

Christian Passover Seder

Leader Haggadah
By Scott Huckaby
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I. Beginning of the Seder

Leader: Welcome to our Passover Seder. Let us ready our hearts to celebrate and tell the story of deliverance, freedom, and redemption. Tradition teaches us that we must all consider ourselves as slaves in Egypt, so that we might celebrate the deliverance in the Exodus as our own deliverance. It is in that spirit of community that we enter this Passover celebration. The Bible uses leaven to symbolize the potential for corruption and sin. Its symbolic removal at the beginning of the Seder, signifies the attitude of repentance, the willingness to remove any corrupting influence in one's life and submit to God in obedience.

Woman Leader: As the Israelites prepared for the exodus by obeying the commands of God through Moses, so in removing the leaven, we symbolize our willingness to obey God in preparation for celebrating the deliverance he has already brought to his people. Let us find and put away the leaven from this table to prepare for our own experience of deliverance. And as we do, let us search for any hidden sins in our hearts that might prevent us from celebrating the joy of this festival. So has anyone seen any leaven on the table?

Action: When the bread is collected in a basket so that all can see it, have it carried out of the room to symbolize our preparation for the Seder.

Leader: We praise you O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who hallows our lives with commandments, and who has commanded us to prepare for Passover by removing the leaven.

1 – Everyone says: Any leaven that may remain among us, which we have not seen and have not removed, may it be as if it does not exist, as if it is the dust of the earth.

II. Lighting the Passover Candles

Female Leader: The candles symbolize the presence of God and mark this as sacred time, the beginning of

Shabat (Sabbath). Now in the presence of loved ones and friends, and before us the symbols of our rejoicing, we gather for our sacred celebration. **As it is written:**

2 – Everyone says: Exodus 12:17 says, “You shall keep the feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this day I brought your companies out of the land of Egypt. You shall observe this day throughout the generations as a practice for all times.”

Female Leader: We assemble in fulfillment of the commandment:

3 – Everyone says: Remember this day in which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by the strength of his hand the Lord brought you out from this place. [Exodus 13:3]

Action: Female Leader lights two Passover candles, other women light other two-candle Passover sets.

Female Leader: May our fellowship be consecrated, O God, by the light of your presence shining upon us and bringing us peace.

4 – Everyone says: May the lights we now kindle inspire us to use our strength which you so freely give us to help and not to hinder, to love and not to hate, to bless and not to curse, to serve and worship you, O God of freedom!

III. The First Cup: the Cup of Sanctification and Freedom

Leader: Passover is about memory and fulfilled promises. But it is also about hope, the hope that comes from a God who has fulfilled promises. God gave promises of freedom to His people. With four cups from the fruit of the vine we celebrate and we recall God's promises to Israel and to us. **join me in reciting Exodus 6**

5 – Everyone says: Exodus 6:6 and 7 says, “I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the yoke of the

Egyptians, I will deliver you from slavery, I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, I will take you as my people and be your God.”

Leader: In the four cups that we drink tonight we celebrate these four "I will" promises of God: Freedom, Deliverance, Redemption, and Thanksgiving for fulfilling His promises that allows us to be His people.

We take the first cup and proclaim the holiness of this day of freedom. Blessed is God who fulfills his promises, who is ever faithful to his servants who trust in Him. In every age oppressors rise against us to crush our spirits and bring us low. From the hands of all these tyrants and conquerors, from the power of anything that hinders us from being His people, the Lord rescues and restores us. We praise you, O Lord, who makes holy your people.

what does Exodus 6:6 say?

6 – Everyone says: Exodus 6:6 says, “I am the Lord, and I will free you from the yoke of the Egyptians.”

Leader: Let us drink the first cup.

Action: Everyone drinks the first cup.

IV. The Washing: Preparation

Leader: In preparation for the meal, there is a ceremonial hand washing. This is not a sanitary action but is symbolic of the "clean hands" with which one comes before God.

Psalm 24:3-4 says, “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.” (NKJ)

We will now prepare for the meal by washing our hands.

Action: Using the pitcher of water and basin, everyone rinses then dries their hands.

V. Karpas - The Green Vegetables (Parsley)

Leader: Our Scripture reading for this section of the Seder is taken from the Song of Songs. It is clearly a love song between a man and a woman, which is appropriate for this time of year and the celebration of newness. However, the significance of this reading is

the symbolism seen in a husband and wife and the love of God for His people expressed in His willingness to enter into a covenant with them.

