

The Wilderness Test

BIBLE PASSAGE: Exodus 15:22–17:7

MAIN POINT: God provided for the physical needs of His people.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 3:5–6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people from captivity.

SMALL GROUP OPENING (10–15 MINUTES) **LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY** (25–30 MINUTES) **SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES** (25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 42 **PAGE 44** **PAGE 50**



Leader BIBLE STUDY

The Israelites' future looked incredibly bright. The Lord, through Moses, had rescued them from slavery in Egypt. He fought for them, displaying His power by parting the Red Sea and subsequently destroying Egypt's army. God was working out His plan to bring the Israelites to the promised land—the land God promised to Abraham's family.

But the journey from Egypt to Canaan was not direct. The Lord led His people into the wilderness. The Israelites' bright future seemed to fade. Their dry mouths and rumbling, empty stomachs produced complaints and accusations. They doubted the Lord's goodness.

The Israelites traveled three days into the wilderness and were unable to find water. When they found water at Marah, they must have rushed to it—only to find the water was too bitter to drink. The people grumbled to Moses. Of course, Moses had no power to change the water. But the Lord did. Moses cried out to the Lord, and He showed Moses a tree. Moses threw the tree into the water, and the water became drinkable.

Then the Israelites moved farther into the wilderness. Their hunger produced despair: “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in the land of Egypt ... Instead, you brought us into this wilderness ... to die of hunger!” (Ex. 16:3).

Again, the Lord gave the Israelites what they needed. Moses and Aaron explained the purpose behind the Lord’s provision: “You will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt” (Ex. 16:6). God sent bread from heaven and quail for the Israelites to eat. They ate manna in the wilderness for 40 years.

The Lord is our Provider. Like He provided for the physical needs of His people in the wilderness, He provided for our spiritual needs by sending His Son, Jesus—the Bread of life (John 6:35)—so we can live forever.



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The Wilderness Test

Exodus 15:22–17:7

Moses led the people away from the Red Sea, and they came **to the wilderness. They could not find good water to drink, and they complained to Moses. God said, “If you obey Me and do what is right and keep My commands, I will not punish you like I punished the Egyptians. I am Yahweh, who heals you.”** The Israelites came to a place called Elim (EE lim) where they found plenty of food and water. They camped there.

The Israelites left Elim and journeyed into the wilderness. They were hungry. They complained to Moses. “We wish we had died in Egypt! At least there was food to eat,” they said. “You brought us out here to starve to death!” But Moses had not brought them out there to die. God knew what He was doing.

God said, “I have heard the complaints of the Israelites. Tell them: In the evening you will eat meat, and in the morning you will eat bread until you are full. Then you will know that I am Yahweh your God.”

So at evening, quail came into the camp. In the morning, fine flakes like frost were on the ground.

“What is it?” the Israelites asked.

Moses said, “It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat.”

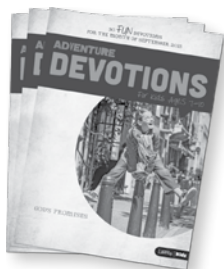
The Israelites called the bread *manna*, which means “what is it?” **God** gave the people instructions. He **told them to collect just enough to eat for the day. If they collected too much, the leftovers went bad. He told them to collect twice as much on the sixth day, because the seventh day was the Sabbath, a day to rest.**

The Israelites did not always follow God's instructions. Sometimes they collected too much manna, and sometimes they tried to collect manna on the Sabbath day. Moses was angry that the people refused to obey God. **The Israelites ate manna for 40 years while they were in the wilderness.**

The Israelites moved about the wilderness as the Lord told them to do. One day, they came to a camp with no water. "Give us something to drink," they told Moses. "Why are you complaining to me?" Moses asked. "You brought us out here to die" the Israelites said. They forgot that the Lord had a plan for them.

"Lord, what should I do?" Moses cried out. God showed Moses a rock and instructed him to hit it with his staff. Water came out of it, and the people drank. It was a sign that the Lord was with them.

