Need:

- dried-out modeling clay or play dough
- water
- toothpicks

Debriefing

Ask: **Is it easy to give a message to a hard heart?** (No.) **What did you have to do to be able to write on your heart?** (Soften it with water.) **In our Bible story today, God was trying to reach the heart of the king of Egypt, called Pharaoh. But Pharaoh had a hard heart. God tried many different ways to soften his heart. None of them worked. Just as God worked on Pharaoh's heart, GOD IS WORKING TO REACH MY HEART. That's our message for today. Say it with me.**



GOD IS WORKING TO REACH MY HEART.

Prayer and Praise



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Review the memory verse and allow time for sharing experiences from last week's lesson study. Give a special warm greeting to visitors and introduce each by name. Acknowledge birthdays or special events.



Suggested Songs

- "His Banner Over Me Is Love" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 25)
- "O, How He Loves You and Me" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 28)
- "Can You Imagine?" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 29)
- "Wide, Wide as the Ocean" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 32)



Mission

Use *Children's Mission*.



Offering

Say: **Bring the money that you want to share to help other people know God.**

You Need:

- offering container



Prayer

Say: **More than anything else, God wants to save us so we can live with Him forever. God is working to reach our hearts. Let's place our hands over our hearts as we pray.** Pray that your students will be open to God's working in their lives.

Bible Lesson

You Need:

- blindfold
- red powdered drink mix
- clear pitcher of water
- small paper or Styrofoam cup
- rubber, paper, stuffed, etc. frogs
- stuffed toy cows, sheep, etc.
- stick-on circles
- fly swatter (disinfect before bringing to class)
- popped popcorn or Styrofoam packing peanuts
- plastic grasshoppers or other bugs
- two adult males
- walking stick or staff for Moses
- narrator

Experiencing the Story

Setting the Scene

Before the students arrive, sprinkle a little powdered red drink mix into the bottom of several paper or Styrofoam cups through which you cannot see. Place them on a table beside the clear pitcher of water. Position Pharaoh in a chair in front of the class. Moses and Pharaoh can act out the story as you narrate, or they can take a copy and read and act out their parts.

Distribute to different children the frog(s), sheep and cows, stick-on circles, fly swatter, popcorn or packing peanuts, and

plastic bugs.

Read or tell the story.

God's people, the Israelites, had been slaves in Egypt for more than 400 years. Their lives were bitter and miserable. God heard their groaning and took compassion on them. He sent Moses to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to ask that the Israelites be set free. But Pharaoh refused. Instead, he made God's people work harder. And the slave masters beat them even more cruelly.

God knew that the Egyptians worshiped many different gods. He knew that Pharaoh expected his idols to protect him and his country. So God decided to show Pharaoh how powerless all his idols really were.

The Egyptians got most of their water for cooking, bathing, drinking, and growing crops from the Nile. They worshiped the river as a god they called Hapi. So

God said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is unyielding. Meet him in the morning as he goes down to the Nile River. Say to him, 'By this you will know that the God of heaven is the Lord.' Then take your staff and strike the water, and it will be changed into blood."

That's exactly what happened. *[Moses holds his staff over the pitcher of water, then pours some into the cups so the students can see it has turned red. Moses offers a cup to Pharaoh, who refuses in disgust.]* But Pharaoh's heart remained just as hard.

Seven days later, God sent Moses back to Pharaoh. Moses again asked that the Israelites be set free, and again Pharaoh refused. This time God targeted their frog goddess, Heqt.

Frogs swarmed over the entire country—in the Egyptians' houses, their beds, their kitchens, their ovens, and even in Pharaoh's palace. *[Invite the children with the frogs to put them on Pharaoh's lap, head, etc.]* Pharaoh called for Moses. "Get rid of the frogs, and I'll let your people go," he said.

The next day all the frogs died. The whole country smelled awful because of the dead and rotting frogs. But again Pharaoh changed his mind. He refused to let the Israelites go.

So God told Moses to hit the ground with his staff. He did, and the dust became gnats. The gnats covered the people and all the animals. Even Pharaoh's magicians said, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh again refused to let the Israelites go.

God sent Moses to Pharaoh with another message. "I will send swarms of flies to the land of Egypt. But I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where the Israelites live. No flies will bother them. You will know that they are My people, and that I am in this land."

