



LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Numbers 21:4-9

1 Corinthians 1:18

Session Theme:

Disobedience

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: Slithering Serpents!

Bring a long piece of yarn or string to class. Spread it out on a table to look like a snake. Ask kids what they think of when they see this. (*A worm? A knitting project? A snake?*) Explain that in today's story, there were a whole bunch of things like this all over the ground. But they were not simple pieces of yarn. They were writhing, biting serpents! Where did they come from? What was going on? Let's begin our lesson to find out!

Have you ever been ungrateful and grumpy? Have you ever refused to see the good things and blessings in your life? That's what happened in today's Bible story to the people of Israel. And oddly enough, a land full of snakes taught them to look at things quite differently!

c. Opening Prayer

Lord God, sometimes we are full of complaints. We notice only what is going wrong. Open our eyes to see our many blessings, and give us thankful hearts. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- "Amazing Grace" (hymn)
- "Count Your Blessings" (children's song)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today's Lesson is from the Old Testament
- Scripture Section: Wilderness

After God freed the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt, Moses led God's people through the desert wilderness to Mount Sinai, where God gave them the Ten Commandments written in stone.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level.

Upper Elementary: Read the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read the Scripture text from the Bible

For Upper and Lower Elementary, use the Storyteller questions to help the students think about the events of the story.

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Upper Elementary: Worksheet and Drama

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, Questions)

Adult: Bible Study Sheet (Introduction and Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day's lesson one last time. If you have not already done so, introduce the Theme Word for the week, providing the definition, and asking how the lesson connects to that theme.

Youth/Adult: Discuss "Reflection for the Week Ahead"

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Upper Elementary: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format



Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Numbers 21:4-9

1. By this point in the story of the Exodus, what miraculous things had God done for the Israelites? List here as many as you can:

- **Delivered Israel from the plagues**
- **Delivered Israel from Pharaoh's army**
- **Made a dry path through the Red Sea**
- **Given the people manna and quail to eat**
- **Made water come from the rock for the people and the animals to drink**
- **Established the priesthood**
- **Given them the Ten Commandments**

2. Why were the Israelites grumbling? What didn't they like about the wilderness? Why do you think they were not more thankful for all God had already done for them? Have you ever been like that?

The people of Israel were tired and grumpy. In Egypt they had a variety of foods to eat, not just manna and quail, and they were tired of eating the same thing every day. Life was very different for them in the wilderness; they lived in mobile tents, and water was scarce in the desert. It was probably a frightening experience to be out in the unknown, neither reaching their destination nor knowing how much longer they'd be out there. This caused them to forget what God had already done for them. This happens to us, too, when we fail to be thankful.

3. The word the Bible uses to describe the serpents is *Seraph*, which is translated "fiery." This can simply indicate that the snakes were poisonous. But how might the word *Seraph* indicate there was something more supernatural at work here? (Read Isaiah 6:1-7.)

The seraphim in Isaiah tended the Lord when he was on his throne in heaven. Perhaps the meaning in Numbers 21 is that these same heavenly beings were employed by God in this situation — that it wasn't really serpents but those creatures who served at the Lord's command.

4. What did the Israelites do after the snakes appeared? Did they continue complaining?

The Israelites stopped their complaining after the snakes bit some people and they died. The

people repented of their complaining and asked Moses to pray to the Lord for them that they may be saved from the fiery serpents.

5. What did God tell Moses to make? What did this object symbolize? What did looking at this object force the Israelites to reckon with?

God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and to place it atop a pole. This object symbolized the fiery serpents that killed the Israelites. In essence, the people had to look at the representation of their sinfulness, and as they gazed upon it, they came to know their need for repentance and mercy.

6. Compare what is said about Jesus in John 3:11-21. In reference to Jesus, what does it mean that he would be "lifted up"? What does seeing Jesus in this way force us to reckon with?

In the same way the Israelites looked upon the bronze serpent on the pole, so the sinners of Jesus' day would look up at him on the cross as he was lifted up on the torture instrument of the Romans. We look to Jesus in the same way now as we gaze upon the cross and remember our sinfulness and what he has done for us to set us free from sin and death.

