

Crossing through the Water

EXODUS 14:10–31

2



GOAL

Youth recognize their baptism as the opportunity to leave sin behind and choose a life of freedom.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- AT** Abstract Thinking
- C** Conversation
- CT** Concrete Thinking
- D** Drama
- G** Game
- M** Music
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Holy Spirit, lead me away from sin and invite me into hope for all of your creation. Amen.

THIS SESSION

In the first session, we remembered our baptisms and the dimension of baptism that reminds us that God loves each one of us. God loves us, and there is nothing we can do about that. In this session, we consider the aspect of baptism where we walk away from a meaningless life of sin to a life of love and freedom. Water, the ingredient of baptism, symbolizes this act of cleaning off the misery of sin.

THE BIBLE STORY

Following the plagues in Egypt, Pharaoh first agrees to let the Israelites leave their lives of slavery, only to change his mind and try to recapture them. Today's text, Exodus 14:10–31, begins as the fleeing Israelites come upon the Red Sea, pursued by Pharaoh's army. The Israelites are trapped. Then Moses, following God's instructions, stretches out his hands, the water parts, and the Israelites cross the Red Sea onto dry land. When the Egyptians follow, Moses lifts his hands again and the sea returns to its original boundaries, drowning all of the Egyptians. The Israelites are now free from sin and slavery.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Many youth can articulate what it is to feel trapped. They may not be literally trapped like the ancient Israelites escaping slavery, but they may feel trapped by school work, peer groups, and even their parents. These feelings of entrapment sometimes lead youth to make poor choices. The opportunity to cross through waters into freedom from sin can be both exciting and daunting. Baptism is an invitation to and expression of that crossing. The promise that God will fight for them, as God fought for the Israelites, can comfort.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Bubbles” (p. 14): Obtain individual containers of bubbles for each participant.

Depending on the options you choose:

- “The Floor Is Lava” (p. 14): Arrange the room.
- “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” (p. 15): Familiarize yourself with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process in South Africa by visiting bit.ly/FMTruthCommission.
- “Making a List” (p. 16): Obtain water-soluble paper.

GETTING STARTED

- Individual bottles of bubbles

BUBBLES

AM

As participants enter, have them pick up a bottle of bubbles and begin creating a bubble storm in the room! As more youth enter, have them walk through the bubbles then join in making the bubble storm. Invite the first participants who began blowing bubbles to walk through the bubbles. Encourage excitement at walking through bubbles! Set aside bubbles for “Closing Litany” (p. 17). Tell the youth that you will be exploring how the Israelites crossed through the waters from slavery to freedom.

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

THE FLOOR IS LAVA

G AM

The goal of the game, The Floor Is Lava, is to get from one side of the room to the other without touching the ground. Participants will imagine that the floor is made out of lava and they cannot put their feet in the lava! Youth may play this in teams (helping one another) or as individual players. Have the youth help you set up the room either by placing furniture throughout the room that can be (safely) climbed upon or by placing construction paper on the floor around your space.

After playing, ask the following questions:

- ➔ What were the challenges in that game?
- ➔ How did it feel to finally “make it” across?

Tell youth that today’s topic of baptism considers how the act of baptism symbolizes a crossing over from one way of living to a better one.

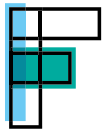
WOULD YOU RATHER?

C AM

Tell participants you will pose a series of questions that begin with “Would you rather . . .” with two answer choices. Explain that you will indicate which side of the room the youth should move to depending on which choice they make. Assure them that there are no wrong answers, just choices. After each choice, invite several youth to share why they chose what they did. Use the following questions or ones of your own. Would you rather:

- ➔ Eat only ice cream or only pizza for the rest of your life?
- ➔ Go into outer space or go to Disney World?
- ➔ Go to the past and meet your ancestors or go to the future and meet your kids/grandkids?
- ➔ Have more money or have more time?
- ➔ Be able to talk with animals or speak all foreign languages?
- ➔ Be an adult or be a kid your whole life?
- ➔ Have X-ray vision or super hearing?
- ➔ Have super speed or be able to fly?
- ➔ Have your dream job first or find your true love first?
- ➔ Live at summer camp or never go to summer camp?
- ➔ Be stranded in the jungle or in the desert?
- ➔ Invent something new or save an endangered species?
- ➔ Be a brilliant scientist or an amazing artist?

Wonder if anyone had trouble choosing. Tell the youth that today's Bible story is about a time the Israelites had to make a difficult choice, whether to go back to Egypt where they knew what they had or trust God and move forward into an unknown future.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

PRINCE OF EGYPT



Show the YouTube video “The Prince of Egypt (1998)— ‘Red Sea’ Scene” (bit.ly/FMPrinceOfEgypt, 4:32). Emphasize how the Israelites felt trapped between the pursuing Egyptian army and the Red Sea.

Read Exodus 14:10–31 and discuss how the Israelites might have felt before, during, and after they crossed. Ask how passing through the waters of the Red Sea might be like passing through the waters of baptism.

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- Internet-connected device
 - Bible

DISCUSSING THE TEXT



Read Exodus 14:10–31 to the group. You may wish to stop periodically to check for understanding.

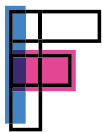
Ask these questions:

- ➔ Why were the Israelites crying out to God at the beginning?
- ➔ How do you think the Israelites felt when Moses said, “The Lord will fight for you, and you only have to keep still”?
- ➔ Is there a time in your life when you have felt the Lord fighting for you?
- ➔ How do you think Moses felt when God told him to stretch out his staff and divide the sea?
- ➔ Why did the angel and the pillar of cloud get behind the Israelites?
- ➔ When did the Egyptians realize that the Lord was fighting for the Israelites?
- ➔ In what way is passing through the Red Sea like being baptized?



