

Crossing the Red Sea

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: When fear is in front of you and behind you, God is still fighting for you. Trust Him, obey Him and praise Him.

Bible passage: Exodus 13:17–15:21. Students read Exodus 14:5–22 and 14:31–15:2 out loud themselves.

Memory verse: "The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." *Exodus 14:14 (KJV)* and "The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." *Exodus 15:2 (KJV)*

You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.

Before class: read Exodus 13:17–15:21. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: How Scary? (5–10 minutes)

Name one side of the room "not scary" and the other side "very scary." Read each situation. Students stand somewhere along the line to show how scary it would feel. 1) You have to give a talk in front of the whole school. 2) You hear a strange noise in the house at night. 3) A doctor says a family member is very sick. 4) Friends are pressuring you to do something wrong, and you're the only one saying no. Ask: *What do you usually do first when you're afraid?* Say: "Israel was stuck with a sea in front of them and an army behind them. Let's see what they did, and what God did."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Tell the beginning in your own words: God led Israel out of Egypt the long way, through the wilderness by the Red Sea, so they would not see war and turn back (Exodus 13:17–18). Moses carried Joseph's bones, as Joseph had asked (13:19). The LORD went before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (13:21–22). God told them to camp by the sea and said He would harden Pharaoh's heart so he would chase them, and the Egyptians would know that He is the LORD (14:1–4).

Read out loud: Exodus 14:5–22. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **harden ... heart** (14:8): make stubborn; **pursued** (14:8–9): chased
- **went out with an high hand** (14:8): left boldly, with confidence
- **host** (14:4, 14:17): army; **drew nigh** (14:10): came near
- **sore afraid** (14:10): very afraid; **wherefore** (14:11): why
- **shew** (14:13): show; **hold your peace** (14:14): stay calm and quiet and let God work
- **rod** (14:16): Moses' staff, a long walking stick
- **the midst of the sea** (14:16, 14:22): the middle of the sea



Tell the middle part in your own words: The Egyptians chased Israel into the middle of the sea (14:23). In the morning watch, the last part of the night, the LORD looked on the Egyptian army through the pillar of fire and of the cloud and troubled them. He took off their chariot wheels so they could hardly drive (14:24–25). The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them" (14:25). Moses stretched out his hand again, the sea returned when morning came, and the water covered the chariots, the horsemen and all of Pharaoh's army that had followed them in (14:26–28). Israel had walked on dry land in the middle of the sea, and the LORD saved Israel that day (14:29–30).

Read out loud: Exodus 14:31–15:2. Old words in this passage:

- **feared the LORD** (14:31): had deep respect for God and trusted Him
 - **triumphed gloriously** (15:1): won a great, wonderful victory
 - **an habitation** (15:2): a home, a place for God to dwell; **exalt** (15:2): lift up in praise
- Then add: Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a **timbrel** (a small hand drum) and led the women, singing, "Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously" (15:20–21).

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. God chose the long road on purpose (13:17–18). Why might God lead us a way that seems longer or harder than we would choose?
2. The pillar of cloud and fire never left them, day or night (13:22). How do you know God is with you, even when you feel stuck?
3. When the Israelites saw the army, they cried to God, and then they complained to Moses (14:10–12). What is the difference between bringing your fear to God and just complaining?
4. Moses said "stand still" (14:13), and God said "go forward" (14:15). Which one is harder for you, waiting or obeying when it's scary? Why?
5. Even the Egyptians admitted, "The LORD fighteth for them" (14:25). Where have you seen God fight for you or your family?
6. After God saved them, the people believed and sang (14:31–15:1). Exodus 15:2 says, "The LORD is my strength and song." What would it look like for God to be your song this week?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words in Exodus 15:2: **strength and song** means God is the One who makes me strong and the reason I sing. **He is become my salvation** means He has saved me. **Prepare him an habitation** means make a place for Him to live, honor Him with my life. **My father's God** means the God my family trusted before me. **Exalt** means lift Him up in praise.

Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Exodus 14:14 this week; keep working on Exodus 15:2 next week too.



5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "The Bible connects the Red Sea to us. Paul wrote that our fathers 'were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea' (1 Corinthians 10:1–2, KJV). Israel went through the sea and came out the other side free, and the enemy that chased them could never chase them again. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."

Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. What is one thing that feels like a sea in front of me or an army behind me right now?
2. What would "stand still" (trust God and pray) and "go forward" (obey) look like for me there this week?
3. Write a short prayer, or a few lines of your own praise song, thanking God for a time He fought for you.

If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: when you feel afraid, bring it to God in prayer before you complain to anyone. Thank God out loud for one thing He has done for you each day.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You fight for Your people. When fear is in front of us and behind us, help us trust You, obey You and praise You. You are our strength and our song. Thank You for loving us and making a way to save us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks why the Egyptian soldiers died: answer honestly and gently. Pharaoh's army was chasing Israel to bring them back into slavery (Exodus 14:5–9). God gave Pharaoh many warnings before this (Exodus 7–12), and even the Egyptians saw that the LORD was fighting for Israel (14:25). God protected His people. God is always good and fair, and He wants everyone to come to Him.

