

Our God Saves

GRADES 2-3



We are grateful to Karen DeBoer, children's ministry team member at The Journey church in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, for her work in developing *Our God Saves*.

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GRADES 2-3

Our God Saves

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 12, Matthew 26:17-30








FOCUS

The annual Passover meal reminded God's people of God's amazing rescue. At the Last Supper Jesus gave new meaning to the Passover celebration.

FAITH NURTURE GOALS

- Tell of God's amazing rescue of God's people and the meal God gave them to remember it by.
- Feel sure that the Lord's Supper shows us God's love and saving power.
- Thank God for his saving power.

A NOTE ABOUT LEARNING STYLES:

In the chart below and beside each Easy Extra activity, you will find one or more of the following descriptions: **Aa** Word Smart,  People Smart,  Music Smart,  Number Smart,  Earth Smart,  Self Smart,  Body Smart, and  Picture Smart—and an icon beside each one. Those descriptions and icons refer to “multiple intelligences,” a term developed by Dr. Howard Gardiner to describe the different ways in which people learn. We've used them here to indicate to you which learning style(s) each step/activity taps into the most. For example, some people are visual learners, others are musical, some learn best when they are physically engaged, some are a combination of several “smarts,” and so on. For more information on each of these learning styles along with a fun quiz you can give your students (and one you can take yourself!), visit <http://dwell.faithaliveresources.org/downloads>, click on “Topics for Leaders,” and open the “Learning Styles Quiz.”

REFLECTION: GETTING INTO THE STORY

After 400 years of slavery, God delivered the children of Israel. This deliverance demonstrated two of God's strongest characteristics: God's power and God's goodness.

The children of Israel lived in a time when people worshiped a variety of gods. These gods were believed to have power over particular realms. People felt they needed to appease these gods and purchase their affection by giving them gifts.

But the God of Israel was no such God. This was the God who controlled *all* things yet gave people the freedom to reject God and, when people chose sin, committed to rescuing them. This rescue was not about what people did to deserve it, but about God being the One who wants to save us in spite of us! God's rescue is made visible in the celebration of the Passover, which Jesus would later use as the basis for a new celebration: the Lord's Supper.

When God delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, God wanted them to remember this mighty act. God knows that people remember best through celebrations. The Passover celebration was not about giving God anything (as if God needed it!) but about remembering and celebrating God's faithfulness to the people God had chosen.

There is a reason why Jesus used the Passover celebration to establish the Lord's Supper: both events recall the powerful actions God took to save people. Whether it was the children of Israel back then or God's covenant people today, God's love moves God to action. That is worth celebrating!

WONDERING





- What similarities are there between God’s deliverance of the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt and the salvation God gives us in Jesus Christ?
- What parallels can we see between the Passover celebration and the Lord’s Supper?


TEACHING

- The Passover Seder meal provides a way for people to walk through the steps of the Exodus. Each element of the Seder has meaning. The wine symbolizes joy, breaking the bread prompts people to remember how God split the Red Sea in two, sitting in a reclining position demonstrates the freedom of God’s people, and so on. God wants people of every age to see and understand the deliverance that God has brought them.
- Celebrating the Passover is also a way for God’s people to testify to those around them about who God is. Think about the characteristics of God that come through most clearly in the Passover. God’s power, love, faithfulness, and grace are all evident in the Passover celebration. What a powerful way to demonstrate who God is to the world!

—Rev. Shannon Jammal-Hollemans

SESSION AT A GLANCE

Steps	Time	Activities	Session-Specific Materials	Multiple Intelligences
Gathering for God’s Story	10	Celebration Consideration	<input type="checkbox"/> Newsprint paper <input type="checkbox"/> Marker <input type="checkbox"/> Timer	 Aa
Entering the Story	5	Story	<input type="checkbox"/> Bible, bookmarked to Exodus 12 and Matthew 26	Aa
Living into the Story	15	Remembering	<input type="checkbox"/> Tablecloth or similar <input type="checkbox"/> 2 dish towels or similar <input type="checkbox"/> Serving tray or large platter <input type="checkbox"/> Clear pitcher <input type="checkbox"/> Grape juice <input type="checkbox"/> Matzoh (check the grocery store for this cracker or use crackers or pieces of flatbread instead) <input type="checkbox"/> Basket or plate <input type="checkbox"/> Horseradish (check the grocery store or use endive or romaine lettuce as an alternative) <input type="checkbox"/> One piece of celery <input type="checkbox"/> One clear cup/glass of salt water <input type="checkbox"/> Prepared charoset (see recipe page 7) <input type="checkbox"/> Spoons, small cups, small bowls, one of each per person <input type="checkbox"/> Communion serving trays/platters/baskets used to serve the bread and the wine/juice in your church	Aa   

