

God Provides Water, Manna and Quail



Scripture Reference: [Exodus 15:22-16:36](#)

Suggested Theme: God took care of His people in the wilderness, and He will take care of us today.

Memory Verse: “My God will use his wonderful riches in Christ Jesus to give you everything you need.”
[Philippians 4:19, ICB](#)

Story Overview:

Within days of leaving bondage in Egypt and heading toward the land God had promised them, the people began to grumble and pine for the comforts of their old life. Despite their complaints, the Lord provided for their needs over and over. He caused bitter water to become sweet and even led them to an oasis to camp during the journey. He fed them by providing meat via large flocks of quail that flew into their camp each evening and a miraculous dew in the mornings, which turned into flakes of sweet bread (manna) for them to eat. A larger portion of these were provided one day each week so that the people could rest and observe the Sabbath the next day.

Background Study:

After seeing God’s power displayed over the mighty Egyptian Army when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, it is difficult to understand how anyone could doubt God and His plans, yet that is exactly what the people did. The journey to the promised land involved hundreds of thousands of people crossing desert lands, so it is no wonder that water and food quickly became an issue.

Wanting to ensure the most work out of their slaves, the Egyptians would have provided for basic needs. Now, after only three days and heading away from Egypt, the people were thirsty for water, and the only water they found was bitter. God provided Moses with a piece of wood (various Bible versions use the words “tree” or “log”) to place in the water and miraculously turn it from bitter to sweet. Soon after this, the people are led to Elim, where water is plentiful.

([Exodus 16:1-3](#)) Over a month into the journey and further into the desert the people stopped to camp in a place ominously named the “Dessert of Sin” where they consider their lack of food and once again grumble and pine for Egypt.

The pillars of cloud-by-day and fire-by-night ([Exodus 13:21](#)) seem to be still leading Moses and the people on this journey. Now, at this point in time, the glory of the Lord became apparent to the people in a cloud over the desert ([Exodus 16:10](#)).

But more was to come from the sky. God provided meat (quail that flew into camp each evening) and bread (manna: wafer-like flakes that landed on the dew each morning) for the people. God laid out strict instructions for the amount to be gathered, and anyone gathering more discovered that the extra would simply rot and fill with worms.

“So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites: ‘This evening you will know that the Lord is the one who brought you out of Egypt. Tomorrow morning you will see the greatness of the Lord. He has heard you grumble against him. We are nothing. You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord.’ And Moses said, ‘Each evening the Lord will give you meat to eat. And every morning he will give you all the bread you want. He will do this because he has heard you grumble against him. You are not grumbling against Aaron and me. You are grumbling against the Lord.’” [Exodus 16:6-8, ICB](#)

It was during this time that we first read about the Sabbath day of rest. On the sixth day, a double portion of manna was provided so the people could set the seventh day aside as holy to the Lord.

Way to Introduce the Story:

Bring very thin wafers or crackers and honey to your gathering. Have a snack before the story. “Do you like the taste of the honey and crackers? When the Israelites left Egypt, they were very happy. After a while their food began to run out and they became hungry. Soon they began to wonder if maybe they would rather go back to Egypt. God sent them some special food.”

The Story:

God’s people were journeying to a land they would call their own. God promised them that they would have their own land, so this became known as “The Land of Promise” or the “Promised Land.”

For years, the people had been slaves in Egypt, but now they were free and on their way to a new home. A man named Moses was their leader, and Moses’ brother, Aaron, was his helper.

To get to their new home, the people had to walk many miles across a desert. After a few days of travel, they were very thirsty. The only water they found tasted so bitter that they could not even drink it.

The thirsty people began to complain. They remembered their life back in Egypt. They began remembering the good things about Egypt they missed and forgot how Pharaoh treated them so badly.

When the people began complaining and wishing they could go back to Egypt, Moses prayed to God for help.

God answered Moses’ prayer. He gave Moses a piece of wood and told him to touch the bitter water with it. When Moses touched the wood to the water, the water changed from bitter to sweet, just as God said it would. Now, there was plenty of water for everyone.

God continued to take care of His people on their journey. During the day, God placed a pillar (or tower) of cloud in front of them so they would know the correct way to go. Even though they were in a desert, he led them to other places with plenty of water to drink.