Passover is a Springtime festival, the season of rebirth, renewal, and new life. The days are filled with more light than darkness. The earth is becoming green with new life.

Action: The Leader takes a sprig of fresh Parsley and holds it up for everyone to see.

Leader: This vegetable, called Karpas, represents life, created and sustained by the Lord our God. We are filled with joy at the goodness of God in loving us and caring for us, and bringing into our lives all good things.

Men join me in reciting Song of Songs 2:10-13

7 (men) – Arise my love and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in the land. Arise my love, my fair one, and come away. [Song 2:10-13]

8 (women) – My beloved is mine and I am his. As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among men. Under its shade I delighted to sit, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banquet house, and his intention toward me was love. [Song 2:3-4, 16]

9 (everyone) – Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. [Song 8:6-7]

Leader: Tonight, we are not simply celebrating Springtime or love. We are celebrating the freedom and wonderful deliverance that God brought to us as slaves in Egypt. But we do not forget that life in Egypt was hard and filled with pain and suffering and tears. **Action:** The Leader lifts up the bowl of salt water so all can see.

Let us never forget that the struggle for freedom begins in suffering, and that **life is sometimes immersed in tears.**

10 – Everyone says: Blessed are you O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.

Action: Everyone dips a spring of parsley the salt water and eats it.

VI. The Breaking of Bread: The Matzah

Leader: This part of the service begins to introduce themes that will become more obviously Christian as the service progresses. Please take out your middle Matzah...

Action: The Leader uncovers the three Matzot, takes the middle Matzah, and holds it before him. Everyone should likewise uncover and hold up their middle Matzah.

Leader: Now I will break the middle Matzah in two. Later we will share it together as the Passover offering itself was shared by the Israelites. Among people everywhere, the sharing of bread forms a bond of fellowship and community.

Action: The Leader obviously breaks the middle Matzah in half, as everyone else does the same. Everyone returns the broken Matzah to the plate with the other two and leaves them uncovered.

Leader: It is interesting that there are three pieces of Matzah in the Jewish Passover observance. Why do you think there are three and it is the middle one that is broken?

The Jews don't even realize why they are doing this but the three Matzah certainly represents the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the second person of the Trinity who was broken on the cross.

I'm not going to do this because of time but in the traditional Passover observance, the Leader will take one of his broken pieces of Matzah and hide it to be revealed later in the ceremony. This hidden, broken piece of Matzah is called the Afikomen.

VII. The Story of Passover

Leader: The Passover story is the heart of the Seder and was traditionally told as a parent telling the story of the Exodus to his children. It is the story, the testimony, of those who have seen and heard the revelation of God in history that sustains the identity and commitment of a people. The Torah tells us that our children will ask questions about who they are as God's people. The Lord has instructed us that we should tell them the story so that they might know the Lord. It is both a duty and a privilege to answer the four questions of the Passover

and to recount the gracious acts of our God. **Who will ask the four questions?**

11 (volunteer) – Why is this evening different than all other evenings? Why on all other evenings do we eat bread with leaven, but this evening we eat only unleavened bread? Why on all other evenings do we eat of all kinds of herbs, but on this evening, we eat bitter herbs? Why on all other evenings do we not dip herbs at all, but on this evening, we dip them twice? Why on all other evenings do we eat in the normal way, but on this evening, we eat with special ceremony?

Leader: We will now answer the four questions concerning Passover that you have asked.

12 – Everyone says: Once we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord in His goodness and mercy brought us out of that land with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

Leader: Had God not rescued us from the hand of the destroyer, surely we and our children would still be enslaved, deprived of freedom and human dignity.

13 – Everyone says: Once we worshipped idols and were enslaved by our sins, but God in His goodness and mercy forgave our transgressions and called us to be His people.

Leader: Therefore, this evening is different than other evenings because we have gathered to remember who we are, what God has done for us, and to tell to our children the story of God's grace and deliverance.

14 – Everyone says: Praise be to God who is everywhere. Praise be to God who has brought us freedom and has delivered us from all that enslaves us!

Woman Leader: God had promised Abraham and Sarah that they would be a great people, a promise he renewed to each generation, to Isaac and Jacob. As time passed Jacob's children came to live in the land of Egypt where his son Joseph was advisor to Pharaoh. But years passed and another Pharaoh came to power that did not remember Joseph and did not know his God, so he enslaved the Israelites. He forced them to work hard making bricks of clay and straw with which to build his cities. As the people increased in numbers, he feared that they might rebel against him, so he ordered every newborn boy drowned. They knew only toil, suffering, and tears.