Living Out of the Story	15	Seated at the Table	<input type="checkbox"/> Photo of The Last Supper painting by Leonardo da Vinci (obtain from the Internet and show using your device of choice) <input type="checkbox"/> Reproducible page 14, one body shape per person <input type="checkbox"/> Last Supper poster, reproducible pages 11-13 <input type="checkbox"/> Tape, scissors, glue <input type="checkbox"/> Crayons or markers <input type="checkbox"/> Decorative items such as ribbon, stickers, paper scraps, optional <input type="checkbox"/> Dear Family letter, reproducible page 15, print or email one per child	
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Step 1 Gathering for God's Story

Warmly welcome each child by name and with a smile as you gather today. Begin with a question for everyone to consider: **If you had to eat the same meal every day, what would you eat?** (Be sure to tell the kids what your pick is too!)

Follow that with this invitation: **Tell us about the best meal you ever had.**

Tell everyone it's time for a challenge. They need to put their thinking caps on, and when you say "Go!" they need to give you as many answers as they can to this question: **If you could plan the perfect birthday celebration supper, what would you include?** (consider food and drink options, decorations, and so on). Set a time limit in advance, give the signal, and list the responses on a large sheet of newsprint paper, trying to gather as many as possible within the time limit.

Congratulate your group on their creative thinking and party planning. Point out that birthday meals are wonderful ways to celebrate becoming a year older. Can they think of any other celebrations? What other reasons might someone have to plan a celebration in their home? (First/last day of school, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, a wedding, an anniversary, and so on.)

Conclude by telling your group this: **God knows that people love to gather for a meal to celebrate and remember special events. God gave the Israelites a special way to remember God's love and power—Jesus gave us a special way to remember that too. We're going to hear a story about that today.**

Pause for prayer together, inviting the children to share any requests for prayer they have. Consider asking for volunteers to pray for one of those requests.

Step 2 Entering the Story

NOTES

During Step 3 you'll be using Passover foods to review the story. For that step we encourage you to sit around a tablecloth that has been spread out on the floor, as early Israelites did to celebrate Passover. You'll also want to arrange in advance a serving tray that contains the following items hidden underneath a dish towel:

- clear pitcher of grape juice and drinking cups
- piece of horseradish (or endive or romaine lettuce)
- basket/plate of matzoh crackers
- piece of celery
- clear cup of salt water
- bowl of charoset and small bowls/plates and spoons

TIP

If there is anyone in your group for whom sitting on the floor is physically difficult, arrange for all to sit around a table instead of on the floor.

TIP

The best way to tell a story is from the heart, maintaining eye contact with your audience and adding expression with your voice and face. Prepare by reading this story aloud once each day during the week leading up to the day you plan to tell it.

In addition, cover the communion serving trays you have obtained with a cloth to keep them out of view for now.

Depending on the size of your room, you might gather for the story and then move to the area in which you have previously spread out the tablecloth and placed the covered trays. Or you might tell the story while seated all together around the tablecloth, with the covered trays within your reach.

Once everyone is comfortably seated, open your Bible and show the children where you've bookmarked Exodus 12 and Matthew 26. Explain that today you have two stories for them—one from the section of the Bible called the Old Testament and one from the section called the New Testament.

The story follows:

A long, long time ago, before Jesus was sent to earth to save us, God's people, the Israelites, were taken as slaves in Egypt by the Egyptian ruler, Pharaoh. Many of the Israelites worked long, long days in the hot sun, mixing mortar—like cement—to build walls for Pharaoh. Life was difficult and very bitter for God's people. They cried many tears, but God was always watching over them, loving them and never forgetting them. God was faithful to them—God always is!—and our powerful God

had a rescue plan for God's people.

First, God sent a man named Moses and his brother, Aaron, to tell Pharaoh that he needed to let God's people go. Nine times Moses went to Pharaoh with God's message to let the people go. Nine times Pharaoh said "No!" and nine times God sent a plague to the land of Egypt to show Pharaoh that God is the most powerful of all. But every time God ended a plague, Pharaoh would say, "No! I will not let them go!"