After more than a month, the people of God arrived in a place called the “Desert of Sin” and made camp. Soon, all the food was gone, and the people began to doubt that God could take care of them. They complained to Moses and his brother Aaron. Sadly, they even told Moses that their lives were better back in Egypt, where they had been slaves. They said Egypt was better than the desert.

But God never forgot His people. God told Moses that food was about to rain down from heaven. As Moses and the people looked out into the desert, they saw a big cloud. They knew that God's glory was in the cloud.

And God did just as He said. Every evening, a great flock of quail (birds) would fly into the camp. The people would gather them and eat them. In the morning, when the people woke up, little white flakes (like wafers) covered the ground. The people called this manna.

Each day, they gathered the manna and took it home to make bread. But God told the people only to gather enough manna to feed their families. God wanted them to do exactly as He said and remember that He would care for them.

But some of the people did not listen. They were greedy and gathered more than God had told them to. They thought they could save some for later. This seemed like a good idea initially, but then they noticed that the extra manna began to rot and stink. Soon, the manna was full of worms. These people realized that they should have listened to God.

God wanted the people to remember Him in another way. He told them that the seventh day of the week would be a day of rest. They were to stop working on this day and make it special. This was a holy day set aside for God, and it was to be called the Sabbath Day.

There would be no manna on the ground on the Sabbath day. Instead, God told the people to gather extra manna the day before the Sabbath and to prepare bread and save it to eat on the Sabbath. Unlike the other days, the extra manna did not rot and was filled with worms.

But once again some of the people did not listen to God. They did not gather extra manna on the day before the Sabbath Day. On the Sabbath, they came to gather manna, but there was none. They really wished they had obeyed God.

For many years, God provided manna and quail for the people. If they obeyed God, they did not have to be hungry.

To help them remember this in the years to come, God told Moses to put some of the manna in a jar to keep in their packs as they traveled on to the Promised Land. That manna did not rot. In fact, it stayed in the jar for many years.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

[Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.](#)

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more](#)

[about review and reflection questions.](#)

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Review:

- What did the Israelites complain about in the desert? (They didn't have anything to eat or drink)
- Why did the Israelites want to go back to Egypt? (They remembered how they had food and water in Egypt)
- What did God do to make the bitter water sweet? (He told Moses to throw a piece of wood in it)
- What did God provide for the Israelites to eat? (Manna in the morning and quail at night)
- Why did God send extra food on a certain day each week? (So that the people could rest on the Sabbath, a special day of the week, instead of collect food)
- What happened when the people tried to collect more food than they needed on other days? (The extra food would rot and have worms in it)
- How did God show the Israelites that He loved them while in the desert? (He provided food and water for them and gave them a day of rest)

Reflection:

- Have you ever been very, very thirsty, like after a long walk or playing a sport, or been very, very hungry? What do you think about or feel?
- The Israelites were travelling through the desert. How do you think they felt when they ran out of food and only had bitter water to drink?
- What do you think the quail and manna the Israelites ate tasted like? Why do you think God chose to send them these two foods?
- What do you think the ground looked like when God sent manna to His people?
- Have you ever been afraid or upset like the Israelites were when they didn't have enough food?
- If you were an Israelite travelling in the desert, would you have been afraid God wouldn't provide you with food and water, or would you have trusted Him?
- What is something you can trust God about today? What can you trust He will provide for you?
- What question would you ask God about this story?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

Song Suggestions:

- [Cast Your Burdens](#)
- [He's Got the Whole World in His Hands Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- [How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.](#)
- [Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.](#)

Activities:

- Review and continue to learn the memory verse as it applies to today's lesson.
- Draw a line down the centre of a chalkboard or whiteboard. Head one column with the word "Needs" and the other with "Wants." List items under one or the other. Does God give us what we need? Which things do we complain the most about?
- Act out today's story.
- Start a collection of items for the needy. Perhaps have a box to collect tins of food for the church pantry.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable "God's Story" printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

Crafts:

- Make a collage with pictures cut out of magazines. Make sure the pictures are of the things that God provides us with. Write the memory verse ([Philippians 4:19](#)) in the centre of the collage.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. [Free printables for this story.](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page Bread from Heaven & puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page The Lord sends quail & puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Game: 'Journey to the Promised Land' \(Christian Crafters\)](#)

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