

UNIT 9 | SESSION 3

THE ARK WAS CAPTURED

Splash 6/22/205

1 SAMUEL 4-6



KEY PASSAGE: Philippians 4:19

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How does God care for His creation? God loves and rules over His creation according to His perfect plan.

CHRIST CONNECTION: God is holy and punished the Israelites and Philistines for misusing the ark. All people sin and deserve God's judgment, but Jesus took that judgment when He died on the cross. All who trust in Jesus are forgiven of sin and saved from judgment.

STORY POINT: The Israelites misused the ark, but God still displayed His power.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The Philistines' capture of the ark of the covenant reveals the folly of seeking God's blessing over God Himself. The Israelites realized they were no match for the Philistines, so they pursued worldly wisdom instead of seeking God in prayer. Reducing the significance of the ark to a good luck charm set off a chain reaction of disastrous events. Yet, God provided His people a victory they did not deserve.

What was the significance of the ark? How does the Lord prove His might against false gods and among the nations of the world?

The ark served as a reminder of God's promise to dwell among His people. Inside it was some manna from heaven, Aaron's rod, and the tablets of the Ten Commandments. Each item demonstrated God's provision, as well as His covenant promise to remain with them through the ages. 1 Samuel 4:5 tells us that when the Israelites entered the camp with the ark, their shouts were loud enough to shake the ground. These shouts, however, were empty praise not fueled by a right view of the Lord or His righteous cause among the nations.

God responded to the Israelites' sin by allowing the Philistines to capture the ark that represented His presence and glory among God's people. Yet, God used what looked outwardly like defeat to bring glory to His name by demonstrating His power over the enemy and His judgment of sin. This foreshadowed an even greater story of God claiming glory through what looked like defeat—when Jesus allowed Himself to be captured by people and crucified to satisfy God's judgment on sin. Likewise, the surprising return of the ark by the unmistakable power of the Lord foreshadowed Christ's resurrection to be with His people.

Lead boys and girls to see that the source of our hope lies not in our wishes of good fortune from the Lord, but rather in the salvation secured by Christ through faith in His name. Like the Israelites, we deserve judgment for our sin. By faith in Christ, however, we receive forgiveness and His righteousness. Pray for boys and girls to see the weight of their sins and the price Christ paid to secure them as His own forever.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10-15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25-30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- "What Doesn't Belong?" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- shoe boxes, 1 per group
- pencils, 4 per group
- hot glue

Session Starter (Option 2)

- wooden blocks or plastic cups, 1 set per group



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- whisk
- straw
- pencil
- tape measurer
- nail
- piece of wood
- dry rice
- bowl
- pot of dirt
- rubber ball

Reflection and Prayer

- Bible Story Coloring Page (optional)



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- countdown video
- Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- "The Ark Was Captured" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Questions from Kids

- "Unit 9, Session 3" Questions from Kids video

Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- "My God (Philippians 4:19)" song
- worship song of your choice (optional)
- ball



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY 🗨️ Have you ever lost something important to you? What was it? How did you feel when you lost it? 🗨️

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “What Doesn’t Belong?” activity page.

SAY 🗨️ Today, we will learn how God’s people sinned and the ark of the covenant was captured. 🗨️

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: TRANSPORT THE ARK

Before the session, gather a shoe box and four pencils per group of four kids. Assemble the “ark” by inserting two pencils on two sides of the tissue box. Hot glue the pencils so they remain in place. Distribute an “ark” to each group of four kids.

Challenge groups to pick up the ark by only touching the “poles” or pencils. Line up groups on one side of the room. Then when you say “go,” lead kids to hop on one foot to the other side of the room. If groups drop the ark, or touch it without the poles, they are out for a round. Repeat, guiding kids to perform different movements like walking backwards, skipping, or tip-toeing.