One night, after giving Pharaoh all those chances to let the people go, God sent Moses to warn Pharaoh that something terrible was about to happen to Pharaoh and his people. Then God sent Moses to the Israelites with some special instructions.

Moses told the Israelite families to kill their best lamb and to smear some of its blood along their doorposts. "Tonight death will come to Egypt," he said, "but God will pass over the homes with blood on the doorposts and you will be saved." Then Moses told the people to cook the lamb meat, to make bread without yeast, and to eat in a hurry so they would be ready to leave Egypt.

That night, the firstborn sons of every Egyptian family—including Pharaoh's—died. Finally, Pharaoh said to the people of Israel, "Go! Leave our country!" God's people gathered their belongings as fast as they could and went. And God led them away from Egypt, out of slavery and into freedom.

Every year since that time, Jewish people celebrate Passover—a special meal to help them remember God's great rescue. Today we're going to use some of the foods served at a Passover celebration for a special remembering meal about God's amazing rescue.

Step **3** Living Into the Story

Uncover your Passover tray and place it in front of you. As you serve or show each item, ask a wondering question as a way to recall the story together and also to think more deeply about it. We've provided hints; use as needed.

JUICE

As you serve the juice, say: **I wonder why wine or grape juice is part of the Passover meal? What part of the rescue story did God want the people to remember when they drank the red juice?** (Hint: What did the people spread on the doorposts? Why?)

Answer: The wine or juice recalls the blood of the lamb that was smeared on the doorposts of the Israelite homes so that God would pass over them and they would be saved.

MATZOH (OR CRACKERS OR FLATBREAD)

As you serve the matzoh, say: **This is a special bread called *matzoh*. It's made without yeast--that's why it's flat. I wonder what it helps us remember from the story?** (Hint: When the people left Egypt, did they take their time packing or did they leave in a hurry?)

Answer: There was no time to wait for the bread to rise, so they made it without yeast.

HORSERADISH

As you pass around the horseradish for the children to touch and smell, say: **This is horseradish. It tastes very bitter—not sweet at all! I wonder why God told the people to eat something that tastes bitter as part of their Passover meal?** (Hints: Think about what it was like for God's people when they were slaves in Egypt. How did they feel about being slaves? Was life happy and sweet?)

Answer: The years of living as slaves in Egypt were unhappy, hard, difficult, and bitter for God's people, the Israelites.

CELERY, DIPPED INTO A CUP OF SALT WATER.

Say: **This is a cup of salt water. During the Passover celebration, people dip a vegetable such as celery into the salt water. I wonder why they include salt water at the Passover meal? What did God want the people to remember that might be like salty drops of water?** (Hints: Have you ever tasted one of your tears when you were crying? Did they taste salty? When God's people were slaves in Egypt and they were feeling very sad, what might they have done?)

Answer: God's people cried. The salt water is a reminder of the tears the people cried while they were slaves.

CELERY DIPPED INTO CHAROSET

As you take out the bowl of charoset, say: **And this is charoset. It looks a little like the mortar or cement that God's people had to mix and use to make buildings for Pharaoh when they were slaves. It also tastes very sweet. During Passover, the celery that was dipped in the salt water is dipped again—this time into the charoset. Do so. I wonder why something that tastes sweet and good is included in the Passover dinner?** (Hint: What is the happy part of the story?)

Answer: When God's people were slaves they had a sweet hope in their hearts for freedom; the sweet taste is a reminder that their hope became a reality. God freed them!

Serve each person the charoset.

As you enjoy your snack of charoset together, begin to connect this story with the New Testament story of the Lord's Supper by asking: **I wonder if this meal of remembering reminds you of another special meal—one Christians celebrate together during a worship service?**

Invite the children to listen closely as you read Matthew 26:17-19 in order to find out two things:

- when Jesus first served his special meal
- to whom he first served it.

Recipe for Charoset
(serves 4-6)

Mix the following:

1 cup (250 mL) apple, finely
chopped or grated
½ teaspoon (2.5 mL) cin-
namon
½ teaspoon (2.5 mL) sugar
1 tablespoon (15 mL) grape
juice

TIP

If the children ask clarifying or informational questions for which you don't have an immediate answer, let them know you'll find out the answer, and then do get back to them. For faith- and story-related questions that you aren't able to answer, it's okay to say, "I wonder about that too." After all, faith involves believing when we don't have all the answers. Let the children know that some things are a mystery and only God knows the answer.

