

Passover with Children

I know you have eaten a meal before

... and listened to a story before.

But today, we are going to eat a story!

Not only is this a story that you eat, but it is a **braided** story:

- This is the story of what happened to the Jewish people in Egypt 3500 yrs ago. (1446 B.C.)
- This is also the story of what happened one night with Jesus and His disciples in Jerusalem more than 2000 years ago.
- And, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, then this is also a story about what happened to you!

This story that we are going to eat is full of symbols--not the kind of cymbals that clang and make music!

A symbol is something that is a real thing, but it also reminds us of something else (represents something else).

Can you think of some symbols? (possible examples: a flag, which symbolizes a country, or the picture of a heart, which symbolizes love)

Everything on your plate is a symbol; it means something. It helps us think of something else.

The first symbol we have is candles. We light candles to sanctify our time together.

"Sanctify" means to make something special. Right now, we want to make this time special. This is not ordinary; it is different. Passover has a very special purpose.

We will now **light the candles** to sanctify this time.

"Lord, we ask you to sanctify this time. Make it special. We want it to belong to You. We want it to be a special time to think about You and to love You and to see how awesome You are. Amen."

Now we are going to do one more symbolic thing before we start the story that we eat: we are going to wash our hands.

Your hands are already clean, so we are doing this to help us think about something else. What could washing our hands symbolize? [Wait for replies.]

Yes, washing our hearts. God knows how to wash our hearts so that we have good things in our hearts, not anger and hatred and selfishness.

[Have everyone wash his or her hands, either in **bowls of water or** with **wet cloths**. Have **small towels** ready, if needed.]

“Lord, we ask You to wash our hearts and minds now so that we can focus on You and hear what You want to say to us today. Amen.”

Welcome to this special celebration!

Passover is a meal that God planned, and God is the One who invited us to this meal. Passover is a story that God wrote. And God is the best StoryMaker ever!

You have **four cups** in front of you. Do you think these might be symbols, too?

God has given us many wonderful promises. These cups represent 4 of those amazing promises. Listen to these verses, and see if you hear some promises.

[Have someone read **Exodus 6:5-8**.]

God gave us four amazing promises: He promised to sanctify us, to deliver us, to redeem us, and to be a praiseworthy God to us.

So the four cups are the cups of sanctification, deliverance, redemption, and praise.

Let’s all hold up the first cup of sanctification because God said that we have special purpose.

Let’s **drink this first cup** as we thank God that we can belong to Him as His people and that He belongs to us as our God.

Our first story starts long, long ago and far away in Egypt.

God’s people (the Israelites, the Hebrew people) were slaves in Egypt. They were slaves of a very cruel king of Egypt. Kings in Egypt used to be called “Pharaohs.” This wicked Pharaoh treated God’s people terribly.

[Have someone read **Exodus 1:8-13**. Or just verse 13.]

The Bible tells us that even though we aren’t slaves of Pharaoh, we have all been slaves in our hearts, on the inside. We have been slaves to sin. That means that we are impatient and grumpy and unkind. Being a slave to sin means that we do these selfish things even when we don’t want to do those things and even though those things don’t make us happy.

The haROset looks a bit like bricks and mortar. Let’s **eat the haroset** to remind us that we have been slaves to sin.

[Have someone read **Exodus 1:14**.]

Pharaoh made the lives of the slaves “bitter.” That means he made things very difficult and painful for them.

We can have bitter lives, too. We hold grudges against people—we stay mad at them. When we don’t forgive other people, it feels like we have a bitter onion on the inside of us.

Let’s **eat (or smell) some onion** to remind us that sin makes our lives very bitter.

Things were terrible for the Hebrew slaves, but then things got even worse! Pharaoh gave orders to kill all the baby boys of the Hebrew people. That was very evil and very sad. There were many, many tears.

We are not slaves in Egypt, but Satan tries to take good things away from us. Our slavery to sin makes us very sad.

The salt water on the table reminds us of tears. Let’s take the **parsley** and dip it in the salt water. **Taste the salt water** and remember that sin steals from us and makes us sad.

[Have someone read **Exodus 2:23-25.**]

God heard the prayers of His people! God came to the rescue! Let’s **drink now from the 2nd cup of deliverance.**

“Thank You, God, for rescuing us!”

What did God do? God sent Moses to talk to Pharaoh. Moses told Pharaoh to let God’s people go.

[Divide your group into 3 groups. Assign one of the following statements to each group.

- A. Make it stop!
- B. You can go!
- C. No! You can’t go!

Go through each of the ten plagues, except for the last one.

After each one, say, “Pharaoh said” and then point to group A and then to group B. Then say, “So God made it stop. But then Pharaoh said” and point to group C.

Here is another option. You can have just two groups by combining A and B into one group.]