Flies covered the land. *[Invite the child with the fly swatter to give it to Pharaoh.]* They poured into Pharaoh's palace and all the homes. People and animals felt their constant bites. But no flies troubled the Israelites.

The Egyptians worshiped many animals, including a bull god Apis, a cow god Hathor, and a ram god Khnum. God wanted Pharaoh to know that He was more powerful than all those gods put together. So God sent Moses back to Pharaoh. "If you refuse to let My people go," said God, "I will bring a terrible plague on your horses and donkeys and camels and sheep and goats and cows in the field. Tomorrow they will all die. But none of the animals in the land of Goshen will die." Who lived in Goshen? That's right—the Israelites, God's people.

The next day, all the Egyptian livestock died. *[Invite the children with the stuffed toy animals to come and lay them on their sides at Pharaoh's feet.]* Only in the land of Goshen did the animals remain healthy. But Pharaoh still would not let the people go.

Next God told Moses to take a handful of soot out of a furnace and toss it in the air in front of Pharaoh. Moses did, and a fine dust settled over the land of Egypt. It brought terrible sores on all the people and animals. The Egyptians' earth god, Geb, was powerless to protect them. *[Invite the children with stick-on circles to stick them on Pharaoh.]* But Pharaoh still refused to listen to God.

God told Moses to give Pharaoh another message. "Let My people go, or a terrible hailstorm will destroy your crops and animals."

By now some of Pharaoh's officials believed God, and they quickly gave orders for their slaves and animals to be brought in to shelter. Then God sent thunder and hail and lightning—the worst storm Egypt had ever seen. The Egyptian

sky gods Nut and Shu couldn't protect Egypt against the God of heaven. *[Invite the children with popcorn and/or packing peanuts to throw them at Pharaoh.]* The hail beat down everything that grew and stripped every tree. But there was no hail in Goshen.

Again Pharaoh promised to let the Israelites go, but he changed his mind when the hail stopped.

Next God sent locusts. They devoured the few green things left after the hail. Pharaoh's crop god Seth had failed. *[Invite the children with plastic bugs to come and give them to Pharaoh.]* But Pharaoh still refused to honor the God of heaven.

God's next target was the sun god Ra. When three days of darkness spread over Egypt, Pharaoh must have prayed to his sun god for light. *[Invite the child with the blindfold to blindfold Pharaoh.]* But it did no good. Only in the land of Goshen was there light.

When Moses appeared before Pharaoh again, Pharaoh's heart was harder than ever. All of God's attempts to reach him had failed.

"Get out of my sight!" he shouted at Moses. "Make sure you do not appear before me again. The day you see my face, you will die."

Nine times God had tried to reach Pharaoh's heart. And nine times Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not listen. How could God make him understand?

Debriefing

Allow response time as you ask: **By the end of the plagues, do you think Pharaoh still believed in the power of his gods? Do you think most people in Egypt believed in Moses' God, or their own idols?**

Two of the most important Egyptian gods were the river god Hapi and the sun god Ra. Why do you think

God started and ended the plagues with those two? Do you think there was anything else God could have done to convince Pharaoh of His power? If so, what?

Why do you think Pharaoh refused God's power? What about us today? Is God still working to reach our hearts? I think He is. And that's our message for today:



GOD IS WORKING TO REACH MY HEART.

You Need:

- Bible

Memory Verse

Open your Bible to Psalm 86:10 and read the memory verse to the class. Use the following clapping game to teach the children the memory verse. Divide the children into pairs and have them face each other. If you have an odd number you will need to participate. Repeat until children know the verse.

Words	Activity
You	clap each other's right hands
a-	clap their own hands
lone	clap each other's left hands
do	clap own hands
marvelous	clap both of each other's
deeds;	hands three times
You	clap each other's right hands
a-	clap own hands
lone	clap each other's left hands
are	clap own hands
God.	clap both of each other's hands

Bible Study

Before class write the following texts on small pieces of paper.

You Need:

- Bibles
- Bible texts written on small slips of paper

Group 1

- Exodus 7:13
- Exodus 7:22, 23
- Exodus 8:15
- Exodus 8:28
- Exodus 8:32
- Exodus 9:7
- Exodus 9:12
- Exodus 9:34
- Exodus 10:27, 28

Group 2

- Exodus 8:19
- Exodus 9:20
- Exodus 10:7

Form two groups. Distribute the texts to the students to find and read. Have all the Group 1 texts read first, and in order.

