

Exodus 17:1-7

(Lectionary Year A, Proper 21)
By Beth Barnett

An opportunity to engage with the questions that the Israelites asked, and they ways that we ask similar questions in our lives.	
You will need:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Text of Exodus 17:1-7 with questions highlighted in colours (see below) either on screen or print copies.• Cards with matching coloured question marks and questions Have enough of these for everyone in your gathering• Plasticene matching the 5 colours• Chris Booth Exodus series Posters.
Time required:	5-7 minutes

Connect

We are continuing to follow the adventures of Moses and the Israelites - so far we've seen them Oppressed, Escaped, Fearful, Rescued, Rejoicing, Fearful, Fed...and now today, we find them with full tummies but thirsty throats and threatening thoughts towards Moses.

The reading has some really great questions.

Give each person a coloured Question Mark card. Make sure that there is a mix of colours distributed across your gathering, and that the red cards aren't all clumped together. Hold back the grey cards until later.

You have each been given a coloured question mark card, Find the question in the reading that matches the colour of your card, and make sure you are familiar with the question in that color. Note that the questions on the cards have been slightly simplified.

Look at your coloured question and pair up with someone nearby. Ask them about their question and let them ask you about yours.

Exodus 17:1-7

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.

The people quarreled with Moses, and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses said to them,

“Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?”

But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said,

“Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?”

So Moses cried out to the LORD,

“What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!”

The LORD said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.

I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb.

Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.”

Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying,

“Is the LORD among us or not?”



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Give your gathering a couple of minutes for this sharing, then call the group back together.

We are going to read the passage from the Bible now. Look out for your question marked in colour in the text and join in when your question comes up.

Read passage, slowly and expressively, encouraging participation.

Optional: *ask everyone to swap coloured cards with someone else, and repeat the process of sharing stories about the question, then reading the text with participation according to the newly allocated colours.*

These are great questions to ask! Even though it seems like the Israelites seem a bit ungrateful for the amazing miracle of food they receive everyday, these questions are important. God doesn't get angry with the people for asking questions - but hears there cry again, and look after them.

Knowing God doesn't get angry with the questions in Exodus encourages us to ask God our own questions.

Extension A

Take some time now to think of the questions you'd like to ask God.

While you do this use the plasticene to make a question mark shape on a piece of card. If you like, tell someone near you what your question for God is, or just keep it between you and God if you like.

Consequence

Display large posters of the images from the Exodus series by Chris Booth. Invite your gathering to make the letters of the question 'Is the Lord in our midst or not?' (a key question from the story of Exodus 17) and add this question to the posters in plasticene writing.

As you work on this together talk about the answer to the question -

Was God in the midst of the Israelites?

How might they know the answer to this question for themselves?

Why might they not know the answer very easily?

How can we tell if God is in the midst of our lives or not?



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Why do you quarrel with me?



Why do you test God?



Why did you bring us here?



Is the Lord among us or not?



What shall I do with these people
who are about to hurt me?



What question do you have for
God?

