

A Christian Passover Seder with Children

by Laura Booz
www.LauraBooz.com

Items needed:

2 white candles
a few pieces of regular bread
Matzah bread
Wine or sparkling grape juice
Lamb shank bone
Parsley
Salt water
Charoset (recipe attached)
Horseradish

A cloth napkin or tea towel to wrap around the Afikomen

Small prizes for the children

Festival Meal for your guests (traditionally without leaven)

Print-out of “5 Questions for the Children to Ask”

Prepare two songs to sing (like “In Christ Alone” and “Great is Thy Faithfulness”). You may want to print lyrics. Sing acapella, sing along with a musician, or play the song through speakers.

Preparations:

Print a copy of the program for yourself. Consider printing copies for your guests, too.

Read over the program so you know what to expect.

Set the table:

Each guest should have: a plate, napkin, utensils, a cup for water, and a cup for wine/ juice.

On each plate, place a sprig of parsley, a scoop of charoset, and a dollop of horseradish.

Set small bowls of salt water around the table so that each guest will be able to reach one easily.

Arrange the leader's place with a Seder plate, which holds a sprig of parsley, a scoop of charoset, a dollop of horseradish, the lamb shank bone.

Place four glasses of wine/ juice at the head of the table.

Fill a large bowl with water for symbolic handwashing, next to a towel.

Before your guests arrive, place some pieces of regular bread around the entryway that could be thrown out the door.

When the guests arrive:

Greet everyone!

Tell the children that regular bread contains something called leaven. When the Israelites had to escape from Egypt, they didn't have time to add leaven and wait for their bread to rise, so they ate unleavened bread instead. The tradition is to search for leaven (regular bread) and throw it out of the house. Invite the children to search for the pieces of bread that you hid. You may also point out that the leaven in the bread represents sin and by doing this, we are asking God to rid us of sin. (Matthew 13)

Gather everyone around the table (standing) and light two white candles. Bless God's name and ask Him to enlighten your hearts about the significance of the celebration.

Provide a large bowl and towel for the ceremonial hand washing. This symbolizes the sacredness of this occasion, and the purity of heart and hands that we are called to exhibit as God's people. (You may want to play quiet instrumental music during this time to encourage personal reflection and set the tone.)

Gather everyone around the table and welcome them to sit.

Hand out the "5 Questions for Children to Ask" to any children who are interested in participating. Tell them that they'll have an opportunity to ask their question(s) later in the ceremony.

At the table...

READ: "I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians, I will deliver you from slavery, I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, I will take you as my people and be your God." (Exodus 6:6-7)

"God rescues us from evil in many ways every day. He always will."

Everyone drinks from the First Cup (The Cup of Freedom) You can explain that, traditionally, each guest would have four cups of wine/ juice. You will be using the four separate cups as you lead the ceremony, but guests may drink out of their own cup each time.

READ: "We are celebrating the freedom and wonderful deliverance that God brought to us as slaves in Egypt. But we do not forget that life in Egypt was hard and filled with pain and suffering and tears."

Dip the Parsley in salt water to remember that God created life, and yet it is often mixed with tears.

The leader makes a stack of 3 pieces of Matzah.

READ: "This Matzah reminds us of the unleaven bread that the Israelites ate the night of their deliverance. When they ate it, they were hoping that God would free them from slavery. These three pieces remind us of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Break the middle Matzah.

Keep one half of the broken Matzah. Wrap the other half (called the Afikomen) in a cloth and hide it during the main meal.

READ: "Later, I will hide a portion of the Matzah which we will use as the Afikomen, the dessert of our meal. It is a symbol of the redemption for which we all long and which we know will come, but yet which we do not yet see."

READ: “The Lord has instructed us that we should tell our children the story of Passover so that they might know the Lord. It is both a duty and a privilege to answer the four questions of the Passover and to recount the gracious acts of our God.”

Child #1 asks: Why is this night different than all other nights?

READ: “Tonight is different than other nights because we have gathered to remember who we are, what God has done for us, and to tell to our children the story of God’s grace and deliverance.”

