



UNIT 6 | SESSION 3

GOD HEALED THE PEOPLE

NUMBERS 21

CHRIST CONNECTION:

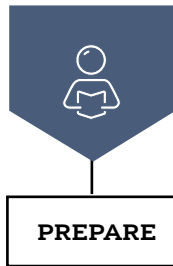
God sent snakes to punish the people, but anyone who was bitten could look at the snake on the pole and live. We sin, too. We can look to Jesus and trust in Him to be saved from our sin.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

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

KEY PASSAGE:

Exodus 15:11



YOUR HEART TO TEACH



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).

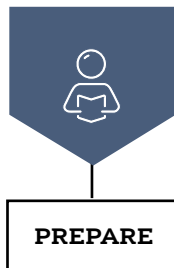
Second, God's instructions made little to no sense. Imagine you are an Israelite and were just bitten by a serpent. Although other serpents are all around still, you are to take your eyes off of that threat and turn them upward to look at a bronze serpent on a pole—an image of the very thing that has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



YOUR HEART TO TEACH

GATHER Supplies

Keep these items on hand for each session: Allergy Alert, Bibles, construction paper, copy paper, washable markers, crayons, scissors (adult use), blunt-tipped scissors, glue sticks, glue, blocks, baby dolls, play dough, world map or globe, snack food, paper cups, and napkins.



WELCOME

Welcome

- "Who Is Like You (Exodus 15:11)" song

Activity Page

- "Snake Stripes" activity page, 1 per child

Hop the key passage

- painter's tape

Transition

- countdown video (optional)



LEARN

Learn about the Bible

- bookmark
- Giant Timeline or Small Group Timeline

Tell the Bible story

- Bible Story Picture Poster
- "God Healed the People" video (optional)

Practice the key passage

- Key Passage Marker
- Key Passage Poster
- "Who Is Like You (Exodus 15:11)" song

Learn the Big Picture

Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

Missions moment

- "Understanding Islam" missions video



LOVE

Snack and talk

- hand sanitizer (optional)
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Big Picture Question Poster

What's biting you?

- large pieces of paper or poster board
- tape



LIVE

Study snakes

- snakeskins
- books about snakes

Play out gratitude

- paper bags, 2 per child

Go on a prayer walk

- "Prayer Walk" printable
- tape
- walking rope (optional)



WELCOME Preschoolers

Post an allergy alert, if needed. Set out supplies to engage preschoolers as they arrive. Play music as you welcome preschoolers. Greet children by name at eye-level. Follow your church's security procedures.

1 ACTIVITY PAGE

Lead preschoolers to complete "Snake Stripes" on the activity page.

SAY “ The snakes we colored are fun, but real snakes can be dangerous. Many of God’s people were bitten by snakes in today’s Bible story. Listen to the story to hear how God healed them. ”

2 SESSION STARTER

Use one or both of the following options to engage curiosity about today’s Bible story.

MAKE PLAY DOUGH SNAKES



Show children how to roll out play dough into snake shapes. Invite them to make snakes in a variety of sizes, colors, and patterns. Gently explain the potential dangers of snakes.

SAY “ Play dough snakes are fun. But some real snakes can be very dangerous to people, so you should always ask a grown-up before getting near one. In our Bible story today, the people of Israel had a big snake problem. Let’s find out if they trusted God to help them this time. ”

HOP THE KEY PASSAGE

Divide the key passage into phrases and write each phrase and the reference on separate sheets of paper. Lay the phrases in a line and tape them securely to the floor. Invite preschoolers to take turns hopping the key passage by beginning at the first phrase and hopping to the reference. Lead the rest of the group to say the phrase as each child hops.

SAY “ Who is like the Lord? No one! He is glorious in holiness, revered with praises, and performs wonders! The Israelites sang our key passage to God after He rescued them from the Egyptians. In today’s Bible story, God’s people forgot about how glorious God was. Instead they complained. They even asked Moses, “Why did you lead us out of Egypt?” Listen to the story to hear how God responded to His people’s complaints. ”

3 TRANSITION TO LEARN

Gain preschoolers attention by showing the countdown video, turning the lights off and on, or clapping a simple rhythm for children to copy. Invite each preschooler to place his hands on the shoulders of the child in front of him and transition to Learn like one long snake.

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





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Ask preschoolers if any of them have taken a long trip. Invite children to share where they went and how they got there. Prompt them to talk about how they felt waiting for the journey to be over.

SAY “Traveling a long way can be hard. Even if you are sitting in a car or train, you get tired and hungry. The people of Israel had been traveling a long time. But they were walking in the wilderness. They were very tired, and hungry and thirsty.”

2 LEARN ABOUT THE BIBLE

Place a bookmark at Numbers 21 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

SAY “Everything God says is true. The Bible is God’s Word to us. Today’s story from the Book of Numbers gives us an important clue into how sinful people are saved.”