Christ Connection: In the New Testament, Jesus said that He is the Bread of life. (John 6:31-35) God provided manna from heaven for His people's physical hunger, and later He provided His Son, Jesus, for our spiritual hunger. The Israelites needed bread to live for a little while, but whoever has Jesus will live forever!



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
ADVENTURE!**

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that God generously gave the people quail in the evening and bread in the morning. (Ex. 16:8) God wanted His people to rely on Him for their daily needs. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: The Wilderness Test

BIBLE PASSAGE: Exodus 15:22–17:7

MAIN POINT: God provided for the physical needs of His people.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 3:5–6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people from captivity.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, ask if they have a hard time trusting other people. Have they ever trusted someone only to be disappointed when that person let them down? What makes it difficult for us to trust?

SAY • Today we are going to continue to learn about God's plan to rescue His people from captivity. In today's story we will see how **God provided for the physical needs of His people**. While in the wilderness, the people of God doubted Moses and the plan that God had for them.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Water in the Desert" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Water in the Desert" activity page.

SAY • While in the wilderness, the people of God had a hard time finding food and water. The people of God complained to Moses, and Moses spoke to God on their behalf. Today we're going to learn how **God provided for the physical needs of His people**.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Gather manna

Scatter an entire bag of cotton balls around the room. (If any kids in your class have cotton allergies, tear pieces of white paper to use instead.) Instruct the kids to collect as much of the manna as they would need to eat for a day. Tell them that God asked the Israelites to only collect what they needed for the day (or two days if the next day was the Sabbath).

SAY • In the wilderness, **God provided for the physical needs of His people.** God heard the complaints of the people and sent them food to eat. He provided for them so that they would know that He is God. The Israelites were instructed to only gather enough to eat each day.

OPTION 2: Whom do you trust?

Ask the kids to make a list of people whom they trust. Let the kids take turns sharing their list with the class. Ask them to explain why they trust the people on their list.

SAY • In our story today, the people of God had trouble trusting Moses and ultimately had trouble trusting God. They complained to Moses that he had led them to the wilderness to die. They even wished that they were back in Egypt. When things got hard, they stopped trusting God. **God provided for the physical needs of His people** in order to show them that He is God and we can trust Him to always take care of our needs.



- Allergy Alert download
- large bag of cotton balls
- torn pieces of white paper (optional)

- chart paper
- markers

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

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Countdown

- countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire
- backpack
- sleeping bag
- snack bar wrapper
- phone

[Leader enters with a backpack and a sleeping bag. Unroll the sleeping bag and sit down on it. Place the backpack next to you.]

LEADER • Hey, everybody! Welcome to the Gobi Desert in southern Mongolia! I'm on my way to Ulan Bator, the capital of Mongolia in the north. The Gobi Desert is pretty large, though. I needed to stop and take a break. Ooo! I know! Now would be a great time to eat a snack.

[Open up the backpack. Make a show of rummaging through the backpack to pull out a snack bar wrapper.]

Uh oh. This could be a problem. It's OK. I'll take out my GPS and look for the nearest restaurant.

[Pull out your phone and wait while it "calculates" directions.] Wow. According to this map, I'm a few days away from the nearest city. Does anyone have a piece of candy or a stick of gum or something?

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • A couple of weeks ago, we learned that God rescued Moses to deliver His people from captivity. God protected Moses when he was a baby, and when he was grown, God called Moses to return to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let His people go.

• Giant Timeline

Last week, we learned that God proved to the Egyptians that He is the one true God by sending plagues to them. Pharaoh refused to obey God's command to let His people go, but God revealed His power so His people could know that He would keep His promise to bring them out of Egypt. Last week, the people praised God after He led them through the Red Sea on dry ground.

In today's Bible story, however, the people had a problem. They were in the desert, a place without much food or water. And they were out of food! Let's see how **God provided for the physical needs of His people.**

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Do you remember our big picture question and answer? ***What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people from captivity.*** When God's people ran out of food and water they forgot God's plan. They complained that Moses had led them into the wilderness to kill them. That isn't true at all. God's plans for His people are always for His glory and our good!

- Bibles
- “The Wilderness Test” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Exodus 15:22–17:7. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video “The Wilderness Test.” For a shorter version of the Bible story, read only the bolded text of the script.

