

GABRIEL'S QUEST

Surprises

Lesson Link: Students will become more familiar with the narrative of the parting of the Red Sea. God will keep His promises.

One day in class, Sister Teresa said, "I have a surprise for you."

The kids came alive with excitement.

"Take out a pencil," she said. She handed out a single sheet of paper to each student. "It's time for a pop quiz."

Suddenly, the excitement turned to slumped shoulders and frowns. "A pop quiz?" someone whispered.

Sister Teresa said, "Ready? I want you to write the word 'Surprise.' Then pass your paper forward."

A hand shot up. A girl named Haley asked, "That's all?"

"That's all," said Sister Teresa.

The kids looked pleased. Gabriel paused a moment. He couldn't remember if the word "surprise" had an "s" or a "z." He guessed that it was an "s" and handed in his paper.

Sister Teresa smiled at them and said, "When I said there was a surprise, you were excited. When I said the surprise was a pop quiz, you were disappointed. When I said the surprise pop quiz was to write a single word, you were happy. Surprises can cause different feelings."

Gabriel wondered why she was teaching a lesson about surprises.

Sister Teresa said, "The stories in the Bible and all through Church history are filled with surprises. When Moses obeyed God and told the ruler of Egypt to free the Israelites from slavery, the ruler of Egypt said no. That's when the surprises started. There



were plagues and sickness. Do you think the Egyptians liked those surprises?"

The class said, "No."

"Do you think the Israelite slaves liked the surprises?" asked Sister Teresa.

"Yes," said a girl named Emma. "The surprises would help them be free."

Sister Teresa nodded and said, "Later on, the ruler let the Israelites leave. But then he changed his mind and chased after them. They came to the Red Sea and God used Moses to do a miracle: God parted the waters so the Israelites could cross over. Was that a good surprise?"

The class said, “Yes.” Gabriel tried to imagine Moses standing in front of the Red Sea. The people must have been amazed when God parted the water for them.

“Then the ruler and his army tried to cross over in their chariots,” Sister Teresa said. “The water came crashing down on them and they were drowned. Good surprise or bad?”

“Bad for the Egyptians,” said a girl named Sophia. “Good for the Israelites.”

Sister Teresa smiled. “So, how can we make sure we’re on the good side of God’s surprises?”

“By following God,” some of the class said.

“That’s right,” said Sister Teresa. “Even when surprises are difficult or hard to understand, we will be on the good side of the surprise if we’re following God. You see, when we pray ‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,’ we are saying that we want to be part of God’s will. If we are part of His will, then we will be on the good side of whatever surprise He sends our way.”

Gabriel was thinking about surprises when he went to visit Grandma Rosa after school. He asked her, “Were you surprised when you had a stroke?”

“Yes,” she said.

“Was it a good surprise or a bad surprise?” he asked.

“I thought it was a bad surprise,” Grandma Rosa replied. “But now I see that it was a good surprise.”

“How was it good?” Gabriel asked.

She tried to smile at him. Her smile was still a little crooked from her stroke. “I am meeting wonderful people here at the retirement home,” she said. “I have these special times with you. I have more time to pray. I get to read my Bible more than I did before.”

“So, a bad surprise turned out to be good?” Gabriel asked.

Grandma Rosa nodded. “I think every surprise can be good if we remember that God loves us and wants what is best for us. That’s part of His great plan. But if we disobey God, then His surprises can be confusing and painful.”

Gabriel thought about it for a moment, then said, “I want to be on the good side of God’s surprises.”

Grandma Rosa grinned at him. “I’m not surprised,” she said, and then she laughed.

Questions:

1. ***Can you name some people who were on the good side of God’s surprises?*** (Answers may include Abraham, Moses, and the Israelites.)
2. ***Why were they on the good side of the surprises?*** (They trusted God.)
3. ***How can we be on the good side of God’s surprises?*** (Answers may include by trusting God and following His commands.)