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline or small group timeline. Remind children that all the stories in the Bible fit together to tell an even bigger story. The Bible tells us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

3 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Tell the following Bible story using the provided storytelling tips or show the video. Use the bold version of the Bible story for younger preschoolers.

GOD HEALED THE PEOPLE

“ Moses and **the Israelites were on a long journey through the wilderness. The people** were tired of how long the journey was taking, and they complained. They said, **“Why did you lead us out of Egypt? There is no bread here. There is no water. We do not like the food we have!”**

God sent snakes that bit the Israelites. Many of the people died. **Then the Israelites talked to Moses. “We were wrong to complain. We have sinned,”** they said. **“Please talk to God for us. Ask Him to take away the snakes.”**

So **Moses talked with God. God said, “Make something that looks like a snake and put it on a pole. When anyone who is bitten looks at it, he will get better.”**

Moses made a bronze snake and put it on a pole. Whenever someone was bitten, all that person had to do was look at the bronze snake, and he got better. ”

4 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 sin, too. We can look to Jesus and trust in Him to be saved from our sin. ”

5 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ How did the people of Israel get better? [Allow responses.] Just by looking at the bronze snake on the pole. And how can we be saved from our sin? [Allow responses.] Just by looking to Jesus who died on the cross! Looking to Jesus means trusting Him. Many years after the Israelites suffered from snake bites in the wilderness, Jesus Himself mentioned this story in a conversation. He explained that like Moses lifted up the snake on the pole, Jesus would be lifted up and everyone who believes in Him would have eternal life. All we have to do to be saved from our sin is look to Jesus and trust in Him. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Invite input: Pause periodically as you tell the story to ask preschoolers what they think. After the first paragraph, ask if the situation sounds familiar. After the second paragraph, ask if children think that God forgave and helped the people. After the third paragraph, ask if the solution seems strange.

Make a replica: Before the session, cut a snake shape from brown construction paper. Throw the paper snake on the floor as you tell about God’s punishment. Then as you describe God’s solution, tie a couple of sticks together in a cross shape and hang the fake snake on it. Hold it up high as you finish the Bible story.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

6 PRACTICE THE KEY PASSAGE

Place the key passage marker at Exodus 15:11. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Read the key passage aloud. Encourage preschoolers to look to you and say the key passage while you silently mouth the words and do the motions you created together in the first session of this unit.

SAY “ God was right to punish the people’s sin. He is glorious in holiness, and the Israelites did not revere Him, or honor Him, with the praise He deserves. But God is also gracious and performs wonders. He healed whomever simply looked up in faith! We can look to Jesus in faith to be healed too. Let’s praise Him now for the wonders He has done. ”

Sing the key passage song, “Who Is Like You.” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 LEARN THE BIG PICTURE QUESTION AND ANSWER

SAY “ Since God is holy, He must punish sin. God sent snakes to punish the people for complaining against Him. But God is also good and loving, so He provides a way to be saved. Anyone who was bitten could look at the snake on the pole and live. **What is God like? God is holy, good, and loving.** We sin, too. We can look to Jesus and trust in Him to be saved from our sin. ”

8 MISSIONS MOMENT

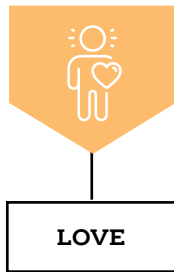
SAY “ God wanted His people to trust Him. God wants all people to trust in Jesus so they can be saved from sin. Samuel Zwemer trusted in Jesus, and he wanted the Muslim people to trust in Jesus too. Last week we learned that Samuel Zwemer was one of the very first missionaries to Muslim people. The Muslim religion is called Islam. In Islam, people do not believe in Jesus to be saved. Let’s watch this video to learn how we can pray for Muslim people. ”

Show the “Understanding Islam” missions video. Pause the video to pray for each prayer need mentioned.

SAY “ Muslims work hard to gain the favor of their god, but the one true God does not need people to work hard to gain His favor. He sent His Son to earth to live the perfect sinless life that we could not live. Jesus was punished on the cross for our sin. We can have God’s favor, not because of what we do, but because of what Jesus did for us. ”

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





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God because of what we learned

1 PRAY

Invite preschoolers to close their eyes and think about God as they talk with Him.

SAY “ God, You are holy. It is right for You to punish sin. We are not good at accepting discipline even when it is good for us. Please forgive us. Thank You for making the way to save us. Thank You for sending Jesus to take the punishment for our sin. Help us look to Him in faith so we can live forever with You! Amen. ”

2 SNACK AND TALK



Post an allergy alert. Wash hands or use hand sanitizer. Serve a snack. Show the Bible story picture poster as you ask the following questions. Retell parts of the Bible story as needed.

SAY “ What was your favorite part of today’s Bible story? ”

SAY “ What did you learn about God in today’s Bible story? ”

SAY “ How are we saved from our sin? ”

SAY “ What is God like? God is holy, good, and loving. ”

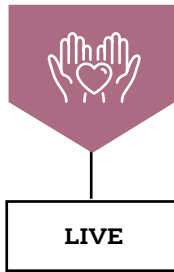
3 WHAT’S BITING YOU?

