

General Church Education



Family Lesson: Exodus 15

Bitter and Sweet Water

[Family Talk](#)

[Level 2](#)

[Song](#)

[Level 3](#)

[Level 1](#)

[Level 4](#)

[Level 5](#)

Family Lesson 2 - E

Bitter and Sweet Water
Exodus 15

Family Talk:
THE SONG BY THE RED SEA

by the Rev. Fred Schnarr

The story of the escape of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt is filled with many amazing events and dramatic miracles.

After Egypt had been ruined by the ten plagues, Pharaoh decided to let the children of Israel go. So relieved were the Egyptians to see these Hebrews go that they gave them all kinds of food, clothing and jewels.

Having eaten the passover, as directed, the children of Israel marched to the shores of the Red Sea. While camped by the sea, they heard a thundering noise, and realized that Pharaoh with his great army of horse-drawn chariots was actually chasing them to bring them back into slavery in Egypt.

Then it was that two more miracles happened in quick order. A pillar of cloud came between the children of Israel and the Egyptians, so that Pharaoh could not see the Israelite camp. Nor could he see that the Lord had actually parted the waters of the Red Sea, and that the children of Israel were escaping on dry ground through the very middle of the sea.

When Pharaoh and his army saw what was happening, and chased after them, he was too late. The wall of water that the Lord had held up to make a path suddenly collapsed and drowned all the Egyptian soldiers.

And now let us imagine the picture that the Lord describes for us of the Hebrew people finally freed from Egyptian bondage. As they looked at the waters of the Red Sea, where the Egyptians had disappeared, the Hebrews suddenly broke out into a song of thanksgiving to the Lord for saving them.

Led by Moses, all the people raised their voices in song. Just imagine the sound of hundreds of thousands of voices singing at one time, with the words they sang echoing across the water.

Never in the whole story of the Word are we given such a picture of joy and gladness in song. And as if this were not enough, Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, then led all the women to sing again, only this time, with dancing and the use of timbrels.

The Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem tells us that the ancient people loved to sing songs to the Lord, especially when they thought about how the

Lord would some day come into the world to save the human race. When they sang such songs about the Lord an amazing thing happened. The angels who were secretly with them, because they too like to sing about the Lord and His Word, rejoiced greatly.

And it is written: “they who sang, and they who heard the songs, had heavenly gladness from the holy and blessed influx which flowed in from heaven, in which they seemed to themselves to be as it were taken up into heaven”
(*Arcana Coelestia* 8261:3).

The Writings also tell us that joyous and thankful thoughts about the Lord, “burst forth in the body into various acts, as into songs, and also into dance”
(*Arcana Coelestia* 8339).

This was true of the ancients. Could it be true again? Will the people of the New Church find a special delight in songs and music about the Lord? Surely we all feel we can so delight at times of special celebrations, like Christmas or times when we experience great joy, like at a wedding.

But how about the other more regular occasions of our life — occasions of family and church worship and prayer, or times when we conclude a difficult test, or go through a series of unpleasant trials. Do our songs reflect our spirit, our joy, and our thanks and praise to the Lord?

When false, evil, and ugly things attack us for a time, but then seem to vanish like the Egyptians army, let us remember that it is the Lord who overcomes such bad things. Because we have to make such a strong effort to resist and overcome, we feel like we are the ones who conquer evil spirits and chase them away. But this is only the appearance, isn't it? The reality is that the Lord fights for us through our efforts, and in time it is His Word that makes the change in us and removes those who are trying to destroy us.

Let us remember this truth when we think of this magnificent picture of the children of Israel all singing and dancing to praise the Lord. Let us remember it when we think of the wise ancients loving to sing and dance the praises of the Lord. And let us reflect and think to ourselves, what we can do in our own life, and in the life of the New Church to show our joy and delight in the Lord's Word.



Crossing The Red Sea

Based on Exodus 14

Lori Odhner



And the wa-ters came tum-bling and splash-ing and crash-ing and pour-ing,



down up-on Pha-roah and all Pha-roah's men. 1. Now the child- ren of
2. Well the walls were of
3. And then Pha-raoh



Is - rael fol-lowed Mos - es out of E - gypt to be free, For the
wa - ter on--their right side, on their left side, all a - round, But the
chased them with his hors - es, and his cha-riots, and his men, For he



Lord meant to save them from their long mis - e - ry.
Lord led them safe - ly through the Red Sea on dry ground.
wan-ted to en - slave them back in E - gypt once a - gain.