Read the passage.

Tell your group that during the Passover meal Jesus had with his followers, the disciples, he created a whole new celebration using two of the foods of Passover. Which two foods from the Passover meal did he use for the special meal for his followers? (Wine/juice, bread)

Why did Jesus include wine/grape juice?

Answer: To help us remember that Jesus' blood was shed when he died on the cross. It was shed for the forgiveness of our sins.

Why did Jesus include bread in his new celebration meal?

Answer: To remind us that Jesus' body died on the cross and that his body came back to life three days later so that we could be forgiven for our sins.

Lift the cover off of the tray on which you have the communion dishes so that the children can get a close look at them. Pass them around so they can hold and touch them. Your children may have some questions. Prompt them by asking: **What do**

you wonder about when you look at these dishes and think about the Lord's Supper we serve in church?

Conclude this step by telling your group that God knows people remember well by celebrating. *Point to or hold up the tray of Passover food.* **Passover is a way to remember that God loved the Israelites so much that he saved them from slavery and made them free.** *Point to or hold up the communion dishes.* **At the Lord's Supper we remember that our powerful God loves people so much that God sent Jesus to the world to die for our sins. And God brought Jesus back to life so that all people who believe in him can be saved and live forever with God after we die.**

TIP

Here's another idea: hang your poster beside a church bulletin board. Pin to the board a clear zipper-locked bag containing a few colored markers and extra people shapes. Add a note that says, "You're invited to remember too! Add yourself to the table." Have your kids encourage their family members and friends and others to add their picture to the table too.

Step 4 Living Out of the Story

Note: Before the session begins, tape together the three reproducible pages needed for this step—placing Jesus in the center—to form a long poster. (If you have a large group, print extra pages to make your poster longer.)

Gather at the craft table and show the children the photo of the painting *The Last Supper*. Have any of them ever seen it before? Explain that it's probably the most famous painting ever painted of the Last Supper. It was painted by a man named Leonardo da Vinci. He imagined that Jesus and his followers might have looked like this.

Show your group the poster you have prepared. Explain that Jesus came to save all people who believe in him—including us. To celebrate that, you're going to make your own version of the *Last Supper* painting, this time with all of you gathered beside Jesus at the table.

Pass out body shapes and markers and other decorative supplies. Invite each person to make an image of him- or herself. Glue completed pictures to the poster. If you have extra time and some children are done sooner than others, invite them to think of other people who are included at Jesus' table. Decorate shapes for those people and add them to your poster too. Perhaps someone would like to make your pastor(s)! Be sure to join the children and make an image of yourself too.

Add a caption to your poster such as "*The Last Supper* by [your group's name]" or "We Remember." When finished, hang the poster outside your room so all can enjoy it.

Before you send your group on their way, gather them around you for an echo prayer to say thanks for our loving God's saving power. Invite the children to repeat after you:

Loving God,

You are so powerful.

You saved the Israelites from slavery.

You sent Jesus to save us.

Thank you, God! We love you too.

Amen.

If you're sending the Dear Family note home to each family rather than emailing it, be sure to send it home with the children along with these parting words, **Remember, God loves you [name]!**

TIP

This activity was inspired by the Last Supper painting activity found at <http://faithandwonder.com/tag/worship-stations/> in which they painted a Last Supper scene on canvas and placed it beside the communion table during worship. Consider making your poster a painting like this instead!

EASY EXTRAS

1. Arrival Activity: Making Charoset

TIME

5 minutes



Body Smart



Number Smart



People Smart

SUPPLIES

□ apple(s), cinnamon, sugar, grape juice, measuring cups, measuring spoons, knife, mixing bowl, spoon, optional: grater and/or cutting board(s)

Invite the children to help prepare the charoset that you'll be eating during Step 3. Set up the supplies and assign children to measure and add the appropriate amounts. (Remember to wash hands first!) The recipe serves 4-6; increase quantities as needed.