SAY 🗨️ The ark of the covenant was a special reminder to the Israelites that God was with them. It was not to be moved without God’s clear instructions, and when it was moved, only the priests could carry it by the poles. Today’s story is about how **THE ISRAELITES MISUSED THE ARK, BUT GOD STILL DISPLAYED HIS POWER.** 🗨️

OPTION 2: FALLEN TOWERS



Form kids into groups of three or four and provide each group with a set of wooden blocks or plastic cups. Invite each group to build a tall tower or structure. Then, direct kids to close their eyes. Tap one kid on the shoulder and allow him to choose one tower to knock over. Direct kids to open their eyes. Challenge kids to guess who they think knocked over the tower, giving them three guesses. If kids guess correctly, the kid who knocked over the tower is out and a new kid will be chosen to knock over a tower for the next round. If not, allow the same kid to knock over a different tower. If the same kid knocks over every tower without getting caught, award him a prize such as candy. Play as time allows.

SAY 🗨️ Was it hard to know who knocked over the towers? [Allow responses.] Today, we will see how God’s power caused an idol statue to fall down and break. However, everyone knew it was God who had done it. God’s power was clearly shown, and the enemies of God became afraid. Let’s get ready to see how God is powerful and holy. 🗨️

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





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)



Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “ Hi, kids! My name is [your name], and I am glad you’re here to learn more about our great God. Did you know that God is holy? This means that God is separate from what He created. He never sins, and He is greater than us in every way. God’s holiness means we are to worship Him and honor Him. However, we’ll see how God’s people did not honor Him when they misused the ark of the covenant. If you have your Bible, please hold it up as we get ready to hear our story. [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.]



In our story, we’ll see that **THE ISRAELITES MISUSED THE ARK, BUT GOD STILL DISPLAYED HIS POWER.** [Display the Story Point Poster.] Let’s pray: ‘Dear heavenly Father, thank You for loving us even though we are not holy like You. Please help our hearts worship You above all. Amen.’ ”

worship

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

- * Praise Him anywhere
- * Buy'd My Life
- * Offering

SAY “ Let’s review our big picture question: **How does God care for His creation?** What was the answer? [Allow responses.] **God loves and rules over His creation according to His perfect plan.** Let’s say the answer again: **God loves and rules over His creation according to His perfect plan.**

Sometimes God’s care for His creation means He disciplines His people when they sin. The Bible tells us that ‘the Lord disciplines the one he loves’ (Hebrews 12:6). Like a good parent who doesn’t want their children to keep doing wrong, God disciplines His people so they will turn away from sin. Today, we will see how God cared for His people by punishing them for misusing the ark and how He also allowed His people to have the ark returned home to them. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “ Over the past few weeks, we have seen how God cared for His people and met their needs. God was with Ruth and provided a family redeemer for her. Last week, we learned how God heard Hannah’s prayers and gave her a son named Samuel. Samuel became a prophet for Israel and spoke God’s words to the people. Today, we will see how God’s people misused the ark, but God was faithful to display His power so the ark could be returned to Israel. ”



LEARN the Bible Story



1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to 1 Samuel 4:1-11; 5; 6:1-12. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “The Ark Was Captured.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

THE ARK WAS CAPTURED

“One day, Israel was defeated in battle against their enemies, the Philistines. When they returned to the camp, they had an idea: “Let’s bring the ark of the LORD’s covenant from Shiloh. Then we will win!”

The ark represented God’s presence with His people. The Israelites thought the ark of the covenant would help them win against the Philistines.

When the Israelites went to battle with the Philistines again, the Israelites were defeated. The Philistines captured the ark, and Hophni and Phineas died. When Eli heard how the Philistines took the ark, he fell over backward out of his chair and died.

The Philistines took the ark of the Lord and brought it into the temple of a false god they worshiped named Dagon. When they woke up the next day and went into their temple, they found the statue of Dagon fallen over, face down before the ark of the Lord. They put the statue back upright in its place. But the next morning, they again found the statue of Dagon fallen over, but this time the statue’s head and hands were broken off.

God acted against the Philistines. He punished them with tumors, and the Philistines were terrified. They decided to move the ark to a different Philistine city. But God acted against the people in that city. Then the Philistines moved the ark a third time, but God continued to punish the Philistines. **Finally, they decided to send the ark back to Israel.**

The Philistines placed the ark on a cart attached to two young cows that had never pulled anything before. They also placed gold gifts in the cart as a guilt offering to the Lord. The cows traveled up the road to the Israelites. The ark of the Lord was back home with the people of God.