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Some of Lori Odhner's *Songs From the Word* are available on tape and in a binder of sheet music from the General Church Book Center, Cairncrest, P.O. Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009 Telephone (215) 914-4920, e-mail bookcenter@newchurch.edu

Bitter and Sweet Water

Exodus 15

LEVEL 1 – ACTING OUT THE STORY

**Let's take a journey with the Israelites.
You can act out this story by taking a trip through your house.**

1. The Children of Israel were in the desert, sleeping in tents.

Make a tent over a chair or table with a blanket.

2. They did not know when they would find water to drink.

Wander through your house, looking for water.

3. Finally, they came to Marah where there was water. But the water was bitter. (Parent: prepare some water ahead of time. Add a drop of lemon juice or vinegar to make it taste bitter.)

Now you can find some water. Pretend it doesn't taste good. Maybe it really doesn't!

4. The Lord told Moses to put a tree into the water. Now the water was sweet and they could drink it.

Have some fresh water. Show that this water tastes good.

5. Travel on to Elim where there was an oasis. There the Israelites found 12 wells of water and 70 palm trees.

Travel on to another place in your house that is so pleasant you want to stay there.

If the weather is nice, you may enjoy setting up this play outside.

Bitter and Sweet Water
Exodus 15
LEVEL 2 – A SONG FOR THE LORD

Do you remember how the Lord protected the Children of Israel when they crossed the Red Sea on dry ground? And do you remember that the Lord did not let their enemies, the Egyptians, catch them? By letting the dry path through the sea disappear, the Lord stopped the Egyptians from crossing and covered them with the water of the Sea. This was a great miracle. The Children of Israel, when they turned back and saw the water going over the Egyptians were very happy that the Lord saved them from their enemies.



What do you do when you're happy? Sing, whistle, hop, make noise, and maybe dance around? Well, the Children of Israel were so happy that they danced and sang a wonderful long song of thanks to the Lord.

You can sing and dance and make a happy song to the Lord, too. Maybe you have a piano, a whistle, or other music maker at your house. Or you can make your own by shaking measuring spoons, bells or whatever you and your family can find.

Here are some of the words the Children of Israel sang. You can sing them, too, and dance as they did to praise the Lord. You may try to learn these words by heart:

“The Lord shall reign forever and ever.”

(Exodus 15)

You may also enjoy learning the enclosed song about **Crossing the Red Sea**, by Lori Odhner.

Bitter and Sweet Water

Exodus 15

LEVEL 3 – MOSES' SONG OF PRAISE TO THE LORD

On the next pages you will see the beautiful poem Moses sang to praise the Lord when the Children of Israel were saved from the Egyptians.

Read the poem. Choose a part that you particularly like to learn as a recitation. It would be wonderful if you could learn the whole poem!

Then color the designs around the poem to illustrate it.

When you have finished decorating your poem, you can display it in several ways:

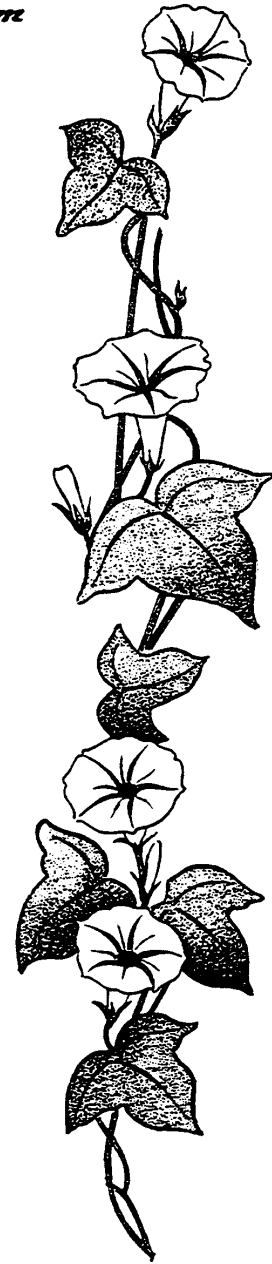
1. You can stand it up on your bedside table or worship table to remember how the Lord saves all of us from captivity.
2. Mount the poem on a stiff piece of paper, and hang it up on your wall.
3. Any other way you can think of to display this lovely work of art!