Leader: They cried out from their cruel oppression, hoping that God would remember the promises He had made to the fathers. And God heard their cry and remembered the covenant He had made with Abraham. Through a wise mother and sister, God saved the life of the boy Moses from the ruthless hands of Pharaoh. After he had grown up, God sent Moses to deliver the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt, and promised Moses that He would be with him.

Woman Leader: And yet when Moses asked Pharaoh to free the Israelites, he refused and increased their labor. So God sent ten plagues on Pharaoh and the land of Egypt so they might know that the Lord is God, and let the people go.

Action: The Leader takes the second cup of wine and holds it.

Leader: In a moment we will drink the second cup, the cup of deliverance, and we will celebrate in joy God's deliverance from slavery. A full cup is a symbol of joy. Yet our joy is diminished because the Egyptians, who are also God's children, suffered from Pharaoh's evil ways. Lives were sacrificed to bring about the release of God's people from the slavery of Egypt, and we do not rejoice at the death of any of God's children. As we recount the plagues, we will spill a drop of juice from our cups for each plague to recall the cost of sin, and the consequences of evil in our world.

Action: Everyone takes the second cup and holds it. **DO NOT drink from the second cup yet.** As each plague is recited, a single drop of juice is removed from the cup, either with a finger or spoon, and placed on a plate. Traditionally, a finger is used to symbolize the finger of God's judgment on sin.

Leader: Blood. Frogs. Lice. Swarms. Cattle Disease. Boils. Hail. Locusts. Darkness. Death of the First Born. As innocent people suffered and died long ago because of the oppression of tyrants, so people today still suffer from evil in the world. Our news is filled with accounts of murder and violence. We cannot celebrate God's deliverance for ourselves without longing that all God's children experience freedom from their bondage. So, we will spill another drop from our cups to recall the cost of evil in our world today.

Action: Everyone removes a single drop of juice from the cup and places it on their plate. Everyone replaces the second cup on the table **WITHOUT drinking.**

Woman Leader: Pharaoh continued to refuse to let the people go until the last plague, the death of the firstborn of all of Egypt, convinced him to release the people. By following God's instructions and putting the blood of a lamb on the door posts of the houses, the Israelites were spared this plague as death "Passed Over" their houses.

Action: The Leader removes the symbolic lamb bone from the Seder plate and holds it up for all to see.

Leader: This is the symbol of the Passover lamb that was killed so that our children might live. It reminds us not only of God's wonderful grace in providing for us life and not death, it also reminds us that we are called to obedience in response to God's gift of life. The sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem were a reminder of that grace and that gift of life.

Action: The Leader replaces the bone and removes the roasted egg from the Seder plate and holds it up for all to see.

The egg is a symbol of mourning, and is to remind us that the Temple in Jerusalem, the place of sacrifices, is no longer standing, and so sacrifices are no longer offered. But since the shape of the egg has no beginning and no end, the egg is also a symbol of new life and hope, and reminds us that God's grace is not confined to sacrifices in a temple.

Action: The Leader leads everyone in eating the egg.

Woman Leader: Even as the Israelites were leaving, Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army after them. Trapped between Pharaoh's army and the Sea of Reeds, the Israelites had nowhere to go. But God told Moses to lift his staff over the sea, and God parted the waters. They were able to pass through the midst of the sea. When the Egyptians tried to follow, the waters closed back over them. When the Israelites saw that they were free, **Moses' sister Miriam led them in rejoicing and praising God.**

15 – Everyone says: We Praise you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who hears the cries of the oppressed, who brings freedom to the captive, and who creates for yourself a people.

Action: The Leader takes the remaining half of the Matzah and holds it up for all to see.

Leader: Today we eat Unleavened Bread because our spiritual ancestors in Egypt had to leave in such haste

that they could not wait for their bread to rise, and so had to bake it while it was still flat.

Join me in reciting Deuteronomy 16:3...

16 – Everyone says: “You shall eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you came out of the land of Egypt with great haste, so that all the days of your life you may remember the day of your departure from Egypt.”

Action: The Leader replaces the Matzah and takes the horseradish and holds it up for all to see.

Leader: This evening we eat bitter herbs to remind us of how bitter our lives were as slaves in Egypt. As sweet as our lives are now, we must never forget the bitterness of our bondage.

Join me in reciting Exodus 1:12-14...

17 – Everyone says: The Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields. [Exodus 1:12-14]

Action: The Leader replaces the horseradish and takes the bowl of Charoset (**ka-ró-set**) and holds them up for all to see.