7. Does it seem strange that a sign of human sin and punishment could be used by God as a means of salvation and healing? Compare what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:18 about our Christian faith.

It seems strange to us, but to God it's not strange at all. God always seems to use what is foolish by human standards to show us his great wisdom. God often works paradoxically to show us, through faith, how he is always in control in unexpected ways and means.

8. In a spiritual sense, is grumbling a useful way to handle frustration and disappointment? What happens when we "look to Christ" in times of struggle and hardship?

Spiritually, it makes more sense to give our anxieties, worries, and struggles over to Jesus rather than fussing and complaining. Our grumbling does nothing to take away our pain and frustration. However, when we look to Christ, we find exactly what we need for the day! We are reminded of his great love for us and the promises that he's made to his people, and that encourages and sustains us.

Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: Striking Snake Craft

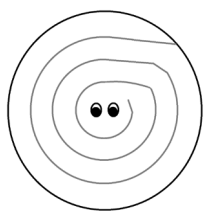
Materials Needed:

- Paper plate
- Scissors
- Glue
- Googly eyes
- Markers
- Red paper
- Fishing line
- Pin



Instructions:

Give each person a paper plate, markers, and a pair of scissors. Invite kids to draw a spiral shape on their paper plate using a light-colored marker. To do this, begin from the outside of the plate and draw a line spiraling around towards the center of the plate. (*See illustration.*) Keep the space between lines the same so the body of the snake is consistent. At the center of the paper plate, allow a little



open loop which will be the snake's head.

Next, invite kids to use other colored markers to decorate the snake "skin" with any pattern they like — stripes, circles, squares, zigzags, etc. It's up to them! When the snake skin is decorated, have kids cut along their

original spiral line (it should be easy to see, since it is in a different color than the designs) to make a spring-shaped snake.

Give kids a pair of googly eyes and some glue. Have kids glue the eyes into the center of the snake's "face" (or alternately, simply draw the eyes on in marker instead). Take a small piece of red paper and invite kids to cut a long, narrow rectangle. Have kids make a "forked tongue" by cutting a "V" at one end of the rectangle. Glue the tongue underneath the snake's face. Cut a long piece of fishing line. Poke through the snake's head with a pin. Thread the fishing line through the head and tape it on the other side. Pull up on the other end of the fishing line to make the snake strike!

Activity 2: Snake Bite Game

Materials Needed:

- Large area to play a game, inside or outside
- Masking tape, yarn, rope, or orange cones to mark off a "safe" area



Instructions:

Before playing this game:

Identify a wall or make a starting line, and make a finish line behind which the kids will be "safe." If playing indoors, these lines can be made from masking tape or even yarn. If playing outdoors, use orange cones or rope for the same purpose.

To play the game: Designate up to half the students as "snakes." The rest will be "Israelites." One volunteer from the Israelite group can be "Moses."

This game is played like freeze tag, but with a twist:

Explain that the snakes will sit or lie down in the center of the playing area in a way that makes it difficult — but not impossible — to cross the area. Snakes cannot leave their spots but can move their arms like snakes in order to "bite" (tag) any Israelite who is passing by. The only Israelite who is safe from being "bitten" is Moses.

To play this game, the Israelites will line up at the starting line. Their job is to try to cross to the safe area, avoiding snakes as best they can. Any Israelite that gets "bitten" has to sit down in place. The only way that person can move again is if Moses comes over and tags them.

Once all of the Israelites have crossed to the other side of the room, play more rounds, switching roles so everyone has a chance to be an Israelite at least once.