Cut out a large cross shape and tape it to the wall. Cut out a similarly sized snake shape and lay it on a table. Invite preschoolers to think about all the things that upset them: fears, worries, or frustrations. Write those things on the snake or encourage children to draw things to represent them. When preschoolers cannot think of anything else, tape the snake onto the cross shape. Pray, thanking God for Jesus and asking Him to resolve all the children’s concerns.

SAY “ When the Israelites confessed their sin and asked God to take away the snakes, He provided a way for the people to be saved. Whenever someone was bitten, all that person had to do was look at the bronze snake on the pole, and he got better. God saved the Israelites from the snakes that were bothering them. There are a lot of things bothering us, but God has provided a way to save us, too. We can look to Jesus and trust in Him to be saved from our sin. He promises to undo all the sad things one day. ”

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





THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE for God out of love

- 1 Choose the activities that best fit your group, space, available resources, and time constraints. Set up activities in one of these ways: as a group, all at the same time; in small groups that rotate through each activity; or set up as centers, allowing preschoolers to browse and choose.

LOOK TO THE OBJECT



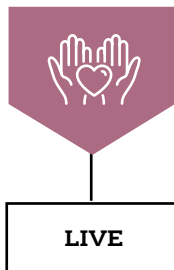
Play a game like “I Spy,” challenging the children not to say their guesses out loud but only look at the items silently. You will pick an object in the room and describe its color, shape, size, or use. Pause between each clue to give children time to look around and think, and continue until it appears that most children are staring at the correct object. Invite one of the preschoolers to say her guess, and if correct, to lead the game next. Continue as desired.

SAY “ All you had to do in our game was look at the object you guessed. In our Bible story today, all the people who had been bitten had to do was look at the bronze snake on the pole, and they got better. We can look to Jesus and trust in Him to be saved from our sin. That doesn’t mean you have to find a picture of Jesus and stare at it anytime you sin. Looking to Jesus means turning away from your sinful behavior and trusting in what He has done for you instead. You can pray and tell God you are sorry, like the Israelites did, and He will save you. ”

STUDY SNAKES

Provide snakeskins and books about snakes for children to investigate. Explain how snakes shed their old skins, and invite preschoolers to feel the skins. Read the books to the children as they show interest. Be sure to wash hands after handling snake skins.

SAY “ Some types of snakes can’t hurt people, and of course, these snakeskins are harmless. But some snakes are very dangerous to people. God sent snakes to punish the people of Israel for complaining against Him, and many people died. But God wants His people to trust Him and live. So He told Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole. When anyone who was bitten looked at it, he got better. We sin, too. We can look to Jesus and trust in Him to be saved from our sin. One day, Jesus will crush the serpent Satan so he can’t hurt us anymore! ”



THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

PLAY OUT GRATITUDE

Show children how to draw a face on the bottom of a folded paper bag and then place your hand inside it to make a puppet. Give each child two paper bags. Guide preschoolers to make one happy-face puppet and one grumpy-face puppet. When children have completed their puppets, use them to practice grateful responses versus complaining responses. Hold up your grumpy puppets, and repeat one of the Israelites' complaints. Then hold up your happy puppets, and invite preschoolers to brainstorm and play out ways to respond to the same situation gratefully, instead. Continue playing out responses using situations from the Bible story and situations that preschoolers may encounter in daily life. Offer plenty of suggestions for ways to respond gratefully.

SAY “ The people of Israel complained about leaving Egypt instead of being grateful that God rescued them from slavery. They complained about the food instead of being grateful for the manna. They complained about the lack of water instead of being grateful for how God provided. They were wrong to complain; they sinned. We sin when we complain, too. Let’s practice being grateful for everything God has done for us, instead. Most of all, we can thank God for sending Jesus to save us from our sin. ”

GO ON A PRAYER WALK



Before the session, print and cut apart the footprints from the “Prayer Walk” printable. Place the footprints in different places around your church building or classroom. Encourage preschoolers to search for the footprints as you lead them on a walk. As you come across the footprints, read the prayer prompts. Encourage volunteers to lead the group in prayer at each stop. As you walk, talk about opportunities preschoolers may have to share Jesus with Muslims or others in your community. Be sure to follow your church’s security procedures for leaving the classroom.

SAY “ Prayer walking is a good way to remind us of people and things we need to pray for. We prayed for Muslims on our prayer walk today. We prayed for Muslims who live in our country, and Muslims who live in other countries. In some countries, Islam is just about the only religion. Those countries need missionaries. Let’s keep praying this week for Muslim people to look to Jesus and trust in Him to be saved from sin. ”

2 TRANSITION

Invite preschoolers to complete the coloring page. Consider leading preschoolers to sing the key passage song or involving them in a simple game to practice the key passage or big picture question. If parents are picking up children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Give parents the completed activity page. Distribute the big picture cards for families. Encourage parents to engage with the family discussion starters and family activities during the week.