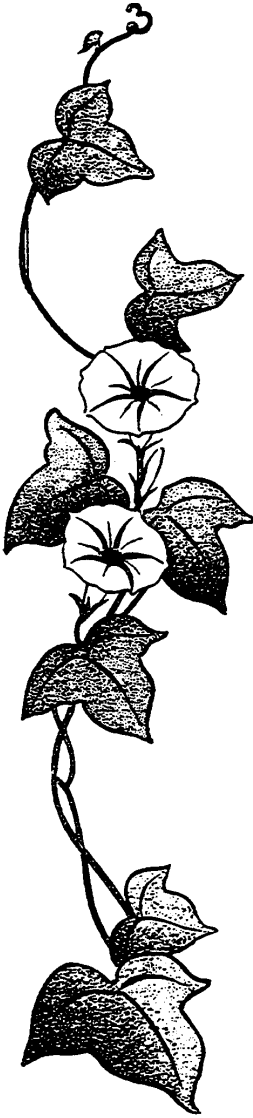
Perhaps you would enjoy learning the enclosed song about Crossing the Red Sea, by Lori Odhner.



*I will sing to the LORD
For He has triumphed gloriously!
The horse and its rider
He has thrown into the sea!
The LORD is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation;
He is my God, and I will praise Him;
My father's God, and I will exalt Him
The LORD is a man of war,
The LORD is His name.
Pharaoh's chariots and his army
He has cast into the sea;
His chosen captains also
are drowned in the Red Sea.
The depths have covered them;
They sank to the bottom like a stone.*

*Your right hand, O LORD,
has become glorious in power;
Your right hand, O LORD,
has dashed the enemy in pieces
And in the greatness
of Your excellence
You have overthrown those
who rose against You;
You sent forth Your wrath
which consumed them like stubble.
And with the blast of your nostrils
The waters were gathered together;
The floods stood upright like a heap;
And the depths congealed
in the heart of the sea.
The enemy said, 'I will pursue,
I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil;
My desire shall be satisfied on them.
I will draw my sword,
My hand shall destroy them.
You blew with your wind,*





*The sea covered them;
They sank like lead
in the mighty waters.*

*Who is like You, O Lord,
among the gods?
Who is like You, glorious in holiness,
Fearful in praises, doing wonders?
You stretched out Your right hand;
The earth swallowed them.
You in Your mercy have led forth
The people whom You have redeemed;
You have guided them in Your strength
To Your holy habitation.*

*The people will hear and be afraid;
Sorrow will take hold of the
inhabitants of Palestina.
Then the chiefs of Edom
will be dismayed;
The mighty men of Moab,
Trembling will take hold of them;
All the inhabitants of Canaan
will melt away.
Fear and dread will fall on them;
By the greatness of Your arm
They will be as still as a stone,
Till Your people pass over, O LORD,
Till the people pass over
Whom You have purchased.
You will bring them in and plant them
In the mountain of Your inheritance,
In the place, O LORD,
which You have made
For Your own dwelling,
The sanctuary, O LORD,
which Your hands have established.*



*The LORD shall reign
forever and ever.*

-Exodus 16:1-18

Bitter and Sweet Water
Exodus 15
LEVEL 4 – CYCLES THROUGH LIFE

Exodus 15 describes a kind of cycle that everyone goes through over and over again in their lives.

Good things happen to us and we are happy. We joyously praise the Lord. We thank Him for His help and the happiness He has helped us enjoy. But we must move on with life. We can't just sit and praise and not be useful to others.

How soon we forget! When things don't go well for us, when we don't get our way, or we lose out on things we really want, then we are unhappy. We think, "Why ME? Why does this always happen to ME? What did I do to deserve this? The Lord doesn't love me. Maybe there isn't any Lord at all."

We might even try to get back at the Lord or others because we think it's not our fault; it must be someone else's fault that we are so unhappy. We look back to when we were happy and long to be happy again. We might try to find some miracle or shortcut that will bring us happiness again right away. The instant "unhappiness cures" we might try like pills, drugs, alcohol or a person that makes us feel good, only bring us more unhappiness after their temporary effect wears off. We must come to realize that the only way to happiness is to face our problems and find away out of them with the Lord's help. Manmade cures only bring more problems.