LEADER • What happens when you get really hungry? Does your stomach growl? Does your stomach sometimes ache? What do you do when you get really hungry? [*Invite kids to answer.*] Most of the time, when we get hungry, we can go to the kitchen or the grocery store to get something to eat. The Israelites were in the wilderness, or desert. They didn’t have food and water, things that all people need to live.

Do you think God forgot to give them food or water? No! God made our bodies and He knows exactly what we need. More than that, God is good and He gives us what we need, too. God was testing the Israelites to see if they would trust Him to take care of them and be their God. Did they trust God? Sadly, no! They complained. Even though they complained, **God provided for the physical needs of His people.**

God provided manna from heaven for His people’s physical hunger, and later He provided His Son, Jesus, for our spiritual hunger. In the New Testament, Jesus said that He is the Bread of life. The Israelites needed bread to live for a little while, but whoever has Jesus will live forever!

Ask the following review questions:

1. Why did the people complain to Moses in the wilderness? (*They could not find food or water, Ex. 16:2-3; 17:1-3*)

2. What did the Israelites call the food that God provided? (*manna, Ex. 16:31*)
3. What instructions did God give the Israelites for collecting manna? (*Only collect enough to eat each day. Collect enough for two days on Friday so they didn't have to gather manna on the Sabbath; Ex. 16:16-26*)
4. How did God provide water for His people? (*He told Moses to hit a rock with his staff and water came out, Ex. 17:5-6*)
5. How long did the Israelites eat manna in the wilderness (*40 years, Ex. 16:35*)
6. ***What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people from captivity.***

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Hebrews 3:5-6. Invite kids who can say the key passage from memory to say it now. Praise each kid's attempt. Say the key passage together one more time.

LEADER • Moses rescued the Israelites from slavery, but Jesus rescues people from sin! The Bible teaches that Jesus is the Bread of life. When we trust in Jesus, we receive forgiveness of sin and life forever with God. Sing the key passage together.

- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- "Confidence of Our Hope" song

• “Unit 4, Session 3”
discussion starter
video

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Have you ever let someone down? Check this out.

Show the “Unit 4, Session 3” discussion starter video.

LEADER • The gang sure let each other down, didn't they? Do we ever let people down or disappoint them? Has anyone ever let you down? Will God ever let us down? Why not? [*Invite responses.*]

God will never let us down because He is faithful and true! God wanted to see if Israel trusted Him to care for their daily needs. The Bible says that God let them be hungry so they would know that man doesn't just live on bread and water, but on every word that comes from the Lord. [*See Deut. 8:3.*]

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Freedom” song

LEADER • God's people were now free from captivity in Egypt, but they needed freedom from sin. Let's sing to thank Jesus for giving us freedom from sin.

Sing together “Freedom.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Before transitioning to small groups, make any announcements for your kids ministry. Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • Dear God, thank You for always providing for Your people. We don't deserve Your many blessings. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to rescue us from sin. Help us to trust You more each day. Amen

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:19.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

Small Group LEADER

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KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 3:5-6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people from captivity.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- dry erase board or chalk board
- markers or chalk
- erasers

Draw the outline of a house on a dry erase board or chalk board, complete with a roof, chimney, windows, doors, a sidewalk, and so forth. Next to the house write the majority of the key passage, but draw a blank line for each letter of the words *FAITHFUL*, *SERVANT*, *HOUSE*, *SON*, *CONFIDENCE*, and *HOPE* instead of writing them out. Kids will play a version of Hangman by guessing letters to fill in the blanks. For each letter they guess incorrectly, erase a detail from the house, such as a window or chimney. When all the blanks have been filled correctly, guide kids to say the key passage with you.

SAY • While Moses was a faithful servant of God, Jesus is much better. Jesus humbled Himself as a Servant, but He is really God the Son. Because of Jesus' obedience to die on the cross and raise again to rescue us from sin, we can have life with God forever when we turn away from sin and trust in Jesus.

