

DEAR PRESCHOOL TEACHER

Dear Teacher,

We can grow in our relationship with God as we study and share the scriptures with our students! This quarter we will learn about “God’s Covenants with People.” We will learn about how God’s covenant promises were made and kept with people throughout the Bible. Following God can be challenging because there are so many distractions. As we go through the lessons this quarter, we should ask ourselves: who are we following?

We will begin by learning about God. Then we will learn about God’s relationships with Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Israel, Joshua, King David, King Josiah, Nehemiah, Esther, and Job. We will see that God keeps His promises even when we don’t keep ours. God is loyal and calls us to follow Him.

This quarter highlights the message: let’s follow God! Our love for God and other people can change our world. Finally, we end the quarter remembering that following God doesn’t mean everything will go our way. It means that even when we feel sad, we turn to God. When we make bad choices, we turn back to God. When good things happen, we thank God. As you go through this quarter, we pray that you will get to know God better and help your students get to know Him just like the people in the Bible did!

Grace & Peace,

UMI Editorial Team

ONE-HOUR CLASS SCHEDULE

ACTIVITY

LENGTH

PURPOSE

OPEN THE LESSON:
Focused Learning Center

10 minutes

Informal learning activities are provided, and the lesson concept is introduced.

PRESENT THE SCRIPTURES:
Life Application Story
(student folder—page 1)

6 minutes

The theme is introduced through an age-appropriate story for early readers while helping the teacher determine what the students already know about the topic.

READING THE BIBLE STORY:
Bible Story
(student folder—page 2)

7 minutes

The Bible Story is written so that early readers can read along. Discussion questions and presentation ideas help the students retell the Bible Story to show their understanding.

EXPLORE THE MEANING:
Memory Verse

5 minutes

The students will memorize or enhance their understanding of the Memory Verse.

Action Time

5 minutes

The students will use large muscles to engage in games, songs, and activities that reinforce the lesson theme.

NEXT STEPS FOR APPLICATION:
Knowing and Growing
(student folder—pages 3 and 4)

12 minutes

These pencil and paper activities correspond to the Life Application Story and the Bible Story. Ideas for discussion are included.

Worship Time

5 minutes

These activities reinforce the topic and aid children in sharing the lesson with parents.

Craft Kingdom®

10 minutes

The children will create age-appropriate crafts that help them focus on God in their lives.

NOTES

T4T—TIPS FOR TEACHERS

CREATING POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Children are not just little people; they are whole people with emotions and feelings that are often acted out differently from what adults might expect—or want. This is the behavior we see when a toy isn't shared, or someone's feelings get hurt and they begin to cry. Being unsure of how to handle the emotional behavior of younger children can frighten new volunteers who might not be familiar with their attitudes and actions.

As Christian educators, we have an opportunity to help children develop social skills and to learn acceptable routines and practices for our classrooms and beyond. Here are a few tips that might be helpful as you begin a new quarter of learning and Christian development:

- Avoid using negative language to address the child. Never call (or even silently label) a child's behavior naughty, insolent, or standoffish. In truth, children might not have developed the social skills needed for the classroom or public space, but that does not mean that they are "bad" in some way. Patiently model appropriate behavior for them.

- Make sure that you have established routines so the children are comfortable in the space and have multiple opportunities to learn acceptable behaviors. This doesn't mean that you should make so many rules that the children hate coming to class. It does, however, require you to do certain things the same way, such as having the children sit and pray before snacks, or having the children sit in a circle or stand in a line for certain activities.

- Teach children to use "inside" or "six-inch" voices to help them learn to control the volume of their voices during interactions.

- Teach the use of "please" and "thank you." These skills might not be used as often as we assume in other settings.

If conflict occurs, try some of these steps to help resolve the situation:

- Before class, pray that conflict will be at a minimum—even though you know that is not always possible. Pray also as soon as conflict occurs. This doesn't mean that you should stop all action and lift a cry unto God. Simply whisper a prayer asking for the intervention of the Holy Spirit as you seek wisdom and resolution.

- Encourage the child to talk to you quietly about any problem he or she has or perceives. Don't talk to the child in front of everyone else. If possible, take the child aside. This will lessen the negative response that grows out of embarrassment.

- Listen carefully and prayerfully so that God can help you intervene in the best possible manner. Listen to see if there is a larger issue needing to be addressed. If you know the child, pay attention to his or her personality. Is the child prone to hurt feelings, shyness, or being overly assertive? Has there been a recent change in the family situation that might cause acting out? Is the child hungry or sleepy? Avoid acting too quickly on the assumption that you "know" the child.

- If two children are involved, encourage them to talk to each other and teach them to listen and take turns.

- It is not always possible for everyone to win in the midst of conflict, but since this is a church setting and these are small children, seek solutions that help the children maintain their dignity and learn how to better live in social situations in ways that honor God.

Sometimes it is necessary to help children agree that everyone is different but that they can respect and love each other because God loves them. With these tips and patience, you can create a more positive learning environment where children feel cared for while they are learning.

The Entire Bible in One Year

Quarter At-A-Glance – September 2023

September 3, 2023: Week 1 Genesis **Blessing for All Nations** **Genesis 12:1–9**

The Lord instructs Abram to take his family to another country and promises to make him a great name and nation. Abram obeyed the Lord and went toward the Land of Canaan.