Help youth make connections between the Israelites crossing through the waters from slavery to freedom and baptism as a symbol of crossing from sin to the freedom that God promises.

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- Bibles



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or both options.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION



Show Resource Page 1 and read the brief information about Nelson Mandela. Distribute copies of Resource Page 2 and take turns reading the first two sections.

Compare this story with the story of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea and ask these questions:

- ➔ How were both groups escaping injustice?
- ➔ How did the commission help black South Africans escape?
- ➔ What were the freedoms promised after the commission?

-
- Resource Page 1
 - Copies of Resource Page 2

Invite the youth to imagine what the sins that *trap* them are. Maybe they are being bullied, or they feel some laws or systems are sinful.

Ask:

- ➔ What kind of waters would you need to pass through to be free from this sin?
- ➔ What promises made in baptism assure you that God will help you pass through to freedom?

BAPTISMAL LITURGY

C

Remind youth that the aspect of baptism we are considering today is crossing through the water. Ask where they see this aspect of crossing from danger and sin to life and freedom in your church community.

Read a portion of the baptismal liturgy from the *Book of Common Worship* where worshipers pray to God to use the baptismal water to wash away sin and raise to new life.

Send your Spirit to move over this water
that it may be a fountain of deliverance and rebirth.
Wash away the sin of all who are cleansed by it.
Raise them to new life,
and graft them to the body of Christ.
Pour out your Holy Spirit upon N. [and N.],
that *she/he/they* may have power to do your will,
and continue forever in the risen life of Christ.¹

Discuss how youth understand the transformation or change that happens to one who is baptized. Affirm responses.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- Water-soluble paper
- Washable markers
- Bowl of water
- Internet-connected device

MAKING A LIST

M AT X

Give youth water-soluble paper and a washable marker. Have them find a quiet place in the room and think about the ways that they feel trapped. They could be trapped by the things that they do or because of the ways that others treat them. Invite them to write these things on their water-soluble paper.

After a few minutes, begin playing a recording of “Freedom Is Coming” such as is found in the YouTube video “Freedom is Coming Traditional South African” (bit.ly/FMFreedomIsComing, 2:53). It is repetitive enough that youth could pick up the tune after a couple of repetitions.

As youth listen to the music, invite them to take turns approaching the bowl of water and putting their paper in the water. Encourage youth to watch it dissolve before they walk away. When the music ends, invite youth to share about that experience if they wish.

1. *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2018), 411.

PAINTING A MURAL

A

Provide mural paper and markers or paint and painting supplies. On the left third of the mural, invite youth to list/draw things that they encounter that are sinful. In the center of the mural, have youth draw the waters of the Red Sea and the waters of baptism. Wonder together if there is a way to represent both *waters* at the same time. On the right side of the mural, invite youth to list/draw images of new life in freedom.

Youth can all work on all parts of the mural, or in teams on parts of it.

When finished, ask these questions:

- ➔ How does water represent new life?
- ➔ What does it feel like to move from sin to life?

Display the mural in a space designated for youth if you have space.



This mural may be used during worship in a time of confession and assurance of pardon.



FOLLOWING JESUS

CLOSING LITANY

AM

Have youth get their bottles of bubbles again and open them. Have them follow the instructions as they pray with you.

Dear God,

As we blow bubbles, we blow out those things that trouble us.

As we blow bubbles, we blow out those ways that others mistreat us.

As we blow bubbles, we blow out all of our sins.

As we blow bubbles, we are reminded of your children who passed through the Red Sea.

As we blow bubbles, we are reminded of the forgiveness you offer.

As we blow bubbles, we are reminded of the freedom you offer in our baptisms.

As we blow bubbles, we remember that your Holy Spirit blows with us wherever we go.

Amen.

Encourage youth to take remaining bubbles with them to be reminded of the power of their baptism.

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- Mural paper
 - Markers or paint

-
- Individual bottles of bubbles

Nelson Mandela



Photo credit: al clark / Shutterstock.com

A church's stained-glass windows include Nelson Mandela, a revolutionary anti-apartheid leader. When apartheid ended, he served as the first democratically elected president of the new South Africa from 1994 to 1999. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Process

Background

South Africa is a country on the southern tip of Africa. It was colonized by Europeans who treated the black, original population as inferior. A system called apartheid enforced racial segregation between blacks and whites from 1948 through 1990. Many black people rebelled as they were deprived of political and civil rights and forced to live in poverty. Many were tortured and killed.

In the early 1990s, after continuing to fight for their rights, apartheid ended, and Nelson Mandela was elected as the first black president of South Africa.

Now that the people had crossed through the waters from slavery and death to new life, the question remained; what sort of justice could be given the thousands of victims who suffered under apartheid?

Truth and Reconciliation Process

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created to investigate human rights violations during apartheid. It included nine men and eight women. Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu chaired the commission. Around 21,000 victims testified and many of those responsible for killing and torture were named. A program of reparations—where victims were given resources to repair their lives—was created and the entire social and government system was reformed to protect all people.²

Think about It

When we are baptized, the water symbolizes a washing away of a sinful life and the possibility to live better lives as people who treat others as equals. How was the Truth and Reconciliation process a chance for the people of South Africa to live better lives?

2. "Truth Commission: South Africa," December 1, 1995, www.usip.org/publications/1995/12/truth-commission-south-africa.