Leader: The Charoset reminds us of the sweetness that God can bring into the most bitter of our circumstances. **Join me in reciting Psalm 119:107 & 103:**

18 – Everyone says: I am sorely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to your word! How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! [Psalm 119:107, 103]

Action: The Leader replaces the Parsley and Charoset.

Leader: This evening we eat with special ceremony because in each generation, every person should feel as if he or she has actually been redeemed from Egypt. We tell the story because we are the redeemed of the Lord, and we can sing a new song of praise because of His grace. And yet it is not a new song, because it has been sung by countless people through the centuries as generation after generation have experienced the deliverance and redemption brought by our God. **Are we still slaves to sin?**

19 – Everyone says: Once we were slaves but now we are free!

VIII. The Second Cup: the Cup of Deliverance

Action: The Leader takes the second glass, and raises it for all to see.

Leader: With the second cup, that you took drops from, we celebrate the deliverance that God has brought to us. We are privileged to thank God, to praise Him, to reverence Him, and to rejoice in His grace. He has brought us forth from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from darkness to light, from slavery to redemption. **What does Exodus 6:6 say?**

20 – Everyone says: Exodus 6:6 says, “I am the Lord; I will deliver you from slavery.” We praise you O Lord our God, who has freed your people.

Leader: We praise you O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the earth. Let us drink the Second Cup together...

Action: All drink the second cup.

IX. The Meal

Action: The Leader removes all three remaining pieces of Matzah and holds them in front of him as he recites the blessing...

Leader: We Praise you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Action: Everyone takes the original top Matzoth and breaks it into two pieces.

Leader: Let us all offer a blessing for the bread.

21 – Everyone says: We Praise you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who has made us holy with your word, and has commanded to eat unleavened bread.

Action: Everyone eats a piece of Matzah.

Leader: With bitter herbs, let us remember how bitter our slavery was in the land of Egypt. As we eat, let us allow the bitter taste to bring tears of compassion for the pain that our fathers and mothers felt long ago. **But let us also weep for those who are still enslaved and have not yet experienced the deliverance that our gracious God brings.**

22 – Everyone says: We Praise you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who has made us holy with your word, and has commanded to eat bitter herbs.

Action: Everyone dips a piece of Matzah in the horseradish root and eats it.

Leader: As we are reminded of the bitterness of our slavery, so too are we reminded of the hope that we have in our Lord. **We will now begin to make the Hillel sandwich by placing a small amount of Horseradish on a piece of Matzah.**

Action: Everyone takes the bottom or the third Matzoth and breaks it in two. On one half dips some Horseradish onto the Matzah and places in on a plate. The Leader then takes the bowl of Charoset and holds it in front of him.

Leader: The Charoset is a sweet mixture of apples, honey, and nuts. It symbolizes the mixture of clay and straw that the Israelites used to make bricks for the cities of Pharaoh. Often, life is a mixture of the bitter and the sweet, of sadness and joy. Let us now add the sweetness of the Charoset to the bitterness of the Horseradish.

Action: Everyone takes another piece of the Matzah and dips or spreads the Charoset onto it. Then a sandwich is made with the Matzah and Horseradish.

Action: Everyone eats their Hillel sandwich.

X. The Third Cup: the Cup of Redemption

Leader: This cup is for Elijah the Prophet. Elijah did not see death but was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. It has been the hope of God's people that Elijah would come at Passover, to announce the coming of the Messiah, the son of David. As the prophet Malachi said: *"See, I will send you Elijah the prophet before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes."* [Malachi 4:5]. This cup has traditionally been left untouched, awaiting the time when Elijah would appear to share the Passover.

We will now open the door to welcome Elijah to the Passover. **Who will open the door for Elijah?**

Action: Someone opens the door.

Leader: It looks like Elijah will not be joining us this evening so you can close the door and we will move on and I'll explain the significance of that shortly...

It is at this point in the traditional Jewish Passover Seder that the hidden Afikomen is searched for and when found, the one who found it is given a reward. What do you think this hidden Afikomen represents?

The Afikomen has to represent the Lord Jesus Christ who has been hidden from Israel and will return after Elijah comes. The Jews celebrate the long hoped for Messiah who will mean freedom from a very old slavery.

Alright, with that, let's consider the third cup.

Action: Everyone should take the third cup and place it on the table immediately in front of them. **DO NOT DRINK** this cup yet.

