



UNIT 6 | SESSION 3

GOD HEALED THE PEOPLE

NUMBERS 21

KEY PASSAGE:

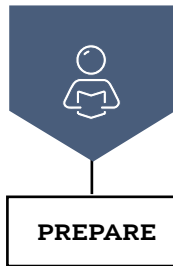
Exodus 15:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What is God like? God is holy, good, and loving.

CHRIST CONNECTION:

God sent snakes to punish the people, but anyone who was bitten could look at the snake on the pole and live. We deserve to die because of our sin, but anyone who looks to Jesus on the cross and trusts in Him will live forever with God.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION



LEADER Bible Study

If there was one thing the Israelites were good at, it was grumbling. They weren't just good; they were experts: "We have no food. We have no water. Why are we in the wilderness left to die? The land has big people in it." And on and on and on. We have to wonder how Moses put up with it all.

In Numbers 21, we encounter another time when the people grumbled—once again about food and water. Each time they doubted God's goodness and truthfulness, God had shown them mercy and grace. But on this day, He sent serpents into the Israelites' camp to strike them for their unfaithfulness. Many people died.

We might not like to think of it, but this is what the Israelites deserved all along. Their sin earned them judgment and death. God was perfectly just and righteous to give His people what they deserved.

Yet, as we have seen so often in the Old Testament and will continue to see throughout the rest of Scripture, God extends grace and mercy along with judgment. When the people pleaded for Moses to intercede on their behalf, God instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and lift it on a pole. Whoever looked upon it would be healed.

Notice two things. First, God's response was not to remove judgment but to provide

salvation through judgment. This is another theme we have seen throughout the Scriptures (e.g. Noah, the plagues).

Second, God's instructions made little to no sense. Imagine you are an Israelite and were just bitten by a serpent. Although other serpents are all around still, you are to take your eyes off of that threat and turn them upward to look at a bronze serpent on a pole—an image of the very thing that has brought death to your door?

This detail in the story is a foreshadowing of what God has called us to do in Christ.

While our faith is far from blind, it always has an aspect of not making sense, at least to the world around us. But this is how we are saved too: by taking our eyes off of the sin in and around us, and looking upon Christ lifted up on the cross—He who became sin (2 Cor. 5:21). We too are saved through judgment, for our judgment has been placed on Christ.

BIBLICAL THEME

Salvation through judgment: Throughout the Old Testament, God judged and saved for His glory. Examples:

- the Fall (Gen. 3)
- the Flood (Gen. 6–9)
- the Exodus (Ex. 5–12)
- the battle of Jericho (Josh. 6)



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 touched a snake? Sometimes reptile exhibits at zoos will give you an opportunity to pet a non-venomous snake. Not all snakes have toxic bites, but if you see a snake in the wild, it’s much safer to avoid it and tell an adult. Today we will learn about a time God’s people had to trust God to be healed from deadly snake bites!”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “Sneaky Snakes” activity page.

SAY “Great job finding those snakes hidden in the picture. Today we will learn about a time God’s people were dealing with a big snake problem. In their case, the snakes weren’t hidden; they were all over the place! We’ll learn more soon.”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: SNAKE BITE



Instruct the kids to stand in a circle with eyes closed. Silently select a kid to be the snake by tapping him on the shoulder.

Next, the kids will open their eyes and mingle, taking turns shaking one another’s hands. The snake may “bite” other kids by quickly giving a double squeeze while shaking hands. Whoever is bitten will continue shaking hands for a few seconds, then lay down “dead.” Remaining kids will vote to identify the snake.

If they are correct, the game ends and the kids win. If they are incorrect, the accused is out and the game continues as before. The snake wins if he is able remain hidden until there is only one other kid left.

SAY “Snake bites can be very dangerous. Today we will learn about a time God’s people had snakes biting them left and right.”

☐ OPTION 2: SNAKE FACTS

Form two teams of kids. Teams will take turns identifying true or false statements. Award a point for each correct answer.

Statements:

- All snakes with red, yellow, and black stripes are venomous. (False, some non-venomous snakes have similar markings)
- Constrictors squeeze their prey. (True)
- Most species of snake are venomous. (False, only 600 out of 3500 species are)
- Snakes are less active in winter. (True)
- The longest snake ever recorded was about 20 feet long. (False, about 33 ft!)

SAY “Snakes are fascinating. Some are basically harmless, and others could kill with a single bite. Today we will learn about a time God’s people dealt with dangerous snakes.”

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





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

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 “Welcome back, everyone! I’m glad you are here to learn about God with me. Who can tell me what book we study to learn about God? [Allow responses.] That’s it; good job! We study the Bible to learn what is true about God and about ourselves. Who brought a Bible with you today? [Allow responses and distribute a classroom Bible to any kids who need one.] Yeah! That’s what I’m talking about. I’m proud of you all.

