

(leader handout starts on page 4)

God Judges Through Plagues:

Plagues song

God sent Moses to Pharaoh  
To set his people free  
God sent Moses to tell him,  
"Let my people go, that they may serve me."  
First he turned the water to blood  
The whole Nile, even water in vessels  
Of wood and stone became blood

God used plagues, plagues, plagues to free his people.  
God used plagues to judge those who wouldn't heed his word  
God used plagues, plagues, plagues to free his people.  
God used plagues to show He alone is God the Lord.

God sent Moses to Pharaoh  
To set his people free  
God sent Moses to tell him,  
"Let my people go, that they may serve me."  
Second God caused frogs to appear,  
Pharaoh's magicians made even more  
He wouldn't serve the Lord.

God sent Moses to Pharaoh  
To set his people free  
God sent Moses to tell him,  
"Let my people go, that they may serve me."  
Third God changed dust to gnats  
Pharaoh's magicians could quite match that  
"This is the finger of God." So they said...

Patterns of Plagues:

Read Ex. 7:5-8:19

1. Considering the first three plagues, how is Pharaoh informed of the coming plagues?  
See especially Ex. 7:16-18, 20; 8:1-5; 9:16.
  - a.
2. After noting the pattern here, does the pattern continue in the rest of the plagues? See  
Ex. 8:20-21, 9:1-3, 9:8-9.
  - a.

3. If you still aren't convinced of the pattern, check out the next three plagues! See Ex. 9:13, 10:3-4, 10:21. What is the significance of God warning Pharaoh first two times and then, after the warnings, sending the third plague in each cycle? What does it say about Pharaoh? What does it say about God?
  - a.

#### Patterns of God:

1. We see more of God's character in the severity of the plagues. What pattern do you notice in the plagues? How do the early ones compare to the later ones? For the first set of three, see especially Ex. 7:19, 21; 8:6.
  - a.
2. To answer what the plagues say about God's character, also consider the two responses of Pharaoh and his officials:
  - a. See Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7. What does this say about Pharaoh and his officials?
    - i.
  - b. See Ex. 8:15; 9:27-32; 10:16-20; What does this say about Pharaoh's heart?
    - i.
3. Notice the response when imitation is no longer possible. See Ex. 8:18-19.
  - a.
4. What happens when Pharaoh's servants see that negotiation is no longer possible? See Ex. 10:7-11. Even worse, what does Pharaoh say in Ex. 10:28?
  - a.
5. What does the slowly increasing severity of plagues say about God?
  - a.

#### A Hardened Heart:

1. Although Pharaoh said in Ex. 5:2, "...I do not know the LORD...", what will God do? Who will know that God is God?
  - a. See Ex. 6:7; 10:2
    - i.
  - b. See Ex. 7:5,
    - i.
  - c. See Ex. 7:17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29
    - i.
  - d. Who gets the most of these? Isn't this sad?
    - i.
2. See Ex. 7:13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12. How is it that the LORD finally hardens Pharaoh's heart?
  - a.

3. What changes once it is the LORD hardening Pharaoh's heart and not merely Pharaoh? See Ex. 9:14-17. What does this say about God's judgements against those who don't heed his word?
  - a.

Take Home:

There are three things I'd like you to consider this week:

1. Meditate on God's relationship with Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Recall that God condemns those who do not trust in his word.
2. Meditate on your own life. Is there a sin over which you have hardened your heart? Be wary! God takes sin seriously.
3. Although this study is on God's judgement, recall how patient God was. He didn't start off by killing Pharaoh's son or by doing big plagues of hail. He started small in order to give time for people to know that he alone is God. He is patient with you too. Even more than this, he has made a new way of salvation for you in Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, it can be frightening to reflect on Pharaoh's hardened heart. Many of us have hardened our hearts over and over again to the point of despair. Remind us this week, that you have done something new since Exodus: you sent Jesus Christ to soften even the hardest heart. We are clothed in Christ's righteousness now. Because of Christ, even our most stubborn sins have been forgiven. Lord, we ask that you would comfort us with this your saving grace and let us also know you in your salvation. In Jesus' name, amen.

(Roughly 45 minutes. Take my time, encourage discussion and questions)

God Judges Through Plagues:

Hook:

**Plagues song (4 min)**

**God sent Moses to Pharaoh  
To set his people free  
God sent Moses to tell him,  
"Let my people go, that they may serve me."  
First he turned the water to blood  
The whole Nile, even water in vessels  
Of wood and stone became blood**

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God used plagues to judge those who wouldn't heed his word  
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God used plagues to show He alone is God the Lord.**

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Pharaoh's magicians made even more  
He wouldn't serve the Lord.**

**God sent Moses to Pharaoh  
To set his people free  
God sent Moses to tell him,  
"Let my people go, that they may serve me."  
Third God changed dust to gnats  
Pharaoh's magicians could quite match that  
"This is the finger of God." So they said...**

**Say: "In this study we will see how God is doing two things in his use of plagues. He is both judging those who do not believe his word and saving those who trust in him. Because of the length and significance of this, this is part one of two. Today we will focus on God's judgement through plagues."**

**Call on a few people to read (6 mins)**

Patterns of Plagues:

Read Ex. 7:5-8:19

**Say: “Now, we’ll break into small groups. Please reflect on Ex. 7:14-8:19 and answer questions 1-3. (8 minutes)**

1. Considering the first three plagues, how is Pharaoh informed of the coming plagues? See especially Ex. 7:16-18, 20; 8:1-5; 9:16.<sup>1</sup>
  - a.
2. After noting the pattern here, does the pattern continue in the rest of the plagues? See Ex. 8:20-21, 9:1-3, 9:8-9.<sup>2</sup>
  - a.
3. If you still aren’t convinced of the pattern, check out the next three plagues! See Ex. 9:13, 10:3-4, 10:21. What is the significance of God warning Pharaoh first two times and then, after the warnings, sending the third plague in each cycle? What does it say about Pharaoh? What does it say about God?<sup>3</sup>
  - a.
  - b.