When we ask the Lord for help, He gives it; not always the kind of help we ask for and not always the kind of help we realize is help. Moses cried out to the Lord and He showed Moses a tree which would sweeten the bitter waters so that the thirsty Children of Israel could have water to drink again. When we become completely discouraged the Lord shows us a way out of our depressed state through doing good.

When we come into an orderly state after our discouragement, then we can learn the truth from the Word again and we can rest from our troubles. This learning and rest is meant by the Children of Israel camping beside the oasis at Elim. After a rest, if we see that it is really the Lord who has helped us out of our troubles, then we are ready to give thanks to the Lord and praise Him.

The cycle has come full circle and after a time we will begin the cycle again.

The Cycle in Our Lives

On page 3 you will find this cycle illustrated by a series of circles:

1. In the inmost circle is the Lord where He should be, in the center of our lives.
2. The second circle shows our states of life.
3. The third circle shows the events of Exodus 15.

The arrows illustrate our states of life:

When we are in a state of thanksgiving and praise we are turned toward the Lord.

When we go on a journey of life we turn somewhat away from the Lord.

When we are complaining we turn our backs to the Lord and may even deny Him.

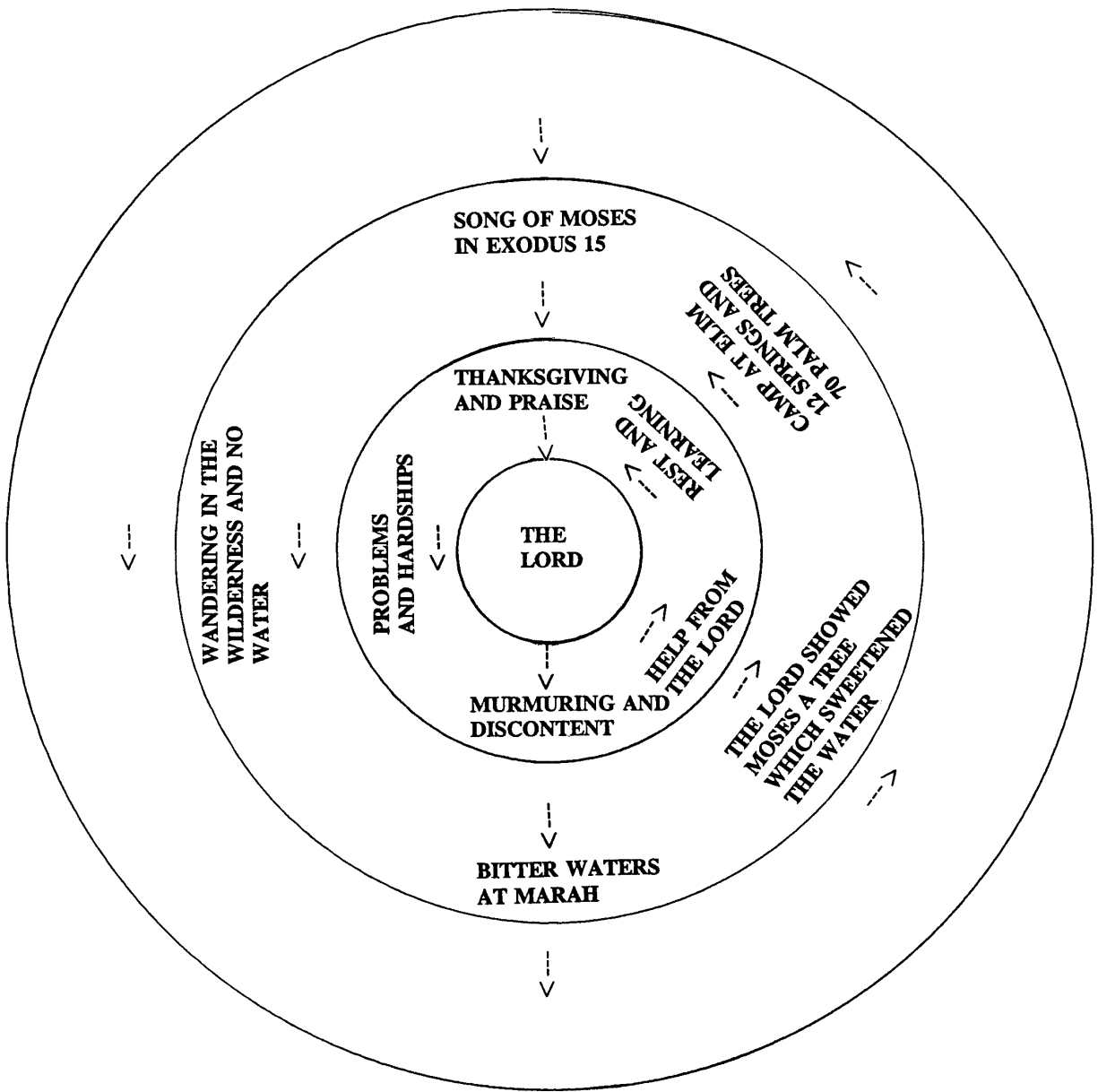
When we receive help from the Lord we begin to turn slightly toward Him.