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- cotton balls
- Allergy Alert download
- scraps of white paper (optional)

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Invite kids to open their Bibles to Exodus 15:22–17:7, assisting kids as needed. Briefly review the Bible story. Form two or three teams of kids. Ask kids the review questions

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

below. Kids will raise their hands to answer. The team that answers correctly gets one cotton ball (manna). If any of your kids have a cotton allergy, use torn scraps of white paper to represent manna. The team with the most manna at the end of the game wins. Adult helpers may need to help non-readers find the answers in their Bibles.

1. Where did the Israelites stop that had plenty of water? (*Elim, Ex. 15:27*)
2. What did the people of God call the food from heaven that God gave them? (*manna, Ex. 16:31*)
3. What happened if people kept manna until the next day? (*It went bad, Ex. 16:20*)
4. What day was it OK to gather two days' worth of food? (*The day before Sabbath, Ex. 16:22*)
5. On what day would people not be able to gather manna? (*Sabbath day, Ex. 16:25-27*)
6. What meat did God provide for the people in the evening? (*quail, Ex. 16:12-13*)
7. How many years did the people of God eat manna (*40 years, Ex. 16:35*)
8. How did God tell Moses to get water out of a rock? (*hit the rock with his staff, Ex. 17:5-6*)
9. ***What is God's plan? God provided for the physical needs of His people.***

SAY • God provided manna from heaven for His people's physical hunger, and later He provided His Son, Jesus, for our spiritual hunger. The Israelites needed bread to live for a little while, but whoever has Jesus will live forever!

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Favorite foods

Instruct the kids to stand the middle of the room. Designate one wall to be “I like it” and the other wall to be “I don’t like it.” Explain that you are going to call out different foods, and if the kids like that food they will run to the “I like it” wall. If they don’t like that food, they will run to the “I don’t like it” wall. Call out the following:

- lemons
- birthday cake
- ice cream
- broccoli
- eggplant
- pimento sandwiches
- tuna sandwiches
- chocolate
- Brussels sprouts
- kale
- fried chicken
- beet salad

SAY • God provided for the physical needs of His people

by giving them food and water in the desert. God gave them manna—food from heaven!—but they even complained about that. They kept comparing the good gifts God gave them in the desert to the things they had when they were slaves in Egypt.

That sounds pretty silly, but we’re not any better than the Israelites. Just like we don’t always want to eat the foods that are most nutritious, we don’t want to trust and obey God. God sent Jesus to earth to take the punishment we deserve for all the times we disobey God. When we trust in Jesus, we are forgiven of our sin and we get the best gift ever: life with God forever.

OPTION 2: Start a food collection

Before the session, investigate a local food bank in your area to which you can give food your class collects. You may also

- cardboard box
- poster paper
- markers
- construction paper or gift wrapping paper (optional)

want to check on a way to give toward a need in another country as part of a missions opportunity. Invite kids to decorate an empty cardboard box that you will use to collect canned goods and non-perishable foods. Make a sign explaining why you are collecting food and encourage kids to let their family and others know about the collection. Decide if your collection will be short-term or ongoing.

SAY • God provided for the physical needs of His people
in the desert and we can be part of how He provides for the physical needs of others by collecting food to give away. Let's not forget that the greatest way God provides is His Son, Jesus, to rescue people from sin.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal and instruct the kids to write down or draw a picture of a time that God provided for them. Maybe it was a physical need, such as food or water. Maybe it was healing when they were sick. As kids draw or write, talk about God's provision.

SAY • God provided for the physical needs of His people.

God also provided His own Son, Jesus, to die on the cross and rise again to rescue us from sin.

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the coloring page provided with this session. Pray, thanking God for sending His Son to take care of our greatest need: our need to be forgiven from sin.

Make sure to give kids the big picture cards to take home to reinforce the Bible story with their families.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid
- crayons or markers
- Big Picture Cards for Families: Kids

Journal Page

God the Redeemer

Key Passage: Hebrews 3:5-6

Big Picture Questions: What is God's plan?
God's plan is to rescue His people from captivity.

Session 1: Moses Was Born and Called

Exodus 1:8-2:10, 23-25; 3:1-4:20

God rescued Moses to deliver His people from captivity.

Session 2: The Plagues, the Passover, and the Crossing of the Red Sea

Exodus 5-14

God proved to Egypt that He is the one true God.