The Bible is a collection of writings inspired by God and written by many different people throughout history. The Bible contains many different stories, but they are really all a part of one big story. That story is about God’s goodness and holiness, our sinful brokenness, and God’s plan to rescue us from sin. ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

SAY “As we learn more about God, it helps us to have a big picture question and answer to help us ‘zoom out’ from a specific story to see specific truths that can tie the stories together. God wants to teach us these truths. Recently, we have been learning more about the ways God is unlike anything or anyone else. Who remembers our big picture question? [Allow responses.] Yep! **What is God like? God is holy, good, and loving.**

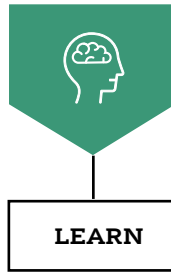
We can say God is holy because He is perfect and nothing in heaven or on earth is like Him. We can say God is good because He is righteous and just at all times in every way. We can see God’s love in the ways He has shown us kindness, mercy, and grace. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “Two weeks ago, we learned that God’s people refused to go into the promised land. God had promised to fight for them and drive out the people already living there, but the Israelites did not trust God or honor Him as holy. For that reason, God led the people back into the wilderness to wander for 40 years. Last week, we learned about a time Moses also disobeyed God and dishonored His holiness. Moses struck a rock instead of speaking to it, and as a result, God did not allow Moses to enter the promised land.

Today we will see, yet again, that God takes sin seriously. We will also see the ways God shows mercy to sinners who do not deserve His favor. ”



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN the Bible Story

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

Open your Bible to Numbers 21. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “God Healed the People.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

GOD HEALED THE PEOPLE

“Moses and the Israelites traveled in the wilderness on a long journey. The people were impatient, and they complained. “Why did you lead us into the wilderness? We are going to die here. There is no bread. There is no water. We don’t like the food we have!”

God responded by sending venomous snakes that bit the Israelites. Many of the people died.

The Israelites went to Moses and said, “We sinned by complaining. Please talk to God for us. Ask Him to take away the snakes.”

So Moses spoke to God for the people. God told Moses what to do: “Make a snake image and put it on a pole. When anyone who is bitten looks at it, he will recover.”

Moses did what God said. He made a bronze snake and mounted it on a pole. Whenever someone was bitten, that person looked at the bronze snake and recovered.

Christ Connection: God sent snakes to punish the people, but anyone who was bitten could look at the snake on the pole and live. We deserve to die because of our sin, but anyone who looks to Jesus on the cross and trusts in Him will live forever with God. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Use props: Bring in a staff and/or rubber snake to illustrate the story.

Vary tone: As you tell the story, draw kids’ attention by changing your tone when speaking dialogue. Slow your pace or emphasize key words.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ Yet again, God’s people refused to trust God. Their complaints about the food God had provided them showed that they did not want to honor God or praise Him for the ways He had been caring for them.

God sent venomous snakes into their camp, and many who were bitten died. This again helps us see that God takes sin very seriously. God is holy and hates sin. God would have been just to allow the snakes to kill everyone. Instead, God graciously gave His people a way to be healed.

When Moses made the bronze snake and displayed it in the camp, anyone who looked at it would be healed. This is a picture of the faith needed to be saved. The people had to trust God and look at the snake. They couldn’t do anything to stop the snakebites on their own, so they had to trust God’s power and goodness. This story gives a clear picture of what God is like.

What is God like? God is holy, good, and loving. Because God is holy, the sin of the people had to be dealt with. Because God is good and loving, He also provided a way for the people to be saved from the danger of the snakes. This is similar in some ways to our need for Jesus. God will not leave our sin unpunished, but He loves us and wants to save us. He sent Jesus to take our punishment for us and rise from the dead. When we turn to Jesus in faith, we live even though we deserve death. ”

3 CHRIST CONNECTION

SAY “ God sent snakes to punish the people, but anyone who was bitten could look at the snake on the pole and live. We deserve to die because of our sin, but anyone who looks to Jesus on the cross and trusts in Him will live forever with God. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 6, Session 3” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. Why did God allow the snakes to bite the Israelites?
2. How can the consequences of sin lead us to trust God more?

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

SAY “ God’s people only had to look at the bronze snake to be healed. In a similar way, everyone who turns to Jesus for forgiveness will find spiritual healing and eternal life with God. That’s the good news of the gospel, and it’s what missionaries share with people around the world each day.

Last week we learned about Samuel Zwemer (zuh-WAY-mer), one of the very first missionaries to Muslims. This week we’re going to learn a little more about Islam and how we can be praying for Muslims—followers of Islam—and the missionaries who serve them. ”

Show the missions video. Then ask for a volunteer to pray for Muslims and for the



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

missionaries who serve them. Pray also for missionaries your church supports.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Write the key passage on a dry erase board or chalkboard. Erase a few words. Challenge the kids to read the verse, inserting the missing words where needed. Then erase more words and repeat the challenge. Continue in this way until the kids are reciting the verse from memory.

Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Exodus 15:11 together. Invite volunteers to say the key passage from memory. Thank each kid for his effort and encourage all the kids to keep working on the key passage.

SAY “God is above and beyond anything or anyone else. He is our Creator and King. No one can compare to Him. **What is God like? God is holy, good, and loving.**”

Lead kids to sing “Lord, Who Is Like You (Exodus 15:11).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning from **LEARN** to **LOVE**.

SAY “God, help us to understand how our sin looks to You. We want to understand the depths of Your holiness, goodness, and love. Give us wisdom to understand who You are so that we can love You more and obey You well. Amen.”

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