Hold up the Second Cup (The Cup of Deliverance):

“A full cup is a symbol of joy. Yet our joy is diminished because the Egyptians, who are also God’s children, suffered from Pharaoh’s evil ways. As we recount the plagues, we will spill a drop of wine from our cups for each plague to recall the cost of sin, and the consequences of evil in our world.”

Each person dips their finger in the wine/ juice and splatters it on their plate, once for each plague. Say the plagues aloud:

Blood
Frogs
Lice
Swarms
Cattle Disease
Boils
Hail
Locusts
Darkness
Death of the First Born

READ: “Pharaoh continued to refuse to let the people go until the last plague, the death of the firstborn of all of Egypt, convinced him to release the people. By following God’s instructions and putting the blood of a lamb on the door posts of the houses, the Israelites were spared this plague as death "Passed Over" their houses.”

Hold up the Symbolic Lamb Bone:

READ: “This is the symbol of the Passover lamb that was killed so that the first born children might live. It reminds us of Jesus, who is the lamb who was slain so that we may live.”

“Even as the Israelites were leaving, Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army after them. Trapped between Pharaoh’s army and the Red Sea, the Israelites had nowhere to go. But God told Moses to lift his staff over the sea, and God parted the waters. They were able to pass through the midst of the sea. When the Egyptians tried to follow, the waters closed back over them. When the Israelites saw that they were free, Moses’ sister Miriam led them in rejoicing and praising God.”

Child #2 asks: Why on all other nights do we eat bread with leaven, but on this night we eat only unleavened bread?

READ: “Tonight we eat Unleavened Bread because our ancestors in Egypt had to leave in such haste that they could not wait for their bread to rise, and so had bake it while it was still flat.”

Child #3 asks: Why on all other nights do we eat of all kinds of herbs, but on this night we eat bitter herbs?

READ: “Tonight we eat bitter herbs to remind us of how bitter our lives were as slaves in Egypt or as sinners without salvation. As sweet as our lives are now, we must never forget the bitterness of our bondage.”

Child #4 asks: Why on all other nights do we not dip herbs at all, but on this night we dip them twice?

“Tonight we dip twice. We have already dipped the Parsley in the salt water. We will also dip the Parsley in the sweet Charoset to remind us of the sweetness that God can bring into the most bitter of our circumstances.”

Child #5 asks: Why on all other nights do we eat in the normal way, but on this night we eat with special ceremony?

READ: “Tonight we eat with special ceremony because in each generation, every person should feel as if he or she has actually been redeemed from Egypt. We tell the story because we are the redeemed of the Lord, and we can sing a new song of praise because of His grace. And yet it is not a new song, because it has been sung by countless people through the centuries as generation after generation have experienced the deliverance and redemption brought by our God.”

Ask everyone to join you in saying, “Once we were slaves but now we are free!”

Sing a hymn of Deliverance (for example, “In Christ Alone”)

READ: “Thank you, God, for bringing us forth from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from darkness to light, from slavery to redemption.”

Drink the Second Cup (The Cup of Deliverance) Guests take a second drink of wine/ juice.

Remove all three remaining pieces of Matzah and hold them in front of you as you recite a blessing like, “We Praise you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.”

Take the top and middle Matzah (the half from which the Afikomen was broken) and breaks pieces to distribute to the group.

Eat the Matzah

READ: “As we eat the bitter herbs, let us allow the bitter taste to bring tears of compassion for the pain that our fathers and mothers felt long ago. But let us also weep for those who are still enslaved and have not yet experienced the deliverance that our gracious God brings.”

Eat the bitter herbs by dipping a piece of Matzah into the horseradish

READ: “Now, we’re going to make a sandwich by placing a small amount of horseradish on a piece of Matzah. The Charoset is a sweet mixture of apples, honey, and nuts. It symbolizes the mixture of clay and straw that the Israelites used to make bricks for the cities of Pharaoh. Yet, they had a hope in a future from God sweetened the misery of their slavery. Often, life is a mixture of the bitter and the

sweet, of sadness and joy. Let us now add the sweetness of the Charoset to the bitterness of the horseradish.”