Session 3: The Wilderness Test

Exodus 15:22-17:7

God provided for the physical needs of His people.

Session 4: The Golden Calf

Exodus 32:1-35; 34:1-9

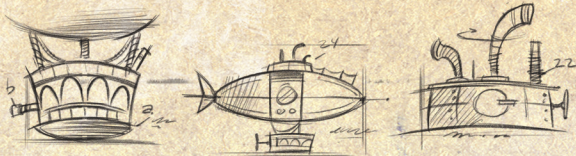
God punished His people for worshiping a golden calf.

Session 5: The Ten Commandments: Love God

Exodus 19:1-20:11; 31:18

God gave us rules to show that He is holy and we are sinners.

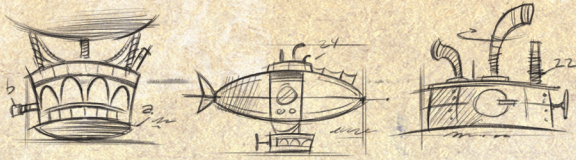




**Moses was faithful as
a servant in all God's
household ... But Christ
was faithful as a Son over
His household. And we are
that household if we hold
on to the courage and the
confidence of our hope.**

Hebrews 3:5-6

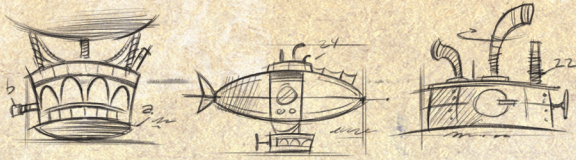




**Moses verily was faithful
in all his house, as a servant
... But Christ as a son over
his own house; whose house
are we, if we hold fast the
confidence and the rejoicing
of the hope firm unto
the end.**

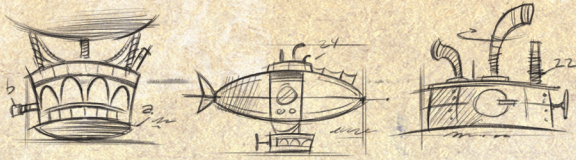
Hebrews 3:5-6





**Now Moses was faithful in
all God's house as a servant
... but Christ is faithful over
God's house as a son.
And we are his house if
indeed we hold fast our
confidence and our boasting
in our hope.
Hebrews 3:5-6**





“Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house,”

... But Christ is faithful as the Son over God’s house.

And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory.

Hebrews 3:5-6



**God provided
for the
physical needs
of His people.**





Water in the Desert

DOWNLOAD THE
TGP FAMILY APP

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete the maze to help Moses reach the water. The letters you cross will spell out part of today's main point.



KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 3:5-6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

- What is God's plan? God's plan is to rescue His people from captivity.

BIBLE STORY:

THE WILDERNESS TEST

- Moses led the Israelites into the wilderness or desert.
- When the people ran out of food and water, they complained to Moses.
- God gave the people manna, quail, and water from a rock.