Leader: Jesus stood in the synagogue of his hometown of Nazareth and read from the Isaiah scroll that promised a new work of God in the world. When he had finished reading, he said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" [Luke 4:21]. We still live in the "today" of that fulfillment, and so we celebrate the coming of Jesus the Messiah, and the faithfulness of God in working throughout history to bring deliverance and freedom to his people.

Woman Leader: Jesus has brought to us a new freedom from the chains of oppression and sin that enslave us. Jesus celebrated Passover with his disciples on the night before he was betrayed and delivered up to be crucified. He commanded that his disciples partake of the bread and the wine as emblems of his broken body and shed blood. We partake of these elements to participate in the new life, in the new birth that God in Jesus the Christ has provided for us.

Leader: As we are about to conclude our Passover Seder we should observe that Elijah has not joined us. But as Christians, we should point out that he has already come. Jesus said in Matthew 17:12...

"But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished."

The very next verse explains that, *"the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist."* [Matthew 12:13]. As John the Baptist served as a spiritual Elijah for the first advent of the Messiah to establish His spiritual Kingdom, I fully expect Elijah to

come before the Messiah returns to establish His physical Kingdom on earth. Indeed, Elijah will likely be one of the two witnesses of Revelation 11. **So, about Elijah, what should we say?**

23 – Everyone: Blessed is He who has come in the name of the Lord!

Woman leader: We praise you O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you, O God, for giving to us your only Son, who suffered and died and rose again, that we might be reconciled to you. How great a love you have bestowed upon us! As we now eat this bread and drink this cup, may you forgive us of any sin that we secretly harbor in our hearts, may you give us the freedom that comes as you transform us into the image of your Son, and may you fill us with your presence through the Holy Spirit that we may truly become your people.

Leader: Let us all take a piece of the unleavened bread.

Action: Everyone takes a piece of the broken Matzah. **DO NOT eat this yet.** The Leader holds up the bread for all to see.

Leader: This broken bread of redemption reminds us of the broken body of our Lord Jesus Christ that was broken for us. Take and eat this, remembering that Jesus died for us, and in so doing accept the grace of God that brings freedom from bondage to sin.

Action: All eat the bread. When finished, the people all hold the third cup in their hand.

Leader: This cup reminds us of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ that was spilled because of us and on our behalf. Every time I take the Lord's Supper cup, I am reminded of the promise Jesus made to us in Matthew 26:29:

"I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

We look forward to that day... Drink this, remembering that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, and in so doing accept the grace that transforms us and brings us from darkness into His marvelous light, and allows us to be people of God.

Action: All drink the cup

Nancy, please lead us in singing together Amazing Grace, Number 24...

24 – All sing:

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound...
That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now, I see.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise...
then when we've first begun.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me...
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now, I see.

XI. The Fourth Cup: the Cup of Thanksgiving and Hope

Leader: Our Seder is now complete, just as our redemption is complete. We rejoice with thanksgiving, and yet are humbled by God's love!

25 – Everyone says: Exodus 6:7 says, "I am the Lord; I will take you as my people and I will be your God."

Leader: Yet the story of God's redemption has not ended. We celebrate what God has done in our history, and what he has done for us personally, but at the same time we still await a new future. All creation still groans and longs for its final redemption. As Jesus left, he promised he would come again and restore all things. We have faith enough to believe that God will not leave the world the way it is, so we await the day in which He will again come and bring His Kingdom in fullness.

Action: Everyone takes the fourth cup and holds it. **DO NOT Drink yet.** The leader raises his glass in front of the people, and all the people also raise their cups.

Leader: We raise our glasses a fourth time in Thanksgiving for God's enduring grace and love to us. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has adopted us as your children, and allowed us to call you Father.

Action: All lower their glasses for the prayer...

26 – Everyone says: Our Father, who is in heaven, Holy is your name! Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into trials, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Leader: We drink the Fourth Cup and give thanks!

Action: All raise their glasses again and then drink the cup.

Leader: The traditional conclusion of the Seder is a hope for the future expressed by Jews throughout history: "Next year in Jerusalem." We will conclude our Seder with the same expression of hope and faith in God, as **we await the coming of a New Jerusalem.**

27 – Everyone says: Next year in the New Jerusalem!

Action: The women extinguish the Passover candles concluding the Seder.

Leader: We have broken bread together and have told the story of our deliverance. Let us now eat together in celebration of our freedom. I will now bless the food: We praise you O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who in kindness, goodness, and grace gives food to the world. Your love for us endures forever. We pray you would use the food we are about to have to nourish our bodies. And help us have a great time of fellowship as we eat. We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen. **Let's eat...**