Make a sandwich with the Matzah, horseradish, and Charoset. Eat.

Time for the festival meal!

It's time to enjoy a full meal together. Sit back and enjoy this time of conversation and fellowship. (Don't forget to hide the Afikomen during this time.)

We usually ask our guests to share stories of ways the God has delivered them in the past. It is so wonderful to hear about God's goodness in each person's life – from the youngest to the oldest.

When you and your guests are finished eating the festival meal, continue with the ceremony...

Point to the third cup (The Cup of Redemption).

READ: "This third cup is for Elijah the Prophet. Elijah did not see death but was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. God's people always hoped that Elijah would come at Passover, to announce the coming of the Messiah, the son of David. So, this cup has traditionally been left untouched, awaiting the time when Elijah would appear to share the Passover. It is also called the Cup of Redemption."

Leave the cup untouched for now.

READ: "Will someone open the door to welcome Elijah to the Passover?"

A child or adult opens a door.

READ: "It is now time to reveal that which has been hidden. Who can find the Afikomen?"

Children seek for the Afikomen...

Traditionally, the host gives the children a small prize afterward.

READ: “The Afikomen has traditionally symbolized hope for the future, a symbol of redemption, as God again acts in history to proclaim good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” [Isaiah 61:1-2 quoted in Luke 4:18-19].

Once the Afikomen is found, hold it in your hand and say,

READ: “We have found the Afikomen that has been hidden! We celebrate that our long hoped for Messiah has come, and brought us true freedom from the slavery of sin.”

READ: “We will now drink the Cup of Redemption and eat the Afikomen. Biblical experts believe that when Jesus celebrated Passover with his disciples on the night before he was betrayed and delivered up to be crucified, He took this cup – The Cup of Redemption – and told His disciples to drink it in His name. He said it was His blood poured out for the forgiveness of sin. Jesus held the Afikomen and told his disciples to eat it in His name. He said it was His body, broken for them. He told them that every time they got to this part of the Passover ceremony, they should remember Him. The Messiah has come!”

Ask everyone to join you in saying, “Blessed is He who has come in the name of the Lord!”

READ: “Let us all take a piece of the unleavened bread.”

Break and distribute the Afikomen.

All eat the bread and drink the Third Cup.

Sing a Song of praise (for example, Great is Thy Faithfulness)

READ: “Our Seder is now complete, just as our redemption is complete. We rejoice with thanksgiving, and yet are humbled by God’s love! God said, “I am the Lord; I will take you as my people and I will be your God” [Exodus 6:7].”

READ: “We raise our glasses a fourth time in Thanksgiving for God’s enduring grace and love to us.”

Together, pray The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6: 9-13 ESV).

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts,
As we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.”

Let us drink the Fourth Cup and give thanks!

All raise their glasses again and then drink the cup.

READ: “The traditional conclusion of the Seder is a hope for the future expressed by Jews throughout history: "Next year in Jerusalem." We will conclude our Seder with the same expression of hope and faith in God, as we await the coming of a new Jerusalem.”

Invite all guest to say together: “Next year in the New Jerusalem!”

Extinguish the Passover candles.

Five Questions for Children to Ask

1. Why is this night different than all other nights?
2. Why on all other nights do we eat bread with leaven, but on this night we eat only unleavened bread?
3. Why on all other nights do we eat of all kinds of herbs, but on this night we eat bitter herbs?
4. Why on all other nights do we not dip herbs at all, but on this night we dip them twice?
5. Why on all other nights do we eat in the normal way, but on this night we eat with special ceremony?

Charoset

Ingredients

6 cups peeled, cored and grated Granny Smith apples
2 lemons, juiced
1 cup roughly chopped walnuts
1 cup golden raisins
1/2 cup honey
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 cup kosher for Passover sweet red wine

Directions

In a large bowl combine all of the ingredients. Serve.

- Recipe courtesy of Wolfgang Puck