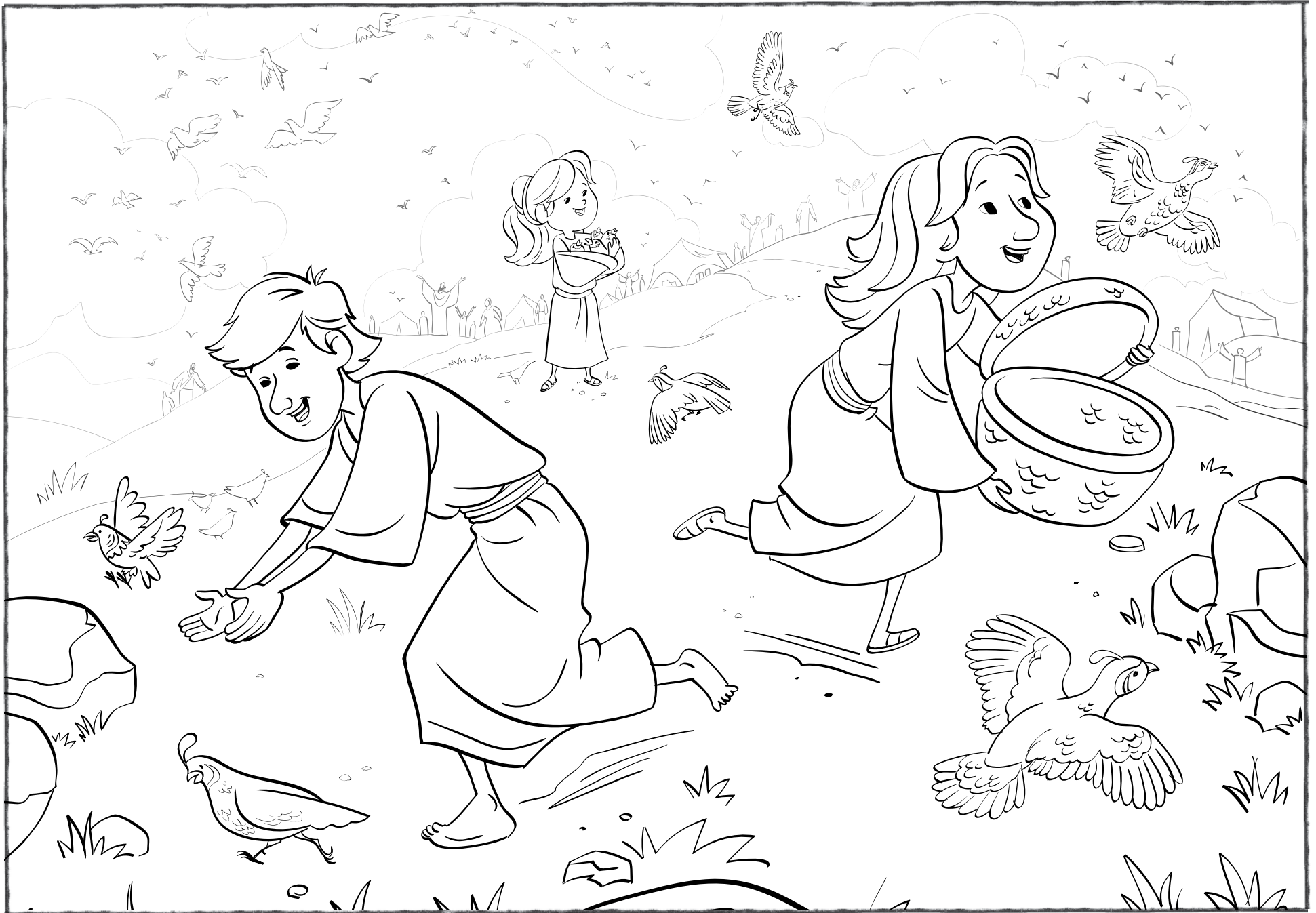
FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- Why did the Israelites complain in the wilderness? How did God provide for them?
- Do we ever complain? What does that tell about us?
- Do you trust God to take care of you? Why or why not?

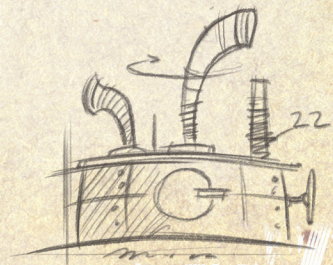
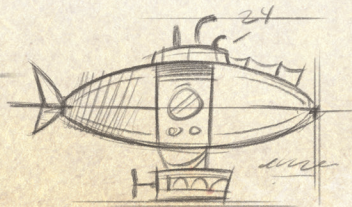
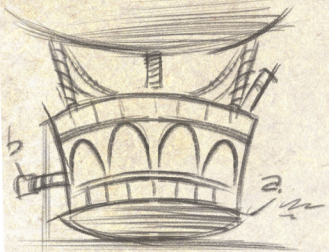
FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- Make a list of things you need to live, and then make a list of blessings God has provided above your needs. Thank God for His care.
- Take it further: Serve a meal or donate food to a homeless shelter or food bank.

Younger Kids Activity Pages
Unit 4, Session 3



What is God's plan?



What is God's plan?

God's plan is to
rescue His people
from captivity.