When we are willing to listen to the Lord and learn His truth we turn even more toward Him.

Finally, when we praise the Lord we are facing Him again.

Application

1. Study the circles carefully. Slowly turn the page to read the words in each circle.
2. Put your own words in the outer circle giving examples from your life, or someone you know or have read about who has gone through this cycle of life.



Bitter and Sweet Water
Exodus 15
LEVEL 5 – JUST DO IT

Pharaoh and the Egyptians suffered through ten devastating plagues before they finally allowed the children of Israel to leave Egypt.

Pharaoh soon changed his mind and pursued after the departing Israelites. Moses raised his rod and the waters of the Red Sea parted to let the Israelites cross safely.

When Pharaoh's soldiers followed in their chariots, they were caught by the returning waters and drowned.



The bitter waters at Marah (*Exodus 15: 22-27*)

It was not long before the Israelites encountered the first of many hardships that they would endure in their journey through the wilderness.

“And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.”

Exodus 15:22

They arrived at Marah and must have been overjoyed to see water. But their excitement was soon replaced by discontent and complaining when they found the water to be very bitter.

“They could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter.”

Exodus 15:23

Do you remember what happened next? The Lord showed Moses a tree. He cast it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet.

Turning bitter into sweet

This story is about truth, and how we feel about it. It can be bitter; it can be sweet.

The children of Israel were passing through the wilderness in their journey to Canaan. The water was there, but it was bitter.

The Word tells us that in *our* journey to heaven we go through states where our minds and spirits are in a wilderness. The Lord's truth is there, in our minds, but we find it tiresome and distasteful. We may know what the Word teaches, but it is not what we want to hear.

When is the truth bitter? Truth that is not lived becomes bitter. We find it boring and distasteful. Perhaps you have experienced this. When we have done something wrong, and our parents or teachers “instruct” us, don’t we have a tendency to be annoyed at what they are saying? We don’t want to hear it. The truth is bitter.

What makes the truth sweet? Well, Moses was instructed to throw wood into the water to make the bitter water sweet. Wood stands for doing good—that is, **doing** what the truth teaches. We need to do what the Word teaches we should do, and not do what the Word teaches we should not do. Then the water of truth will be refreshing and sweet.

There is power and satisfaction in doing what we know to be right and good. Are there times in your life when you have enjoyed that feeling? It comes in everyday, simple choices. Perhaps you are asked to help rake the leaves. But you really want to be doing something else. You know that you should not be helpful, not selfish. But that thought is not welcome. It is irritating because it interferes with what *you* want.

How do you change that? It is not complicated. Throw the wood into the water. You know what is right. **JUST DO IT!** Buckle down and do what you know is right. Try it, and see how you feel later. Your action provides an ultimate that the Lord can fill with good feelings.

So, if you go ahead and help rake the leaves because you know it is the right thing to do, the “bitter” feelings can dissipate and “sweet” feelings take their place.

Application

- 1) Think of four situations to illustrate this principle.

Write a paragraph for each, showing the initial “bitter” response, and the action that transforms the feelings into “sweetness.”

Remember, it may involve *doing* something right, or *not doing* something wrong.

OR

- 2) Choose four of the Ten Commandments.

Write a paragraph about each that applies what you have learned about turning bitter water sweet.

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