

THE PEOPLE COMPLAINED

NUMBERS 20-21



CHRIST CONNECTION: When God's people looked at the bronze snake, they were healed. When we look to Jesus and trust in Him, we are saved from our sin.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We should obey God because He loves us.

KEY PASSAGE: All things work together for the good of those who love God. Romans 8:28

STORY POINT: God's people disobeyed Him.



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

When we reflect on the Israelites' journey to the Promised Land, nothing seems to more greatly characterize the posture of their hearts than their complaints. Despite the signs, miracles, protection, and provision they experienced, they remained reluctant to trust the Lord. Today's passage highlights the Israelites' inclination to disobey and disbelieve God.

What led the Israelites to sin against God and Moses in today's reading? How does the passage of the bronze snake foreshadow Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice?

Korah's goal in the rebellion was to raise his own status by lowering the God-given calling of Moses. He believed that the people were holy enough and that God was near enough, deeming Moses' leadership unnecessary and unfruitful. Continuing to blame Moses, the people's same old complaints resurfaced: the Israelites expressed envy toward generations past and discontentment regarding their current state of wandering.

The people trusted in their own perceptions of their circumstances rather than persevering by faith in God's Word and in their leader's guidance. Their distrust and disobedience led them to be more characterized by complaints than by confidence in God.

Despite these complaints, God extended grace by miraculously intervening. He allowed Moses and Aaron to supply water to the Israelites from the rock. Yet time passed, and the people's impatience came back into play. They persisted in complaining toward both God and Moses, expressing discontentment toward the provision they thought they lacked. Because of this, the Lord sent poisonous snakes among the people, and many people died.

Moses interceded for the people, and God miraculously provided them rescue. By looking at the bronze snake mounted on a pole, the people would recover. This was a glimmer of the eternal salvation that would one day come through the Son of God lifted up on the cross to bear the consequences of sin. Though the Israelites did not deserve this rescue, God saved them by His grace. Likewise, the Son of Man lifted up on the cross provided a once-and-for-all sacrifice for those who look to Him for salvation. Pray for boys and girls to see God's gracious provision, that they would put their confidence in Christ for salvation.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10-15 MINUTES

Greet preschoolers and open the session



LEARN

25-30 MINUTES

Teach preschoolers the story of the gospel



LOVE

Lead preschoolers to love the God of the gospel

30-40 MINUTES



LIVE

Lead preschoolers to live the mission of the gospel



BONUS

60-65 MINUTES

Teach preschoolers for an additional hour



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a supply of the following items available during all teaching sessions: Allergy Alert, Bibles, washable markers, crayons, scissors (adult use), blunt-tipped scissors, construction paper, copy paper, glue sticks, glue, tape, baby dolls, blocks, play dough, and a beanbag.



WELCOME

Find snakes and rocks in the sand

- Big Picture Question Poster
- large shallow bin
- sand
- plastic snakes, 2
- large stones



LEARN

Guess the items

- paper grocery bag
- plastic snake
- rock

Tell the Bible story

- "The People Complained" video (optional)

Learn and practice the key passage phrase

- Key Passage Phrase Marker



LOVE

Find the bronze snake

- yellow construction paper
- painter's tape

Wrap snakes around a pole

- Bible Story Picture Poster
- craft sticks, 1 per child
- 6-inch lengths of yellow yarn, 1 per child

Look at nature items

- shallow bin of sand
- large stones
- plastic snakes
- sticks
- magnifying glass



LIVE

Make a collage

- Key Passage Phrase Marker, 1 per child

Missions activity

- "Missionaries with Manyika People" printable

Snack and Transition

- hand sanitizer (optional)
- "Trace the Snaky Lines" activity page, 1 per child
- Big Picture Cards for Families



BONUS

Guess what disappeared

- tray
- towel
- snake
- rock
- stick
- shallow bin of sand

Say the key passage phrase

- Key Passage Phrase Marker

Roll play dough snakes

- play dough
- plastic snakes

Decorate water bottles

- small water bottles, 1 per child
- strips of construction paper
- assorted stickers



WELCOME Preschoolers

Provide as many learning activities as possible from the Love and Live sections to give preschoolers choices to learn. Incorporate the Bible story, Christ Connection, story point, and key passage phrase in your conversations as the preschoolers engage in learning activities throughout the session.