Christ Connection: God is holy and punished the Israelites and Philistines for misusing the ark. All people sin and deserve God’s judgment, but Jesus took that judgment when He died on the cross. All who trust in Jesus are forgiven of sin and saved from judgment. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Make sounds: Instruct kids to listen for the name of an animal in our story. When they hear the name of the animal, they are to respond with the noise it makes. (Two young cows: moo.)

Act it out: Tell the story as if you were a witness to its events.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ The ark of the covenant was a special reminder that God promised to live among His people. The ark was not something to be careless with or to treat like a good luck charm. It was to be treated as holy because it was a symbol of God’s presence. What did the Israelites do with the ark? [Allow responses.] The Israelites chose to take the ark with them into battle. When they did this, they were not obedient to God’s commands. God is holy, and we must obey His commands because everything God commands is right and good.



What happened to the ark while the Israelites were battling the Philistines? [Allow responses.] The Philistines captured the ark! **THE ISRAELITES MISUSED THE ARK, BUT GOD STILL DISPLAYED HIS POWER.** How did God display His power to the Philistines? [Allow responses.] God alone is God. When the Philistines put the ark in the temple of their false god Dagon, God made the idol statue fall over. He did this again, and the statue’s head and arms broke off. God also gave the Philistine people tumors. They were terrified and recognized that God was powerful.

Eventually, the Philistines decided to send the ark back to God’s people. The Philistines made a plan to send the ark on a cart pulled by cows. The cows had never traveled to the Israelites’ town of Beth-shemesh, yet God directed the cows’ steps to His people. God showed His faithfulness to His people and that He would continue to be with them.

God is holy and punished the Israelites and Philistines for misusing the ark. All people sin and deserve God’s judgment, but Jesus took that judgment when He died on the cross. All who trust in Jesus are forgiven of sin and saved from judgment. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ Today, we learned **THE ISRAELITES MISUSED THE ARK, BUT GOD STILL DISPLAYED HIS POWER.** In the same way, you and I are sinners who have also disobeyed God’s commands. God gave us the ultimate display of power by sending Jesus to die on the cross and rise from the dead. Have you placed your faith in Jesus, trusting in Him for forgiveness of sins? ”

(Tip: Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

* Gospel poster

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)



Show the “Unit 9, Session 3” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. Why does Jesus love us, even when we have sinned?
2. How can we show we love Jesus?



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

SAY 🗣️ Doug and Evelyn Knapp were missionaries in Tanzania, Africa. They worked to share the gospel with the Nyakyusa (NYE ak oo sa) people. But before the Knapps could share the gospel with the Nyakyusa people, the Knapps needed to gain their trust. Doug and Evelyn showed kindness to the people and gave away seed packets so the people could grow food. One day, a farmer asked Doug why he was so kind to the people. This gave Doug an opportunity to tell the man about Jesus. The man trusted in Jesus, and the door was opened to share the gospel with many more people. 🗣️

Tell kids that more than 49,000 baptisms occurred during the missionaries' final 11 years of service on the field. Discuss how the missionaries were faithful to share the gospel, but God is the One who saved those who trusted in Jesus. Remind kids that victory over sin comes from God alone, who provided Jesus to save people. Pray that God would continue to save people from all over the world.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)



Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Philippians 4:19 together.

SAY 🗣️ God is powerful and can meet all of our needs. Through faith in Jesus, He meets our greatest need: forgiveness of sin. 🗣️

Remind kids that in today's Bible story, the ark of the covenant was moved from place to place. Lead kids to sit in a circle. Toss a ball to the first kid and lead her to say the first word of the key passage. Then she will toss the ball to another kid who will say the second word, and so on until the entire key passage has been said aloud.

Lead kids to sing "My God (Philippians 4:19)." You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY 🗣️ God, we thank You for giving us instructions through Your Word. Help us obey You and to turn to Your Son for forgiveness of sins when we disobey. Thank You for sending Jesus to take our punishment in our place. Amen. 🗣️

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to 1 Samuel 6. Remind kids that 1 and 2 Samuel are in the History division of the Old Testament. Invite kids to name other books in this division as well.

