

A Good Shepherd
Sacred Story

Water From A Rock

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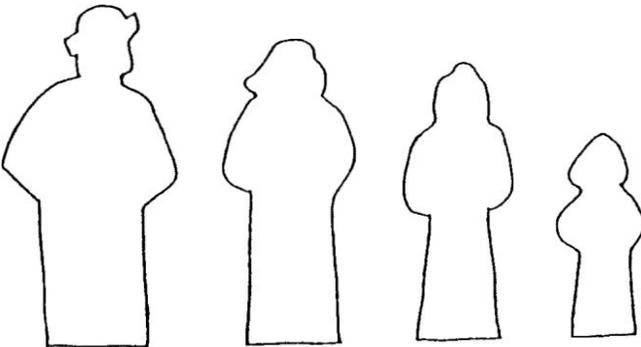
WATER FROM A ROCK ... MATERIALS

- medium wicker basket to hold
- wooden Moses figure
- four wooden onlooker figures
- wooden walking stick



Moses

Walking stick



People of God

WATER FROM A ROCK

Exodus 17:1-7

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story from its shelf. Carrying it with two hands, return to the circle, sit down and place the basket next to you.

During the next few seconds of silence, reverently stroke one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children.

Place the Moses figure and four onlooker figures in the center of the storytelling area.

Move the figures to one side of the storytelling area.

Move all five figures to the other side of the storytelling area.

Place Moses slightly apart from the other figures.

Touch Moses as you speak his words.

Touch each of the three onlooker figures, one at a time as you speak.

Turn the Moses figure away from the other figures and rest your hand tightly on him as you speak.

As you speak, remove the walking stick from the basket and place it in front of Moses.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

All the words to this story are inside of me. If you will make silence with me, I will find all the words to this story of God's people.

The people of God had been in the desert for many days. God had already sent them manna to eat so they wouldn't starve.

They moved from place to place in the desert as God told them.

Once when they were camped they couldn't find any water to drink.

The people started complaining to Moses, "Give us some water!"

Moses asked the people, "Why are you complaining to me? Why are you trying to test Yahweh?"

But the people were very thirsty, and they kept complaining. "Did you just bring us out of Egypt so we could die of thirst with our families and animals?"

Then Moses prayed to the Lord and asked, "What am I going to do with these people? They will soon stone me to death."

The Lord said to Moses, "Take some of the leaders with you. *Also* take along the walking stick you used to hit the Nile River when you were in Egypt."

Move Moses figure and two of the onlooker figures far to one side of the storytelling area.

Place the walking stick in front of Moses once again.

Lift the walking stick and strike an imaginary rock.

Move the remaining two figures to join the others.

Hold out first your right hand and then your left to indicate the area being named.

Carefully place the wooden figures in the basket.

After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to its shelf. Return to the circle and sit down.

Be certain each child has had the opportunity to choose his/her work before you dismiss the entire group.

"I'll be there with you when you get to the rock at Mt. Sinai."

"Hit the rock with your stick and water *will* come out of the rock for the people to drink."

Moses did just as God had told him while the leaders watched.

The people had complained and tested God by asking, "Is God really here with us?"

So Moses named that place Massah, because it means 'testing.' He also called it Meribah, which means 'complaining.'

WONDERING QUESTIONS

■ wonder how God felt when the people complained?

■ wonder what was special about Moses' stick?

I wonder if God is always with us?

Watch carefully how ■ put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

Watch carefully where ■ return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

I wonder what you *will* do for your work today? Let's go around the circle and decide what each of us will do.

WATER FROM A ROCK ... TEACHER HELPS

When first read this story seems to be about people needing water. It is a reasonable assumption since the story is set in the desert and we all know the probability of water being scarce in the desert. The story is also set before the people of God are given the law at Mt. Sinai. In fact we are very likely to shake our heads at the constant complaining of the people whom God had rescued from slavery in Egypt. Even though they had manna provided and had been led carefully through the dangers of the arid land, they still complained that their needs were not being met.

In some ways we find ourselves just slightly sympathetic with the people who complained. After all, water is a very basic need for sustaining life. And, we must admit, we would probably have done exactly the same thing. So even though we feel frustration that they don't trust God to provide, we understand the humanity of the people of God in this story.

If we move into a closer, second reading of the text, the message may have another layer. In verse six Yahweh promised Moses that when Moses got to Sinai he would find God there with him. At the end of the story, verse seven notes NOT that the people of God complained and tested God by asking [for water, but by asking, "Is the Lord really with us?"]

It seems much simpler to us. We believe that God is a Spirit and is everywhere. But the ancient Hebrews had a much more concrete understanding of God. They were surrounded by nations that worshiped idols, gods they could see. It was something of a problem for the people of God, because they could only see their God by the results of what God did. Having left the security of Egypt, albeit oppressive security, the Hebrew people began to wonder if and how their God could continue to be with them.

The two names given to the same place are confusing. Most likely this story is a combination of two different accounts (Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible, p. 50). Many times the keepers of these stories seemed unwilling to lose even a small piece of a story. So rather than choose one over the other, the author (or editors) simply included both names.

The first wondering question asks how God felt when the people complained. Most children will believe that God felt bad or sad or even a little angry. But occasionally there will be a child who will say that God understood because the people were thirsty. When we ask wondering questions about God's feelings, we indicate to the children that God is part of the story. God had to be there if God had feelings about the event.

The second question asks what was special about Moses' walking stick. Younger children will have no problem with this. They will say that Moses' stick was "magic" or that it had special power. Remember these are children who see superheroes on TV every day. All children tend to put power in the stick. But sometimes the older ones can begin to understand that the power to produce water came from God. The stick was only the instrument God used.

The third wondering question gets right to the heart of the story. We wonder if God is always with us. Children, youth and adults alike will ask this question throughout their lives. Often we ask it when we are in a time of deep sadness or pain. This wonderment comes many times from the depths of despair and confusion. It will be good for adults to hear the responses of the young children. Young children almost always say that God is with them. They don't even hesitate. In doing so they provide an important ministry to us ... that of reminding us of the presence of God.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

In this story the people of God were not sure that God was going to provide for their needs. What is the one thing that you would be most afraid of not having?

Take a paper and pencil and jot down the things that you need to have to live. Then underneath jot down the things that you want to have. How many things do you really need? What are they? What are some of the least important things on your lists?

When God told Moses to go to Sinai to get water from the rock God told Moses to take some leaders along with him. Why do you think God did that? Why didn't God send Moses alone?