Mix the following:

1 cup (250 mL) apple, finely chopped or grated

½ teaspoon (2.5 mL) cinnamon

½ teaspoon (2.5 mL) sugar

1 tablespoon (15 mL) grape juice

TIP




If you bring some child-safe knives and several cutting boards, you can assign a few children the task of chopping the apples into tiny pieces rather than chopping or grating the apple ahead of time.

2. Story Option for Step 2: Entering the Story

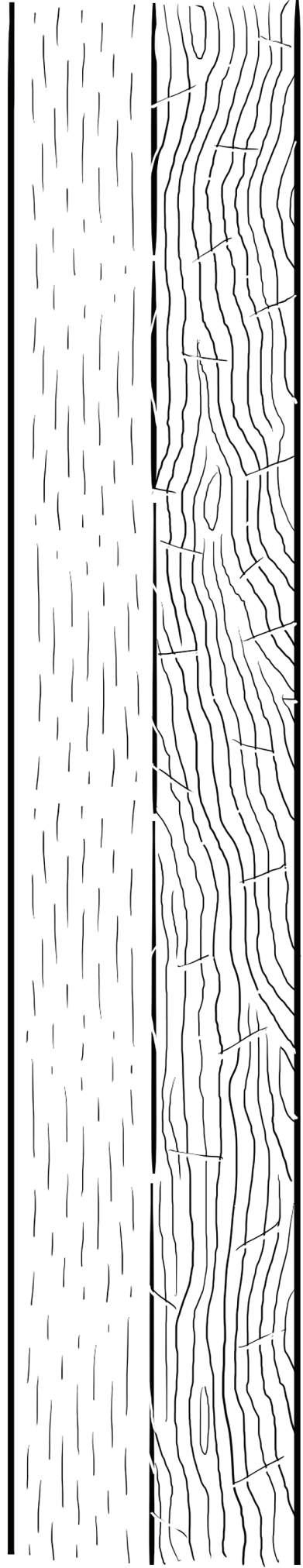
TIME 5-7 minutes	
 Picture Smart  Aa Word Smart	SUPPLIES <input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Jesus Storybook Bible</i> or another appropriate children's story Bible

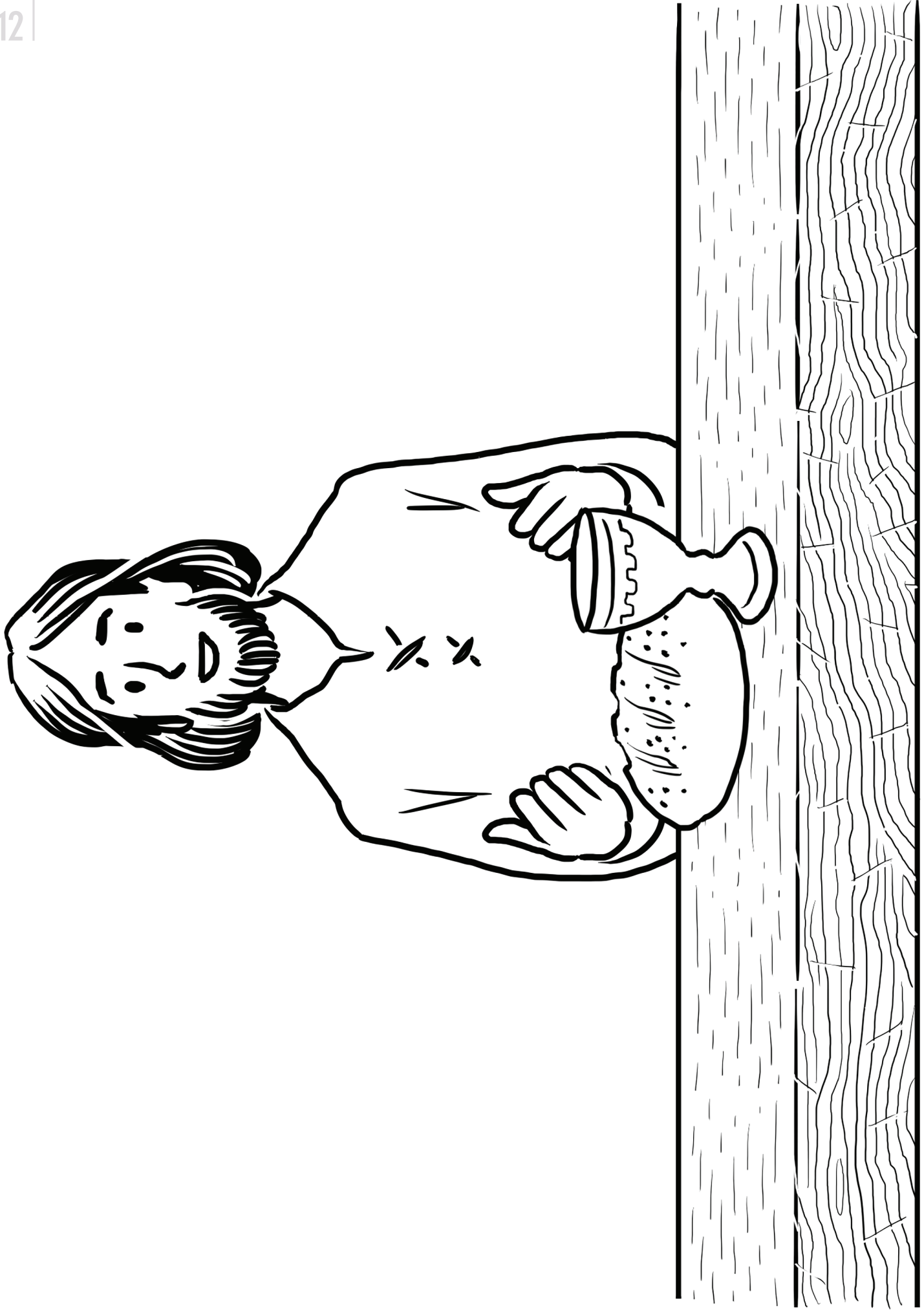
If your children are visual learners or are unfamiliar with the Exodus story, you may wish to read the story from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd Jones. Alternatively you could watch a video telling of the story from the same story Bible; search YouTube for “God to the Rescue!/Jesus Storybook Bible” to find the video. Note: the story doesn’t describe the people having to leave in haste and the making of bread without yeast, so you’ll want to add that to the telling.