**Say: “What do you think? Did anyone want to share with the group?” (2 mins)**

Patterns of God:

**Say: “Let’s move into a discussion of the patterns of God. I’ll give you about 10 minutes.” (10 mins)**

1. We see more of God’s character in the severity of the plagues. What pattern do you notice in the plagues? How do the early ones compare to the later ones? For the first set of three, see especially Ex. 7:19, 21; 8:6.<sup>4</sup>
  - a.
2. To answer what the plagues say about God’s character, also consider the two responses of Pharaoh and his officials:
  - a. See Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7. What does this say about Pharaoh and his officials?<sup>5</sup>
    - i.
  - b. See Ex. 8:15; 9:27-32; 10:16-20; What does this say about Pharaoh’s heart?<sup>6</sup>
    - i.
3. Notice the response when imitation is no longer possible. See Ex. 8:18-19.<sup>7</sup>
  - a.
4. What happens when Pharaoh’s servants see that negotiation is no longer possible?<sup>8</sup> See Ex. 10:7-11. Even worse, what does Pharaoh say in Ex. 10:28?<sup>9</sup>
  - a.
5. What does the slowly increasing severity of plagues say about God?

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<sup>1</sup> In the first two plagues, Pharaoh is warned about the coming plague before it comes; in the third, God simply sends the plague. This is a pattern throughout the first nine plagues. (2 warnings, 1 wham)

<sup>2</sup> Yes

<sup>3</sup> It shows God’s selfless *patience* and Pharaoh’s selfish *persistence*

<sup>4</sup> Increasing severity

<sup>5</sup> *Imitation*: God not all powerful

<sup>6</sup> *Negotiation*: God can be manipulated.

<sup>7</sup> Magicians get wise; Pharaoh doesn’t change

<sup>8</sup> Pharaoh’s heart remains hard.

<sup>9</sup> Pharaoh’s *empty threat* to kill Moses (singular you).

a.

**Say: “Anything you want to share with the group?” (2 mins)**

A Hardened Heart:

**Say: “I’m sure someone wanted to talk about Pharaoh’s hardened heart. Break into small groups again, and we’ll discuss.” (8 mins)**

1. Although Pharaoh said in Ex. 5:2, “...I do not know the LORD...,” what will God do? Who will know that God is God?
  - a. See Ex. 6:7; 10:2<sup>10</sup>
    - i.
  - b. See Ex. 7:5,<sup>11</sup>
    - i.
  - c. See Ex. 7:17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29<sup>12</sup>
    - i.
  - d. Who gets the most of these? Isn’t this sad?<sup>13</sup>
    - i.
2. See Ex. 7:13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12. How is it that the LORD finally hardens Pharaoh’s heart?<sup>14</sup>
  - a.
3. What changes once it is the LORD hardening Pharaoh’s heart and not merely Pharaoh? See Ex. 9:14-17. What does this say about God’s judgements against those who don’t heed his word?<sup>15</sup>
  - a.

**Say: “Anything you want to share with the group? Any questions?”**

Take Home: (1 min)

There are three things I’d like you to consider this week:

1. Meditate on God’s relationship with Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Recall that God condemns those who do not trust in his word.
2. Meditate on your own life. Is there a sin over which you have hardened your heart? Be wary! God takes sin seriously.
3. Although this study is on God’s judgement, recall how patient God was. He didn’t start off by killing Pharaoh’s son or by doing big plagues of hail. He started small in order to give time for people to know that he alone is God. He is patient with you too. Even more than this, he has made a new way of salvation for you in Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer: (1 min)

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<sup>10</sup> Moses and Aaron:

<sup>11</sup> The Egyptians:

<sup>12</sup> Pharaoh:

<sup>13</sup> God gave Pharaoh the most chances to know that God is God and Pharaoh isn’t, but Pharaoh continued to harden his heart. In the end, Pharaoh did know God was God, but he only got to *know God’s judgement* and not his salvation. (*Knowing God through: judgement and salvation*)

<sup>14</sup> Not until the sixth plague does the LORD harden Pharaoh’s heart.

<sup>15</sup> Pharaoh will still know God is God, but he’s going to know it *through God’s judgement*.

Dear Heavenly Father, it can be frightening to reflect on Pharaoh's hardened heart. Many of us have hardened our hearts over and over again to the point of despair. Remind us this week, that you have done something new since Exodus: you sent Jesus Christ to soften even the hardest heart. We are clothed in Christ's righteousness now. Because of Christ, even our most stubborn sins have been forgiven. Lord, we ask that you would comfort us with this your saving grace and let us also know you in your salvation. In Jesus' name, amen.