

WORSHIP

A FAMILY SEDER EXPERIENCE

A few years ago I had the privilege of participating in a condensed seder meal designed to help kids more fully understand Passover and the Last Supper. Sitting in a room with dimmed lights and LED candles as God's story of rescue and salvation unfolded was a powerfully moving experience. It drew me into worship. I was in awe of my God and His abundant goodness.

I would like to share this abbreviated seder meal with you and your family. The seder meal was established in Exodus 13:8 when Moses instructed the people to always remember God's rescue of them from Egypt. It is possible that Jesus' Last Supper with His disciples was a seder meal at which Jesus established the new covenant of communion.

I approach this seder tradition with the utmost respect. People around the world still celebrate the seder today on the eve of Passover. It is a story that unfolds with elements intended to draw the participants more fully into God's story and rescue. Today families read from the Haggadah, which is a narrative of the Passover, and you can find many of these full Haggadahs online or in books. This version is a very abbreviated representation of the meal. It celebrates not only the story of Passover from Exodus but also the places where Jesus fulfills God's long-awaited promises. It is intended to draw your family into worship.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- candle (and lighter or match)
- 1 cup per person
- 1 napkin or small plate per person
- large tray
- small bowl of water and a towel
- Bible turned to Psalm 113 (or print out copies of Psalms 113 and 114 for each person)
- optional: print copies of a portion of your choice from Psalms 115–118
- *maror*: horseradish
- *haroset*: sweet salad (mix of apples and nuts flavored with juice and cinnamon)
- *korban chagigah*: hard-boiled egg
- cup of salt water
- juice (4 small cups per person, or refill 1 cup per person throughout the seder)

For all of the food items you only need a very small amount. The items will be placed on the large tray, and everyone will simply get a taste of each.

- *karpas*: parsley
- *matzah*: unleavened bread (3 pieces of matzos, stacked)

To prepare for the meal, place the large tray on your table where everyone will gather to participate. Place four small cups of juice and a napkin or plate in front of each seat. Place the candle in the center, unlit. All of the food items go on the tray. You can have your cup of salt water and the bowl with plain water and a towel next to the tray. In the following text, the bold text is intended to be read at your meal. Have everyone sit around the table and begin.

WORSHIP



The Passover celebration traditionally lasts seven days. Passover celebrates Israel’s rescue from slavery in Egypt. The seder meal marks the beginning of Passover. It is celebrated around a table, and it is a story that unfolds with many symbols that draw us into worship of God.

Families would begin their celebration at night. A family would read the Haggadah, which means “the telling.” It would recount with these very symbols the Passover story we find in the book of Exodus. On our table you see the items of Passover.

Have someone light the candle.

When everyone was gathered, someone would light the special candles. That person would say a blessing. We will say simply, “We praise You, oh Lord, our God.

Point out the four cups at each person’s place.

We are going to be drinking four cups of juice. This first juice is the cup of sanctification, which reminds us that God has set us apart. In the Last Supper with His disciples Jesus took the cup and shared it with His disciples. Again, a blessing would be said: “We praise You, oh Lord, our God, who created the fruit of the vine.” Let us drink the first cup of Passover together.

Next, we are going to wash each other’s hands. One at a time, dip your fingers into the bowl of water. The person to your left will dry them off with the towel. This washing reminds us of when Jesus washed His disciples’ feet.

Allow time for everyone to wash. When everyone has washed you can place a small bit of parsley on each person’s plate or napkin.

This is called the karpas. It is a lowly vegetable that grows into a crucial part of our seder. It reminds us of the lowly Israelites who were slaves in Egypt and how they grew into God’s chosen people. We are going to dip our karpas into this salt water. This water reminds us of the many tears the Israelites shed while they were in slavery. Before we eat we will say a blessing: “We praise You, oh Lord, our God, who created the fruit of the earth.” Go ahead and eat your karpas dipped in saltwater.

Next, turn to the stack of three matzah. Take the middle matzah and break it in half.

Everyone needs to close his eyes. I’m going to hide half of this for us to find later.

Hide the bread somewhere close by and easy to locate again. Then hold up the piece of broken bread you did not hide.

This is the bread the Israelites ate while they were in Egypt. It reminds us of how difficult it was for them to be slaves.

Next, we will all take part in reciting the story of the exodus together. This can take a long time, but it helps us all remember how great our God is! Let's all take turns talking about the Passover story and what we remember about God.

(NOTE: The story can be found in Exodus 12:1-42. It would be good to talk about how the Israelites were slaves in Egypt before this point. God was about to rescue His people and this final plague was what would finally allow His people to be free.)

After the story, families would sing a blessing to God. This blessing is Psalm 113 and 114, which we will read together. As we read, everyone needs to lift his second glass of juice and keep it raised the entire time.

Place the Bible so everyone can see and read the psalms together, or read from preprinted sheets.

After the blessing has been read it is time to drink our second cup. This cup reminds us of God's deliverance. He was the one who freed the Israelites from being slaves. And He delivers us today. Let us bless God: "We praise You, oh Lord, our God, who created the fruit of the vine."

Next the youngest child would ask four questions to highlight the different elements we are eating. Each question would end with "Why is this night different from all other nights?" Then the leader would answer the questions.

Raise the remaining matzah and say, "We praise You, oh Lord, our God, who brings forth bread from the earth."

Break up the matzah remaining on the tray. Place a little on each person's napkin or plate.

Next, we eat the maror (horseradish). Maror is intended to be very bitter. It is a reminder again of the bitterness of slavery. Anyone who wants to can now taste the maror. Often the point is to eat enough of the maror to cry—a symbol of deep bitterness. We are not going to do that. But that is a warning that this stuff is strong, so please be careful.

After the bitter maror we will make a sandwich. Take a little of your matzah and place some of the maror on it. Also place a little of this haroset (sweet salad) on it as well. Then place some matzah on top

to form a sandwich. This sandwich reminds us of the bitterness of slavery in Egypt but also points to the sweetness of God's rescue.

Now we will eat the korban chagigah: the hard-boiled egg. The egg reminds us of the sacrifices that were made in the temple.

At this point in the Passover celebration, traditionally families would eat a meal together. After the meal the symbols would continue.

Then the hidden matzah would be found. This is called the afikomen.

Find the hidden piece and reveal it with a big gesture.

The afikomen represented the Passover lamb that was to be the last thing eaten at the meal. Today those of us who follow Jesus are reminded of how Jesus revealed what He was about to do during the Last Supper—that He would be the ultimate Passover lamb. Let us again praise God before partaking of the afikomen. Typically, at this point the family would recite Psalm 115 through 118. Let's find a portion we want to read together.

Read together some portion of those psalms, or read from preprinted sheets.

Let's eat the afikomen. Now we are going to drink our third cup. This is the cup of redemption. In Luke 22:20 we read that Jesus lifted up a cup after supper and explained that He would make a new covenant with us. It is God who has redeemed us. Let us bless God, "We praise You, oh Lord, our God, who creates the fruit of the vine."

Lastly, we will drink the cup of completion. Let us bless God: "We praise You, oh Lord, our God, who created the fruit of the vine."

Finally, all of us will say, "This is the lesson of Passover, this is God working in history, this is the story of freedom."

After the meal, spend some time as a family discussing what the meal made you feel and how it helped you worship God.

by Krista Heinen

Krista is a pastor who desires to help the next generation understand its place in The Big God Story. She has her BS in elementary education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her MDiv from Bethel Seminary. Krista loves to preach, play board games, and spend time chatting over coffee. She and her husband, Greg, live in Wisconsin.