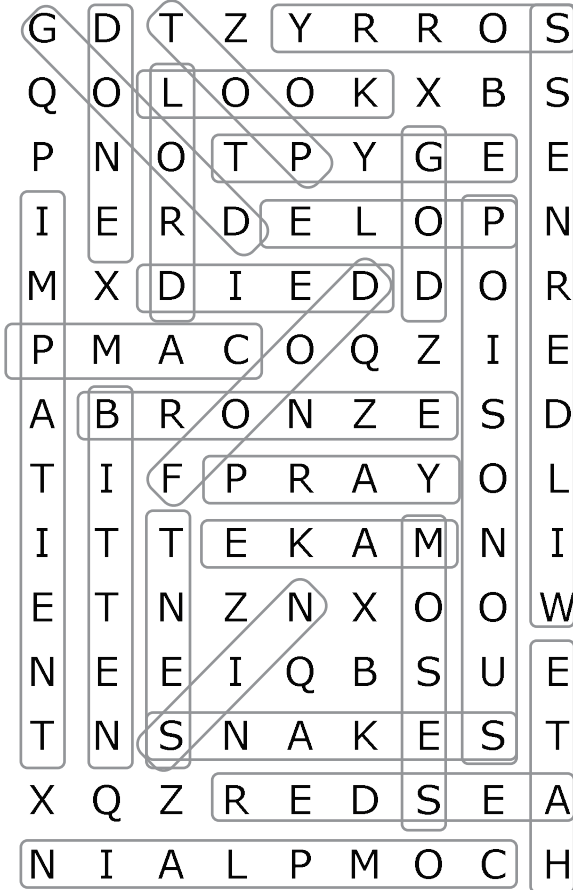
Imagine how scary it must have felt for the Israelites to see snakes all over the ground! Yet God was able to use even the snakes for a good purpose — to remind the people that they were not in charge!

That's a good thing for us to remember, too. God is God, and we are not.

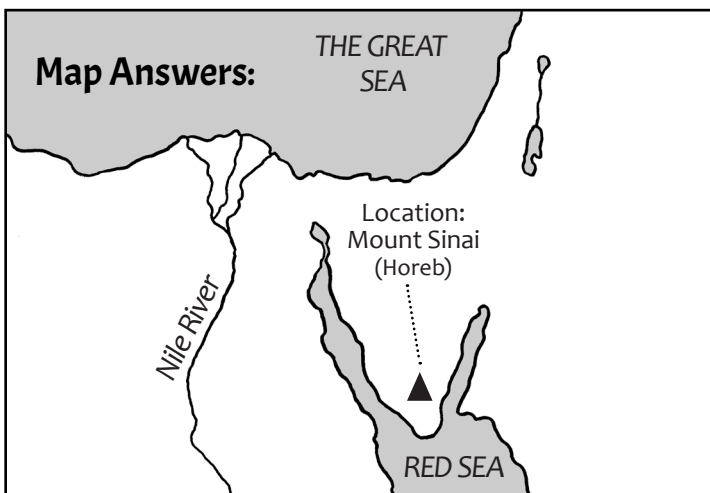
Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the answers to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

Word Find:



- We look to Jesus to forgive our sins.
- Jesus was "lifted up" on the cross at his death.
- Our own sin (the sin of all people) was responsible.



Vocabulary Word for the Week

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary.

Disobedience

to refuse to listen or follow the rules

When the Israelites grumbled against God, and didn't listen to Moses, that was disobedience.

Reflection for the Week Ahead

When the Israelites were crossing through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land, they got cranky from the long, hard journey. This caused them to speak out against Moses and God. The Lord was not happy with them because he had already done so much for them. They should have seen that God is faithful and that he would take care of their needs no matter what.

Have you ever felt like the Israelites? Maybe you have been on a trip that seemed to be taking forever and you got impatient and started to whine and fuss at your parents. Or, think of a time when things weren't going so smoothly and how you responded.



Why do people like to complain? Instead of complaining about a problem, what should we try to do instead?

Even when things go wrong in life, God can bring good out of it. Sometimes we learn a good lesson, other times, hardship makes us stronger. When have you seen this in your life? How can this remind you not to complain the next time life gets difficult?

The Practice of Prayer

On the lines below, write a prayer praising God for his patience and the ways in which he takes good care of us. Ask the Holy Spirit to open up your heart to his Word, that you may live a life of faith and obedience.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.