

Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

The Exodus



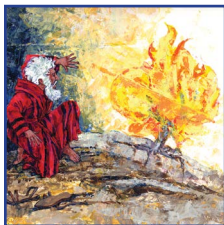
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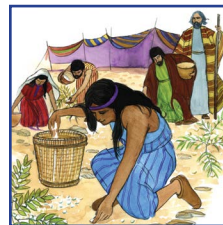
Unit Overview and Connecting page written by Carol A. Wehrheim
Sessions written by Alex Wirth

The Exodus

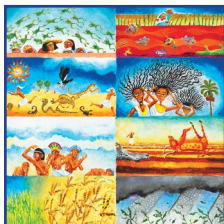
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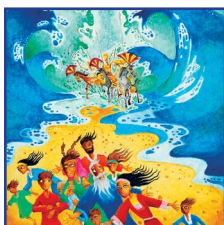
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The free At-Home Kit Guide provides instructions and suggestions for at-home faith formation. Download it at www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum or www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/StoryBibleCurriculum. Click on the unit title, and then click on the download button found at the bottom of the product page for this unit.

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🌿 **Goal:** To understand that God is with you no matter where you are.

Connecting with the Biblical Text

In Exodus 2, Moses is born; is rescued by the pharaoh's daughter after the pharaoh decrees that all male babies of the Hebrews are to be killed; and is raised in the palace until, as a young man, he kills a slave master who is beating a Hebrew slave. At the beginning of chapter 3, Moses is watching over the flocks of Reuel, who is the father of his wife, Zipporah. One would think that his life had settled down, but God had other plans for Moses. God heard God's people groaning in Egypt under the heavy burden of slavery and called Moses to deliver them from the pharaoh. The remainder of the book of Exodus is about that deliverance, its difficulties, the Hebrews' unfaithfulness, and God's faithful and constant love and effort to help them live in God's ways.

For further reflection on the holy ground passage, go to bit.ly/GLHolyPlace.

Connecting with the World

- 🌿 Moses was called to lead the people out of slavery. Closer to our time, Harriet Tubman, who led more than seventy African Americans out of slavery in the South, played a similar role. Watch the movie *Harriet* (Focus Features, 2019) to learn about her story.
- 🌿 Few of us are confronted by God in such a startling fashion as was Moses. Yet we are called by God to particular work and tasks. How do you discern your call from God?
- 🌿 We can become enslaved in many ways and to many things. Look over the front page of a daily newspaper. How do you see others, even yourself, enslaved today? How can you be part of a ministry that helps them or yourself move away from this enslavement?

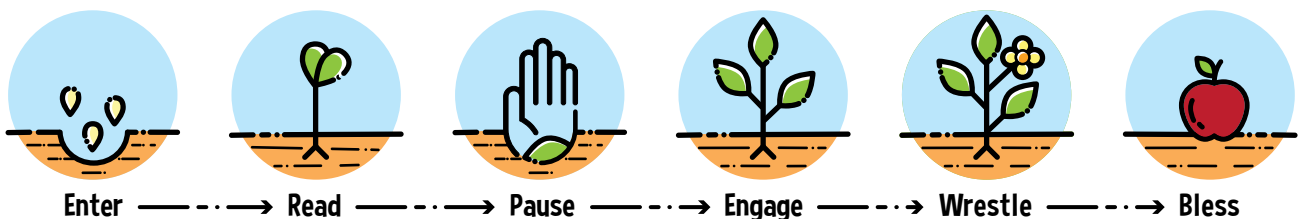
God of the covenant, keep your steadfast love before me so that I might show that love to others. Amen.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

Research has shown that there is an innate spirituality in children, and it cuts across religious groups. The work of Robert Coles and Lisa Miller assure us of this capacity within children. Our task is to nurture it, just as we nurture their physical, social, and intellectual capacities. Children often have special places where they go to be by themselves (in a tree house, behind a large chair, under a large shrub, in a quiet corner). In those special places, they may find a closer presence with God. The adults in their lives can nourish this connection by allowing them this space and time to pray or meditate as they choose.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

- 🌿 The special, holy place was where Moses encountered God. Some speak of such places as thin places. Where have you found a thin place, a special and holy place?
- 🌿 One famous thin place is Iona, an island off the coast of Scotland. Read about the Iona Community at bit.ly/GLIona.
- 🌿 Lives are busy today and thin places, or just a place to be quiet, are lacking. Where might you set up such a place in your home? If there are children, this may be possible only early in the morning or late at night. It may be only one or two times a week. But look for that space and time to nurture your spiritual life.