Debriefing

Ask: **How did Pharaoh respond to God's attempts to reach his heart? Did he get easier to deal with or harder? At what point could Pharaoh have allowed God to reach his heart? How would this story have ended if Pharaoh had not hardened his heart?**

Read all the Group 2 texts. Ask: **How did at least some of Pharaoh's officials respond to the plagues? Did the plagues work to reach the hearts of at least some of the Egyptians? Read aloud Exodus 12:37, 38. This text tells us when the Israelites finally left Egypt. What does it indicate? (That at least some Egyptians went with the Israelites. God reached at least a few hearts in Egypt.) In the same way,**



GOD IS WORKING TO REACH MY HEART.

Say that with me. GOD IS WORKING TO REACH MY HEART.

3

Applying the Lesson

“Reaching Me” Poster

Divide the class into nine groups. A group may be one student. If you have fewer than nine children, give each child more than one paper or poster board. Give each group three minutes to think of a way God works to reach their hearts. (Suggestions: God sometimes works to reach our hearts by saving us from illness, accidents, and disasters. He uses Christian parents, friends, and teachers. Sometimes scary or sad situations touch people’s hearts.) When time is up, ask each group to select one person to draw a picture on the poster that represents the way they decided that God tries to reach their hearts.

Debriefing

Ask: **Why do you think I divided you into nine groups today?** (God tried nine different times or ways to reach Pharaoh’s heart.) **How many different ways do you think God tries to reach our hearts?** (A lot.) **Why do you think God tries so many different ways?** (Different things reach different people.) **Does God still use His power for our good? Does He still try to reach our hearts?** (Yes.) **Today’s message says:**



GOD IS WORKING TO REACH MY HEART.

Say that with me. GOD IS WORKING TO REACH MY HEART.

You Need:

- poster board or large paper
- markers

4

Sharing the Lesson

Heart Treats

To prepare in advance, cut the tulle netting into 6-inch squares. Allow one square for each child in class. In class give each student several candy hearts to place in the center of the netting. Give each child a slip of paper on which to write “God is working to reach your heart” and the name of someone with whom they’d like to share the message. Punch or poke a small hole in the paper. Bring the edges of the netting together and tie with ribbon or yarn just above the candy hearts. Attach the slip of paper to the ribbon as you tie it.

Debriefing

Ask: **Whose heart is God trying to reach?** (everyone’s) If you use valentine hearts with messages written on them, say: **We think of valentine’s hearts as cute messages we give to someone we like. But some of these express how God feels toward us. Which ones?** (Be mine, I love you, I’m yours, etc.) **As you share these candy hearts with someone, be sure to tell that person the story of Pharaoh and how God worked to reach his heart.**

Closing

Sing “God Is So Good” (*Sing for Joy*, No. 13) with your class. Pray that they will always recognize His greatness and be open to the ways He works to reach their hearts.

You Need:

- candy hearts
- 6-inch squares of tulle netting
- yarn or ribbon
- paper
- hole punch (optional)

Stronger Than Egypt's Idols

References

Exodus 3:1-10;
6:28-10:29;
*Patriarchs and
Prophets*, pp. 251,
252, 257-272

Memory Verse

"You are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God" (Psalm 86:10, NIV).

The Message

God is working to reach my heart.

Tara listened to the stories at Vacation Bible School. They kept telling her about God's love for everyone in the world. There are so many people in the world, she thought. Could God really care about me? What do you think? Does God care about you?

The cool, early morning breeze ruffled Moses' beard as he and his brother Aaron stood quietly by the great river Nile. "Here he comes," Moses said softly. "What do you two want now?" Pharaoh growled as he arrived at the riverside.

Moses stepped forward. "The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to say, 'Let My people go.' The Lord says, 'You are going to find out that I am the Lord.'

"I will hit the water of the Nile with this staff, and the river will turn to blood. The fish in it will die, and the river will stink. The Egyptians will not be able to drink any water from the Nile."

It happened just as Moses said. Everywhere in Egypt, water turned to blood. Even water that was stored in pots in people's houses.

But Pharaoh would not let God's people go. He did not want to give up his slaves. After all, they had been slaves in Egypt for almost 400 years.

"Go to Pharaoh again," the Lord said. "Tell him I will send millions of frogs to Egypt. Frogs will be everywhere! Even in people's bedrooms. Even in their beds!"