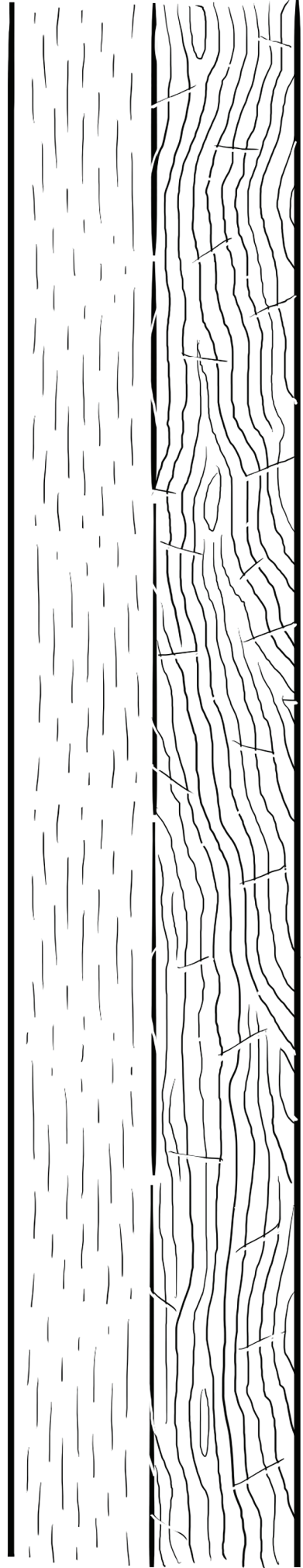
3. Craft: Communion Mosaic

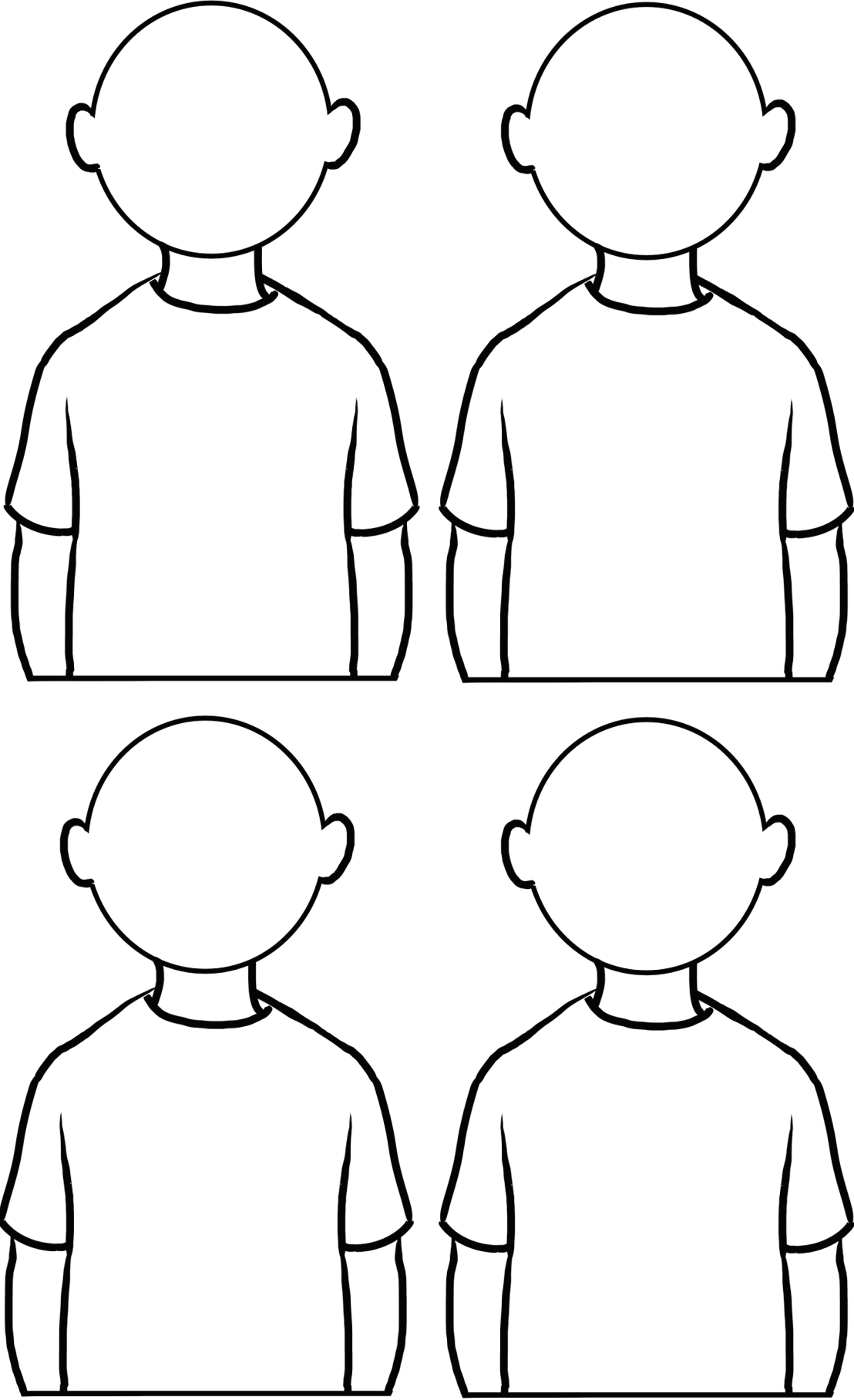
TIME 10-15 minutes	
 Body Smart  Picture Smart  Self Smart	SUPPLIES <input type="checkbox"/> Reproducible page 16, one per child, tissue paper pieces or tiny squares of paper, glue

Invite the children to make a communion mosaic by gluing scrunched up tissue paper pieces or tiny squares of paper to the cup and loaf shape.









Dear Family,

Today your child learned about two celebrations—Passover and the Lord’s Supper—which remind us of God’s saving love and power. After hearing the story of the Exodus (Exodus 12) we enjoyed a simplified version of a Seder meal during which we saw, touched, and tasted some Passover foods together. Ask your child to tell you which foods!

We also looked at the communion elements as we talked and wondered together about the Lord’s Supper (Matthew 26:17-30) as a way to celebrate God’s saving love and power through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Invite your child to tell you what parts of the Lord’s Supper are like the Passover meal.

For more ideas on how to have a conversation with your child about communion, visit Welcoming Children to the Lord’s Supper: A Toolkit, found at <http://www.crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits/welcoming-children-lords-supper>. In addition to conversation starters you’ll also find a great bookmark you can print off and place in your Bible as a way to prepare for the Lord’s Supper together. We encourage you to check it out today!

Sincerely,