The plagues:

1. Water turned into blood
2. Frogs
3. Gnats

4. Flies
5. Cows and sheep die
6. Painful sores on everyone's skin (boils)
7. Hail
8. Locusts (grasshoppers)
9. Darkness

Then God said, "Someone is going to die in every house, unless you let a lamb die for you. If you want to belong to God, and if you will let a lamb die in your place, then no one in your house will die."

God said, "Take a strong, healthy lamb. Kill the lamb and put its blood on the doorposts of your house. Then go inside your house and stay inside."

Use red paint on a cardboard house.

That night, at midnight, the death angel came to every house in Egypt.

If the blood of the lamb was on a house, then the angel would **Pass—Over** that house, and no one died.

But in every house that did not have the blood of a lamb, someone died. Oh, what loud crying there was! All over the land of Egypt, there was great wailing!

Pharaoh called Moses and said, "You can go! Leave now!"

So Moses told God's people, "Hurry! Take your bread without letting it rise. Let's go!" They had to leave quickly, so their bread was flat.

God rescued His people. He became their great Hero who freed them from their slavery. He made a path of dry land for them so that they could walk right through the Red Sea and escape from Egypt.

And then God explained that He wanted His people to have a special meal every year to remember this amazing rescue. God told them to eat onions and flat bread and lamb so that they could remember all that God had done for them.

That is what we are doing now. Passover is the special meal to remember that God is our Hero.

Now, here is the second story: God's people kept celebrating Passover. More than a thousand years later, Jesus was born, and He celebrated Passover every year with His family.

The night before He died on the cross, He ate the Passover meal with His disciples. They remembered the story about Moses and the slaves in Egypt, and they remembered the lambs that had died so that death would PASS OVER God's people.

But then Jesus explained that God was giving another story, the Greatest Story Ever. Jesus said that the Passover is not just about remembering something that happened in Egypt.

The Passover also shows us what happened in Jerusalem with Jesus. The bread, the lamb, and the juice are symbols that remind us of Jesus.

The flat bread reminds the Jewish people that they had to run from their slave masters quickly, and it reminds us that we should also run away from sin quickly, too.

But the most important meaning of the flat bread is that it is like Jesus. The bread had no yeast, and Jesus had no sin.

When Jesus was eating the Passover with His disciples, He took the matzo and broke it, and He said, "This is my body given for you; eat this as a reminder of me." (Luke 22)

The flat bread reminds us of the body of Jesus. Do you see how the matzo is pierced and has stripes and dark spots?

How was the body of Jesus pierced? With thorns and with a sword.
Why were there stripes on the body of Jesus? Because He was whipped.
Why was the body of Jesus bruised? Because the soldiers beat him.

Let's **eat the flat bread** and remember how Jesus suffered in His body for us, even though He had no sin.

Let's think now about the lamb. The Jewish people remember that lambs were killed long ago so that the death angel would PASS OVER the houses of God's people.

But the Bible tells us that Jesus is the Lamb of God! Of course, He is not really a lamb, but He is like a Passover lamb because He died so that other people could live. Jesus is the Lamb that died for us so that death will PASS OVER us.

If we believe that Jesus is the Lamb of God who died for us, then we will never be separated from God. Isn't that awesome?

Let's **eat the lamb** and thank Jesus for dying for us so that we can live with God forever.

The third symbol that reminds us of Jesus is the juice. The grape juice reminds us that Jesus gave His life for us on the cross. Jesus said, "This is my blood which is poured out for many" (Mark 14).

Remember how the Hebrews in Egypt painted their doorposts with the blood of lambs? Let's look at the house again. Can you see how that blood might have looked like a cross? The people painted the doors from side to side, and then at the top. The blood at the top may have dripped down and looked like this: † .

God loves us so much that He would die on a cross for us, so this juice is the symbol of God's great love for us.

The third cup is the cup of redemption. Redemption means that God brings us back into His family. Our hearts are sad and lonely and miserable without God, but God brings us into His family, and then our hearts can be happy!

Let's **drink the 3rd cup** of redemption.

After they ate the Passover meal, Jesus and His disciples sang a song. Did you know that we have the same songs that Jesus and His friends sang that night? Psalms 113-118 are the songs that the Jewish people sang at Passover.

Here is a line that is repeated in Psalm 118: "His love endures forever." That means that God will never stop loving us!

I am going to read a few verses from Psalm 118. After each one, when I point to you, I want you to say, "His love endures forever." Let's practice: "His love endures forever."

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. "His love endures forever."

The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. "His love endures forever."

I will give You thanks, for You answered me. "His love endures forever."

The Lord is God, and He has made His light shine on us. "His love endures forever."

You are my God, and I will praise You. "His love endures forever."

You are my God, and I will exalt You. "His love endures forever."

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. "His love endures forever."

Now, let's **drink the last cup**, the cup of praise.

Amen!