

Intergenerational Worship

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Intergenerational Bible Reading

Exodus 14:19-31 Year A Proper 19 Sept 17, 2017



What this is: Interactive Bible Engagement with Art reflection



Where it's used: Any intergenerational gathering; Early Word



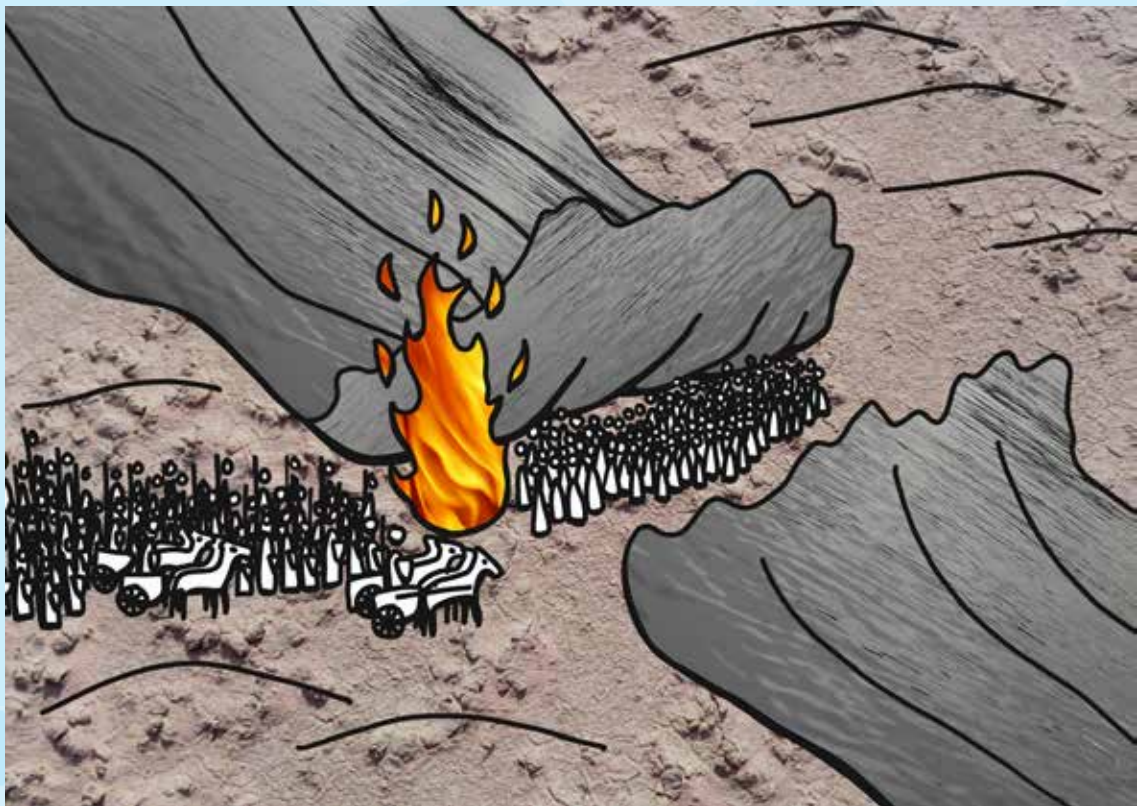
Time: 10+ minutes



Bible focus/theme: Exodus 14:19-31; Crossing Red Sea; Travelling with God



What's needed: 5x Printouts of Exodus 14 Image by Chris Booth, or displayed on screen; Print outs or screen display of the text with words in colour; unpolished rocks in a large waterproof tub, candle and matches, tub of water, wooden dolly pegs or plasticene 'blob' people, toy soldiers (preferably ancient - spears/bows and arrows) and horses (from farm animal sets)



Exodus 14:19-31

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them.

It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided.

The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers.

At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic.

He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers."

So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea.

The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained.

But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

Introduction

Today we pick up the story of the Hebrew slaves, that we have been following in the book of Exodus in the Old Testament of the Bible. The Hebrew slaves are sometimes called the People of Israel or Israelites or just Israel or Jacob. [After this chapter - where they are finally free, they are never called Hebrews again in the book of Exodus.]

God has heard their cries of suffering being oppressed as slaves.

With the complicated character of Moses as their leader - confronting Pharaoh with messages from God to free the people - and with the country of Egypt in chaos following a series of plagues and natural disasters, the Hebrew slaves have escaped into the wilderness. But the sea is in front of them, and Pharaoh's army are pursuing close behind!

Process

Before we read the story from the bible, we are going to use the elements of Chris Booth's art to fire up our imagination. In 5 groups you will be invited to look at one part of the picture and use your imaginations to think about all the possibilities that might be going on with that part of the picture. Take 2-3 minutes to brainstorm all the story possibilities together, and to story-play with the materials you have been given.

Divide into 5 groups, allocating their word 'colour', supplying the following items and designating the part of the picture each group is to explore.

Group 1 - Wilderness; unpolished rocks and waterproof tub - blue words

Group 2 - Fire; candle and matches - red words

Group 3 - Waves: tub of water - green words

Group 4 - Israelites; wooden dolly pegs or plastic people - pink words

Group 5 - Egyptian army; toy soldiers, horses - orange words

After 3-4 minutes provide each group with a copy of the text, and give them some time to rehearse the words in their allocated colour, so everyone in the group can participate.

Continue

Now that our storying imaginations are warmed up, we will read the story from Exodus chapter 14 together. Join in with the words that correspond to your groups colour. Let's read slowly, and attentively, seeing how the different elements in the story work together.

Read the text together, slowly and expressively - making full use of the dramatic tension in the story - pausing to make sure everyone is included in adding their words in colour.

We are going to read again, once more weaving our colours together. As we do, let's have some volunteers bring the materials from each group together to create the story.

Read again. Someone with some foreknowledge should guide the assembling of the wilderness in the waterproof tub with one side stacked higher than the other, placing the israelites and egyptians in formation, holding the candle as the presence of the Lord above the scene. As the Israelites are all moved to safety on the highest part of the wilderness, release the water over the Egyptians.

Reflect

So we've noticed that there are two "armies" named, but one of the armies isn't really an army, but a group of weaponless asylum seeking once-were-slaves - men and women, children and the aged - fleeing, running away to find freedom. The Israelites had no weapons, no swords or bows and arrows or spears or chariots. They had no hope of defending themselves against the super-power army of the Egyptians. What's going on even calling them an army? Imagine such vulnerable suffering people being seen as an army to be attacked? I wonder if in our world today sometimes vulnerable suffering people are treated like they are a threatening army to be attacked with violence instead of cared for with compassion?"

We notice that their only weapon was no weapon at all! Although the text calls them an army, they are a non-fighting weaponless army. What defeats the Egyptians is their own desire for violence.

Help the group think through the likelihood that the Israelites are un-armed. They are carrying children, bowls of dough, and driving herds of animals.

Allow imaginations to explore the injustice of the situation, and make links to situations of injustice of similar proportions and dynamics in our world today.

Conclusion

This is a story that has been told over and over and over again through the Bible in lots of different forms - in songs and prayers and poems and political rants and motivational speeches and laments. Ask someone in your group one of the following questions...

- I wonder what interested or impacted you the most?
- Where has the fire of God's presence flared up and caught your attention today?
- Who has come to mind - friends or family or community or strangers or places in the wider world - as you've read this story today?

Prayer

Use the simple prayer liturgy below to respond further, or use the Exodus 14 inter-generational prayer activity.

'What's not fair?

Does the suffering God care?

How can we turn this into a prayer?

What action does this call us to dare?