Use the following activity to greet children as they enter the classroom. Talk about the big picture question and answer. After each child completes the welcome activity, encourage him to participate in the activities provided from the Love and Live sections of the leader guide.

FIND SNAKES AND STONES IN THE SAND

On a low table just inside the classroom door, position a large, shallow bin of sand. Bury two rubber snakes and stones beneath the sand's surface. Lay the Big Picture Question and Answer Poster next to the sand bin. As the children arrive, stoop down to their level and greet them warmly. Show them the bin of sand and invite them to play, letting them know there are toy snakes in the sand. Instruct the children to sift through the sand with their fingers to find the stones and the snakes, and to place each in two separate piles on the table next to the bin. If needed, rebury the snakes and stones so that all the children can have a chance to find them in the sand.

SAY "I'm so glad that you came to have fun learning with me today. Let's see all of the stones and snakes you found in the sand. During our Bible time today, we will hear a story that has both stones and snakes in it. We will also hear how **GOD'S PEOPLE DISOBEYED HIM**. Our big picture question says, **Why should we obey God? We should obey God because He loves us**. The people in the wilderness disobeyed God by not believing His promise to give them the Promised Land."



Worship
* I will trust you God
* I've got the joy

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN the Bible Story

1 GUESS THE ITEMS

Before the session, put a toy snake and a rock into the bag. Stand in the group time area, hold up the bag, and invite the children to come and see what you have. As the children arrive, invite them to sit down. Walk to each child with the bag and invite him to feel inside the bag without looking and to guess what he feels. Without revealing if the guess is correct, offer each child the chance to feel in the bag and to make a guess.

SAY “ Let’s look inside the bag and see if you guessed correctly. Thank you for playing my guessing game. As we learn today’s Bible story, listen for the the words snake and rock. ”



2 TELL THE BIBLE STORY video

Open your Bible to Numbers 16; 20–21. Tell the following Bible story using the provided storytelling points. You may choose to review the Bible story by showing the video.

THE PEOPLE COMPLAINED

SAY “ God’s people had to walk around in the wilderness for 40 years because they did not trust God. They complained a lot during this time.

Once, the people were very thirsty. They told Moses and Aaron, “It is your fault we don’t have enough water.” The people wished they were still in Egypt.

So Moses and his brother Aaron talked to God. God told Moses, “Take your stick, gather all the people around, talk to a rock, and water will come out.”

Later on, the people complained again. They said, “We do not like eating the same food every day, and we are thirsty!” God let snakes come and bite the people.

The people realized they were wrong to complain. They told Moses to pray and ask God to take away the snakes. So Moses prayed.

God said to Moses, “Make a snake out of bronze and put it on a pole. If someone looks at it after being bitten, that person will be healed.” ”

Christ Connection: When God’s people looked at the bronze snake, they were healed. When we look to Jesus and trust in Him, we are saved from our sin.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

* Bible story picture

3 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY



Demonstrate how to hiss like a snake. Say to the children that you are going to ask them some questions. If they want to answer, instruct the children to hiss. Call on a child who is hissing. Questions to ask: How long did God's people walk in the wilderness? (40 years) When the people complained they were thirsty, what did God tell Moses to do? (God told Moses to strike the rock with his staff.) Why did God let snakes come and bite the people? (because of their complaining) What did God tell Moses to make out of bronze? (a snake) What did God tell Moses to do with the bronze snake? (put it on a pole) How could the people be healed from their snake bite? (by looking at the bronze snake)

SAY "GOD'S PEOPLE DISOBEYED HIM. They complained that they were thirsty and tired of eating the same food every day. So, God let snakes come and bite the people. The people realized they were wrong to complain. God told Moses to make a snake out of bronze and put it on a pole. When God's people looked at the bronze snake, they were healed. When we look to Jesus and trust in Him, we are healed from our sin."

4 SING A SONG

Sing the song to the familiar tune of "Are You Sleeping, Brother John?":

All things work, all things work
Together for the good, together for the good
The good of those who love God, the good of those who love God
Romans 8:28, Romans 8:28

5 LEARN AND PRACTICE THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker at Romans 8:28. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Read the marker aloud. Invite the children to say the phrase with you as they pretend to lap up water to drink with their hands.

