

EXODUS 7:8-13 • REFLECTION GUIDE

When the Counterfeit Looks Convincing

Discernment, trust and the limits of imitation

This lesson began on an autumn Sunday with my seven-year-old daughter, two sticks, a great deal of laughter and an unexpected reminder of Pharaoh's court. Read the passage first; then use these pages alone or together as a family.

Read: Exodus 7:8-13; 8:18-19. Continue with Deuteronomy 13:1-3 and 1 John 4:1.

The sign and the response

Aaron obeyed the Lord before Pharaoh. The Egyptian magicians performed a similar sign. Aaron's staff swallowed their staffs. Pharaoh nevertheless refused to listen. The passage tells us what happened; it does not explain the mechanism of the magicians' act.

What did Aaron do because God commanded it?

What happened when Pharaoh's magicians acted?

What do you notice about Pharaoh's response after Aaron's staff swallowed theirs?

Read beyond the first sign

The magicians imitate some early signs (Exodus 7:22; 8:7). At the gnats, they cannot reproduce what has happened and acknowledge “the finger of God” (Exodus 8:18–19). Even then Pharaoh will not listen. Imitation has a limit; recognition does not automatically become obedience.

Where have I treated a similar outcome as proof that two paths are equally wise?

Am I demanding that God make someone else agree before I take an honest next step?

Three words, one story

TANNÎN · Exodus 7:9-12

The creature here is called tannîn, often “snake” in English. It is a different Hebrew word from nāḥāš in Exodus 4:3. The word alone does not identify an exact species in this scene.

ḤARTUMMÎM · Exodus 7:11

Egyptian magicians or ritual specialists, summoned by Pharaoh to answer the sign.

MAṬṬEH · Exodus 7:12

Staff or rod. The verse says Aaron’s staff swallowed their staffs, keeping attention on the visible contest and its outcome.

Read Hebrew details as aids to the passage, not as secret codes. Ask what the text says, what it does not say, and how its larger context guides your application.

Name the actual choice

A convincing alternative is not identified by its appearance alone. Deuteronomy 13:1-3 asks where a sign leads. 1 John 4:1 asks believers to test what claims spiritual authority. An ordinary gift from another person may be good; a demand to betray truth or integrity is not.

The offer, opportunity or pressure I am evaluating:

What is it asking me to do, conceal, believe or surrender?

Which Scripture and trusted counsel can help me test it?

One truthful and safe next step I can take:

Walk in truth this week

Day 1: Read Exodus 7:8–13. Write down only what the passage states.

Day 2: Read Exodus 8:18–19. Notice what the magicians can no longer do.

Day 3: Read Deuteronomy 13:1–3 and 1 John 4:1. List the tests these passages give.

Day 4: Describe one real decision without assigning biblical villain roles to people.

Day 5: Take a wise, concrete step; ask for help if you need it.

Lord, give me a heart that listens. Help me remember Your faithfulness, receive good gifts with gratitude, test what appears convincing, and choose the truth with courage. Keep me humble toward others and honest about my own heart. Amen.

What will I carry forward from this passage?

Full teaching: skillfulwomenproject.com/letters/when-counterfeit-looks-convincing

A family Bible moment

I had a wand; my daughter had a sword. In our game, hers always won. Her imaginary command to the angels made me laugh, then sent us back to the Bible. Our play is a doorway to the story, not a retelling of its details.

1 READ Exodus 7:8-13 aloud. Ask: Who told Aaron what to do? What did Pharaoh's magicians do? What happened to their staffs?

2 PLAY with two paper staffs or pencils on a table. Let your child arrange the scene and tell it back. Keep the action gentle. Ask: Was the power in a piece of wood, or in the Lord who gave the command?

3 CONNECT Ephesians 6:17: God's word is called the sword of the Spirit. We can speak His truth and pray. Read Psalm 103:20 and Hebrews 1:14 if your child asks about angels: they are God's servants, not ours to command.

4 PRAY: "Lord, help us listen to You, tell the truth and come to You when we are afraid. Thank You for caring for us. Amen."

My child's question or observation:

What did I notice God teaching me through play?