Moses told Pharaoh the words of the Lord. And it happened just as Moses said.

The frogs were everywhere, and they made the Egyptians crazy!

"Get rid of these frogs, and I will let your people go!" Pharaoh shouted at Moses.

So the Lord ended the plague, and all the frogs died. But Pharaoh did not let the people go.

The Lord spoke to Moses again. "Tell Aaron to hit the dust with his staff. The dust will turn into gnats."

Aaron did. And suddenly the land of Egypt was filled with a fog of tiny, irritating gnats. The little gnats covered the Egyptians and all their animals. The gnats drove the Egyptians crazy!

But Pharaoh would not let God's people go.

The Lord spoke to Moses again. "Tell Pharaoh if he refuses to let My people go, I will send swarms of flies to Egypt. The houses will be filled with them. The ground will be covered with them. But there will be no flies in Goshen where My people live. I am the Lord, and I have power even in the heart of his land!"

Moses told Pharaoh the words of the Lord. And it happened just as Moses said.

"Get rid of these horrible flies!" Pharaoh shrieked. "I will let your people go!"

So the Lord made the flies disappear. But Pharaoh would not let God's people go.

The Lord tried to reach Pharaoh's heart five more times. He tried to show Pharaoh that He was the true God. The Egyptians worshiped many gods, and the Lord used each plague to show Pharaoh that his gods were useless.

All the Egyptians' horses, donkeys, camels, cows, and sheep died. (The Egyptians worshiped a bull god and a cow god.) The animals of the Israelites did not die.

Next, horrible, painful sores appeared on the Egyptians. (They worshiped a lion-



headed god that was supposed to have power over disease.)

Then the Lord sent a huge hailstorm. It destroyed all the crops and every tree. (The Egyptians worshiped a sky god and a god of storms.) The hail did not fall where the Israelites lived.

Then the Lord covered all of Egypt with locusts. The locusts ate every green thing left in the land, and they filled all the houses. The Egyptians' god of crops could not save them.

Finally, a deep, terrible darkness covered Egypt for three days. Their sun god could not help the Egyptians. But there was light where the Israelites lived.

The Lord had now given Pharaoh nine opportunities to see that He was far greater than Egypt's false gods. He had tried over and over to speak to Pharaoh in a way he could understand. He would try one more time.



Daily Activities

Sabbath

- Read your Bible lesson story. Try to imagine that you live in Egypt and the water has been turned to blood. What do you think? What do you do?
- Read John 4:13 in your Bible. Then read Psalm 86:10. Teach the verse to your family.

Sunday

- Read Exodus 3:1-10 during family worship.
- If you have a safe place, build a small fire with your family's help. Put a piece of a branch in the fire. What happens? Imagine that you are Moses. What would you have thought when the bush didn't burn up?
- Review your memory verse. What marvelous deed did God do to guide Moses? Did it reach Moses' heart?

Monday

- During family worship, read together Exodus 6:28-8:32.
- Draw a picture of each of those plagues on a different piece of paper. Save them.
- Ask an adult to help you with this. Put some food coloring in water to represent sin. Ask an adult to add some bleach to the water. What happens? The bleach represents Jesus forgiving us. How is this like the way God works to reach your heart? (Be careful with the bleach; it could ruin your clothes.)

Tuesday

- With your family, read Exodus 9:1-10:29 for worship today.
- Draw a picture of each of those plagues on a different piece of paper. Save them.
- How was God working to reach Pharaoh's heart? Did it work?

Wednesday

- During family worship arrange your pictures of the plagues in order. Tell your family how God tried to reach Pharaoh's heart. Turn the pictures over. On the back of each write one word of your memory verse. Mix up the papers. Try to put them in order by looking at the pictures. Now put them in order by looking at the words. Say your memory verse without looking.

Thursday

- With your family's help, create a maze for worship. Draw it on paper or make one with furniture, boxes, etc. Draw or make something to represent a heart to go at the end. Talk with your family about the different ways God is working to reach your heart. Say your memory verse together.

Friday

- Act out the story of Pharaoh and Moses with your family. What can you use to represent the different plagues? Ask the adults in your family to tell you about ways God has reached their hearts. What has God done to reach your heart?
- Sing some praise songs. Thank God for using so many different ways to try to reach our hearts.