SAY "Our key passage phrase tells us: 'All things work together for the good of those who love God. Romans 8:28.' When we love God, we obey Him. **GOD'S PEOPLE DISOBEYED HIM.** They complained and wished they were still in Egypt. They were not showing they loved God. Let's say our key passage phrase while we pretend to lap up water to drink."

6 PRAY

Pray, asking God to help us learn to obey even when it's hard.

Transition from LEARN to LOVE





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God because of what we learned

1 FIND THE BRONZE SNAKE

Cut a yellow piece of construction paper into a large snake shape and place a piece of sticky painter's tape on its back. Gather the children and invite them to be seated. Instruct the children to close their eyes. Say to the children that you are going to hide the bronze snake somewhere in the room while their eyes are closed. Hide the snake in plain sight. Prompt the children to open their eyes to find the snake and to point to it with their hands. Play several rounds as interest allows.

SAY While they were in the wilderness, God's people complained to God. **GOD'S PEOPLE DISOBEYED HIM.** Because of their disobedience, God let snakes come in and bite the people. To heal them from their bites, Moses put a bronze snake on a pole. When God's people looked at the bronze snake, they were healed. When we look to Jesus and trust in Him, we are healed from our sin.

2 WRAP SNAKES AROUND A POLE

Prior to the session, tape the piece of yarn to a craft stick for each child. Display the Bible Story Picture Poster. Instruct the children to wrap their yarn around the stick, like a bronze snake around a pole. Secure the end with tape. As the child wraps, point to the Bible Story Picture Poster and ask the child to tell you what he sees in the picture.

SAY **GOD'S PEOPLE DISOBEYED HIM.** They complained, and as a result, God allowed snakes to come and bite them. God instructed Moses to put a bronze snake on a pole. When God's people looked at the bronze snake, they were healed. When we look to Jesus and trust in Him, we are healed from our sin.

3 LOOK AT NATURE ITEMS

Place the shallow bin of sand, large stones, rubber snakes, and sticks on a tabletop. Lay the magnifying glass next to them. Show a child how to hold the magnifying glass in front of an object so that the object looks larger. Guide the child to look at the different items and to see what each of them looks like through the magnifying glass. Point out for the child things such as how the sand is made of tiny grains, that snakes have scales, the textures of the rocks, and the grain pattern of the wooden sticks.

SAY God's people lived in the wilderness for 40 years. **[Touch the sand.]** When the people were thirsty, God told Moses to talk to a rock, and water would come out. **[Touch the rocks.]** The people complained, and God let snakes come and bite them. **[Touch the snakes.]** God told Moses to put a bronze snake on a pole for those who had been bitten to look at it to be healed. When we look to Jesus and trust in Him, we are healed from our sin.

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE for God out of love

1 MAKE A COLLAGE

Distribute a copy of the Key Passage Phrase Marker, blunt-tipped scissors, two pieces of construction paper, and a glue stick to each child. Guide children to glue their phrase markers to one piece of paper. Using the other sheet of paper, demonstrate for children how to cut long strips of paper, or snakes, with scissors. After children have cut several snakes, lead them to arrange their snakes onto their key passage papers and then glue them down.

SAY “ The key passage phrase tells us that all things work together for the good of those who love God. Today, you heard how **GOD’S PEOPLE DISOBEYED HIM**. They complained, and God allowed snakes to bite them. ”

2 MISSIONS ACTIVITY



Print and display a copy of the “Missionaries with Manyika People” printable.

SAY “ Missionary Ryan Curry and a local pastor volunteered to take a trip to see if they could reach the Manyika people in the mountains of Mozambique, Africa. The two men traveled on a dirt bike over a rough road, dodging many holes. The men almost gave up, but soon they saw a woman who greeted them. The woman believed what the men told her about Jesus. It took months for the missionary and pastor to return to the village because the rain made it impossible to travel on the rough road. When the road was dry, the men traveled by car with their wives back to the area. Several people chose to follow Jesus. [Lead a prayer.] ”

3 SNACK AND TRANSITION



Post an Allergy Alert. Serve the snack. As children eat, review and talk about the Bible story. When children finish their snack, lead them to complete the activity page. As they work, continue talking about the Bible story and emphasize the Christ Connection.