Leading

Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ A burning bush (see note below)
- ✓ Small metal tins (like those used for mints—3.75 x 2.45 x 0.8 inch)
- ✓ Resource Page 1
- ✓ Copies of Resource Page 2
- ✓ Collage supplies: magazines, colored and patterned paper, old hymnal pages, recycled materials.
- ✓ Decorative items, such as beans, beads, ribbons, yarn, and glitter
- ✓ Glue or Mod Podge
- ✓ Internet-connected device
- ✓ *God Is Coming to Visit!* (Flyaway Books, available October 2021)

Be as creative as you want (or don't want) with your burning bush. It could be as simple as colored tissue sticking up out of a paper bag or as elaborate as fabric and streamers blown by a fan with lights.

Preparing to Lead

It is important to approach this Scripture text knowing exactly who and where Moses is as this story begins. It is very easy, when we are teaching about great biblical leaders, to project who they become at the end back into the beginning of their story. As this story opens, Moses isn't the epic "Let my people go!" hero we know from the movies. Moses is far away from the people he came from (the enslaved Hebrews) and the people he was raised by (the pharaoh's court). He's just a shepherd wandering around in the desert, and yet God calls him to confront a king and rescue an entire nation of people.

This story is a great opportunity to teach children, who may feel just ordinary in every way, that God shows up for them just as God showed up for Moses. Make sure you know this about yourself as well! You may feel ordinary, too, but God has called you to educate young people in the stories and ways of God. That is an epic, heroic calling too.

This session focuses on how, even out in the ordinary desert, Moses encountered God in a special, holy place. Think about how you can make your ordinary teaching space feel special and holy for the children. Can you rearrange the furniture, dim the lights, or

do something else to set the mood? Create some kind of artificial "burning" bush from colored paper or streamers for the children to gather around. You'll also need a table and chairs for a craft called Mobile Special Holy Place. Pile them with the supplies listed above. You may want to assemble an example of this ahead of time so that the children can see what they are making. See example images on Resource Page 2.

Before the children arrive, take a slow, deep breath, and pray:

Extraordinary God, make this place special and holy too. Amen.



Enter into sacred space together.

Invite the children to sit in a circle around your burning bush. Tell the children that in today's story, God calls out to the main character from a burning bush. Pretend that you are throwing your voice by turning your head to the side and partially covering your mouth. Say, "Moses, Moses," and then pretend like you heard it come from the burning bush.

It's OK to make this part pretty silly. You are trying to draw the children into the story, and sometimes being silly is the best way to help children see themselves in the story and make it memorable.

Encourage the kids to all lean in and put a hand to their ear. Say, "Moses, Moses," again. Then say, "And Moses answered, 'Here I am.' So that's what we're going to do." Say each child's name in this same way and have them answer, "Here I am." Then pray together:

God of our ancestors, /
God of our families, /
you have called each of us by name. /
Help us to hear your call /
and learn about you today. /
Amen. /

You may want to have the children remove their shoes to illustrate God's instructions to Moses to respect the holy ground, but this might be impractical with large groups or younger children.

Leading



Read a story of God's people.

Invite the children to sit in a comfortable position to listen to “Moses and the Special Holy Place.”

Read the first two paragraphs of the story in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 90).

Have a conversation using the questions in the first paragraph:

- ✦ Is there a place that is special to you?
- ✦ Do you have a quiet place you like to be?”

Read the rest of the story.



Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Ask the children to pause silently for a moment and to imagine what God's voice might have sounded like coming from the burning bush. After a silent period, invite the children to share what God's voice sounds like to them.



Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Encourage the children to engage their imagination and curiosity with the story. Wonder together with the children using the “Hear, See, and Act” questions on page 91 of *Growing in God's Love*.

- Where Is God?
 - ✦ Have the children stand up but stay in a circle around your burning bush. Encourage the children to go to the part of the room where they think God would most likely show up right now. Invite a few children to share why they chose that spot.
 - ✦ Regather around the burning bush. Engage the children in conversation around the following questions:
 - Where do you think God is most likely to show up at our church? Why?
 - Where do you think God is most likely to show up in your house? Why?
 - Where do you think God is most likely to show up in our town? Why?
 - Where do you think God is most likely to show up in our world? Why?

- ✦ Notice how the children answer, and name the places as you go. Are they naming big, important places? Safe, comfortable places? Fun, exciting places? Special, holy places? Ordinary places?
- ✦ Then ask, “Where was Moses when God showed up?” Go back to the story if you need to. It says, Moses “took the flock far from home to the sunny side of the mountain.” Help the children recognize that Moses was nowhere special when God showed up. Even though he was far away from his people, from where he grew up, and from his new family home, God was with him, just like God is with them wherever they go. Any ordinary place can be a special holy place because God is there.



Wrestle with our place in God's story.

- Mobile Special Holy Place
 - ✦ Invite the children to sit around the tables with the decorating supplies. While giving each child a small metal tin, remind them of the main point of the previous activity: any ordinary place can be a special holy place because God is always with us.
 - ✦ Show the children your pre-made example of a Mobile Special Holy Place, summarize the instructions on Resource Page 1, and invite the children to make their own using the art supplies and copies of Resource Page 2.
 - ✦ As the children create, ask them about the choices they are making about supplies, images, and colors. This can help them think theologically about what they are making, and it helps solidify personal relationships between you and them.

Pre-cutting may be necessary for younger children. If you are unable to gather enough mint tins, you can instead use pages of card stock folded in half like a card.



Bless one another with God's grace.

Move back to a circle around your burning bush. If the Mobile Special Holy Places are dry enough, have each child open theirs in front of them and pray the following prayer:

God, who spoke to Moses, /
speak to me, /
wherever I am, /
in whatever I do. /
Speak to me /
so that I can say, /
“Here I am.” /
Amen. /



Grow with more.

- Virtual Special Holy Place
 - ✦ God is truly everywhere! You can even create a special holy place online. On your internet-connected device, visit bit.ly/GLCandle.
 - ✦ Facilitate a discussion among the children about what they want to pray for and then light the online candle. Alternately, send the link home with the children so that they can light an online candle with their families.
- Listening to a Story
 - ✦ Read *God's Coming to Visit!*, by Franz Hübner. Pause as you come to the point where all the animals settle in for the night. Ask the children what kinds of things they might do to prepare for God's visit. Finish reading the book. Wonder with the children how they feel to know that they don't need to do anything to impress God.

Moses and the Special Holy Place Resource Page 1

Mobile Special Holy Place Instructions

- ✦ Invite the children to select and cut out any images or words that feel holy or special to them from Resource Page 2 or from the decorative papers.
- ✦ Once they have selected their materials, encourage them to lay out their entire design inside their metal tins.
- ✦ Assist the children in gluing down their designs.
- ✦ If time allows, invite the children to decorate the outside of their tins with the other decorative materials. Help them make sure that their boxes will close by keeping materials away from the edges.
- ✦ When the Mobile Special Holy Places are dry, encourage the children to share their Mobile Special Holy Place with the group. Engage the children in discussion using the following prompts:
 - Why did you choose the words or images you chose?
 - What, in particular, helps your holy place feel special to you?
 - What is your most favorite part of your Mobile Special Holy Place?
- ✦ Offer the children an opportunity to go to the part of the room they indicated in the “Where Is God?” activity, open their Mobile Special Holy Place, and spend a few minutes on holy ground.



Image credit: Megan Cochran

Mobile Special Holy Place Artwork

Special holy place

“Moses, Moses”

Here I am

Take off your shoes

Holy ground

I hear them crying out

Who am I?

I'll be with you.