Consider pointing out the location of Gaza (I1), which was a city in Philistia, on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map to help kids understand where this story took place. Choose a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 6:13 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verse aloud.

SAY 🗨️ When God’s people saw the ark of the covenant coming toward them, they were filled with joy. The ark was a symbol of God’s presence. It was a way for God to show His people that He was with them. The presence of God brought terror on the Philistines, but God’s presence returning to the Israelites brought them joy.

God is holy, and being in the presence of a holy God is scary because we are sinners who deserve death. Yet, through faith in Jesus, God’s presence brings Christians joy. Believers can come before God, and worship Him without fear. One day, God will call all Christians to live with Him forever. 🗨️

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

| **SAY** 🗨️ Why did the Philistines keep moving the ark from city to city? 🗨️

Remind kids that the Philistines were terrified of God’s presence because He afflicted them with tumors, made their idol statue fall, and punished them by death. Discuss how God is holy, and He will punish those who do not repent of their sin and turn to Jesus. Remind kids that the Philistines did not worship the one true God. Through God’s power, He showed the Philistines that He alone is God.

| **SAY** 🗨️ How did the Israelites misuse the ark? 🗨️

Discuss how God’s people treated the ark like a “good luck charm.” The people were only using God to get what they wanted. The ark did not have any special powers. It was a reminder of God’s presence with His people. God, alone, had the power to give the Israelites victory.

| **SAY** 🗨️ How can we escape the punishment our sin deserves? 🗨️

Help kids understand that God is patient, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Discuss how repentance means we recognize our sin before a holy God and turn to Jesus—the only One who can save us from our sin. Encourage kids to remember how Jesus took the punishment our sin deserves when He died on the cross. Remind kids that Jesus rose from the dead, revealing He has the power over sin and death. Anyone who trusts in Him as Savior and Lord will be saved.

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





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: DON'T MISUSE IT

Choose five volunteers to come to the front of the room. Distribute one of the following tools to each kid: a whisk, a straw, a pencil, a tape measurer, a rubber ball. Challenge the kid with the whisk to use it to hammer a nail into a piece of wood. Tell the kid with the straw to use it to scoop up some dry rice. Invite the kid with the pencil to use it to comb his hair. Lead the kid with the tape measurer to use it to dig a hole in a pot of dirt. Then ask the kid with the ball to bounce it up and down.

SAY “ We don’t use a whisk as a hammer or a straw as a spoon. Only the ball was given the proper treatment. Today, we learned how **THE ISRAELITES MISUSED THE ARK, BUT GOD STILL DISPLAYED HIS POWER.** God’s people used the ark like a good luck charm, rather than treating God as holy. God is worthy of our obedience and worship. God displayed His power and showed Israel and the Philistines that He is the one true God. When we see God as holy, we recognize how we need Jesus. Jesus changes our hearts to want to please God. Through the Holy Spirit, we can live in ways that please God and honor Him. ”

OPTION 2: SHADOW FUN



Form kids into groups of three or four and dim the lights. Distribute a flashlight to each group. Invite kids in each group to take turns placing their hand in front of the light to create a shadow on the wall. Demonstrate how bringing their hand closer to the light makes the shadow larger, while moving their hand further away from the light makes the shadow smaller. Challenge kids to create an animal with their hands, such as a butterfly, duck, or dog.

SAY “ The shadows you created weren’t really a dog or a cat, but they resembled them and gave us a picture of the real thing. In the Bible, God gave His people ‘shadows’ or pictures about what was to come. God gave the people the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant to symbolize His presence among them. But God can’t be confined to a box. The ark was a ‘shadow’ or picture that pointed to Jesus. The Bible calls Jesus Immanuel, which means ‘God with us.’ When Jesus came to earth, He made the way for us to not only see what God is like, but He also made the way for us to be with God forever. Jesus saves us from sin and brings us into God’s presence. ”

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.