SAY “ When God’s people looked at the bronze snake, they were healed. When we look to Jesus and trust in Him, we are saved from our sin. ”

Remember to communicate helpful information to the bonus teaching hour leaders. If parents are picking up children at this time, tell them something their child did well during the session. Distribute Big Picture Cards for Families. Encourage parents to engage with the family discussion starters and family activities during the week.



BONUS Teaching Hour Group Time

1 GUESS WHAT DISAPPEARED

Place a rock, toy snake, stick, and container of sand on a tray. Cover the tray with a towel. Invite the children to play a game. Show children the tray with the towel. Tell the children you are going to uncover the tray for 10 seconds. Uncover it and count loudly to 10. Recover the tray and ask the children to recall what they saw. Remove the towel again and carefully take away one item so children cannot see what was removed. Then, prompt children to guess what was removed.

2 TALK ABOUT THE BIBLE STORY

Open the Bible to Numbers 16; 20–21. Use the summarized points below to talk about the Bible story:

THE PEOPLE COMPLAINED

- God's people had to walk in the wilderness for 40 years. They complained a lot.
- Once, the people were very thirsty. They blamed Moses and Aaron. They wished they were still in Egypt. God told Moses to speak to a rock so water would come out for the people to drink.
- Later on, the people complained again. They did not like their food, and they were thirsty. God let snakes come and bite the people.
- The people knew they were wrong to complain. They asked Moses to pray for God's help. God said, "Make a bronze snake and put it on the pole. Whoever looks at the snake will be healed."

3 SING A SONG

Sing the song below to the tune of "Are You Sleeping, Brother John?":

All things work, all things work
Together for the good, together for the good
The good of those who love God, the good of those who love God
Romans 8:28, Romans 8:28

4 SAY THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker at Romans 8:28. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Read the phrase. Show children how to press their hands together and to move their hands back and forth in a snake motion. As they move their hands like a snake, lead them in saying the phrase.

5 PRAY

Pray, thanking God for loving us even when we disobey Him.



BONUS Teaching Hour Activities

6 LOOK UP

Invite children to spread out around the classroom, to quietly lay down on the floor, and to close their eyes. Say to the children that you will choose one child by touching that child on his shoulder. When he feels your touch, he is to say the phrase, “Look up!” cuing everyone to open their eyes and to jump up to a standing position. The child chosen to say, “Look up!” now becomes the one to choose another child to say, “Look up!”

SAY “What is the phrase we had to say to get everyone to jump up? [Allow responses.] **GOD’S PEOPLE DISOBEYED HIM**, and He allowed snakes to bite them. God told Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole. When God’s people looked at the bronze snake, they were healed. When we look to Jesus and trust in Him, we are healed from our sin.”

7 ROLL PLAY DOUGH SNAKES

Distribute play dough to the children and place toy rubber snakes where they can be seen. Ask the children to tell you what makes a snake unique: body shape, colors, tongue, eyes, and so forth. Demonstrate for children how to pinch off a ball of play dough and then how to roll it with their hands on the tabletop making a snake. Invite children to add eyes or a tongue to their snake creations. Show the children how to press the rubber snakes against the play dough snakes creating a scaly texture in the dough.

SAY “God’s people complained a lot during their time in the wilderness. They complained about being thirsty. They complained that they did not like eating the same food every day. Because of their complaining, God let snakes bite them. The people told Moses to pray and ask God to take away the snakes. God told Moses to put a bronze snake on a pole. When God’s people looked at the bronze snake, they were healed. When we look to Jesus and trust in Him, we are healed from our sin.”

8 DECORATE WATER BOTTLES

Prior to the session, cut strips of construction paper long enough to wrap around water bottles. Write the key passage phrase on each strip. Distribute prepared strips, stickers, markers, and crayons to the children. Read the key passage phrase aloud and prompt the children to decorate their strips using the provided supplies. When the children are finished, wrap the labels around the bottles and secure them with tape.

SAY “We heard in our Bible story that the people were very thirsty. They complained to Moses and said that they wished they were still in Egypt. God told Moses to talk to a rock and water would come out. **GOD’S PEOPLE DISOBEYED HIM**. They complained and didn’t trust that He would take care of them.”

Release preschoolers to parents according to your church’s security procedure. Tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session.