September 10, 2023: Week 2 Exodus **Obeying God's Law** **Exodus 20:18–26**

Without obedience to the law, people live in chaos, hurting themselves, others, and their environment. God delivered the commandments to the Israelites while showing divine and holy power that tested them to convince them to obey the laws of the covenant.

September 17, 2023: Week 3 Leviticus **Living as God's Just People** **Leviticus 19:9–18, 33–37**

This chapter begins with a call to reflect on the nature of God: "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (v. 2, NKJV).

September 24, 2023: Week 4 Numbers **People Grumble** **Numbers 11:1–6, 10–15**

During times of trouble, what happens when we forget our blessings? When God brought the people out of slavery in Egypt and provided for them in the desert, Moses and the people complained repeatedly, loudly, and often about their hardships. They had forgotten what God had done for them.

October 1, 2023: Week 5 Deuteronomy **The Heart of the Law** **Deuteronomy 10:12–22; 16:18–20**

The principle underlying justice in this passage does not originate in humankind, but in the nature of God. Loving God involves more than a sentimental response; it means serving God with one's heart and soul.

October 8, 2023: Week 6 Joshua **God Is Victorious** **Joshua 6:2–3, 4b, 12–20b**

At God's command, Joshua and the children of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days. On the final day as Israel conquered the city, God miraculously caused the walls to collapse.

October 15, 2023: Week 7 Judges - Ruth **Listen to God's Judges** **Judges 2:11–19**

This passage is an introduction to the book of Judges, which explains Israel's recurring cycles of national apostasy.

October 22, 2023: Week 8 1-2 Samuel **God's Covenant with David** **2 Samuel 7:1–13**

This lesson is based on the story of David's desire to build a permanent structure for the Ark of God, a house for the Lord. Instead, God promises to establish David's dynasty including a descendant who would build the temple and establish his kingdom forever.

**October 29, 2023: Week 9 1-2 Kings
Josiah Brings Reform**

2 Kings 22:8–10; 23:1–3, 21–23

During the repair of the temple, the Book of the Covenant was found and brought to King Josiah. Upon reading it and realizing God's Word was not being followed, Josiah called the people together, read the Book of the Covenant to them, and led them in a renewal of the covenant, pledging to follow the Lord and keep His commands.

**November 5, 2023: Week 10 1-2 Chronicles
The Ark Comes to Jerusalem**

1 Chronicles 15:1–3, 14–16, 25–28

King David was seeking to deliver the Ark of the Covenant to a temporary tent where it would be housed. The ark itself is a symbol of the importance of worship in the lives of God's people.

**November 12, 2023: Week 11 Ezra - Nehemiah
Nehemiah: The Captive Cupbearer Rebuilds a Nation**

Nehemiah 2:11–20

People are often contemplative before they make major decisions. How does one or should one react after careful consideration of a major decision? Nehemiah set out to rebuild the wall after praying and surveying the ruins.

**November 19, 2023: Week 12 Esther
A Time for Courage**

Esther 3:2–3, 5–6a; 4:7–16

Haman was infuriated when Mordecai refused to bow down to him. In retaliation, he ordered not only that Mordecai be killed, but all the Jews of the kingdom. Mordecai gave this message to Esther, the queen, who was his cousin/niece. Mordecai told Esther to plead the cause of the Jewish people before the king.

**November 26, 2023: Week 13 Job
When Tragedy Occurs**

Job 1:14–15, 18–19, 22; 3:1–3, 11

These Scripture passages deal with the age-old question, "Why do Christians or good people suffer?" It acknowledges the fact that even God said that Job was "perfect, upright, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1). However, these facts did not keep Job from being tried in the crucible of suffering.

GOD BLESS US ALL

WEEKLY THEME:

A BLESSING FOR ALL NATIONS

BASED ON:

Genesis 12:1–9, NIV

KEY VERSE:

Genesis 12:2, NIV

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Knowledge: Preschoolers will state that God blessed Abram.

Attitude: Preschoolers will understand that God wants them to share their blessings with others.

Action: Preschoolers will sing “Father Abraham.”

DEAR TEACHER

In today’s lesson, your preschoolers will learn that God blessed Abram so he could be a blessing to others. Use this lesson to help preschoolers understand that they, too, are blessed.

SUPPLY LIST

SECTION	MATERIALS
Focused Learning Center	Crayons, paper
Action Time	<i>Scripture Scene®</i> , <i>Teaching Success Kit</i>
Worship Time	<i>Sing-Along CD</i>

OPEN THE LESSON

Focused Learning Center

Floor Plans

Make sure there are enough crayons and paper for all students. As students enter the classroom, instruct them to draw a picture of their house and the people who live with them. They may also draw other things in the neighborhood that are significant to them (e.g., their neighbor’s dog, a park, the fire station, the library, or their backyard).

PRESENT THE SCRIPTURES

Life Application Story

(Distribute student folders.)

Before reading, give the preschoolers a chance to share their pictures. Be sure to stress that because we’re all different, we live in different types of houses with different types of family members, but God loves us all the same.

During reading, explain that even when things happen that make us sad, God cares about

us, and God is always faithful. God shows that He cares by blessing us.

After reading, tell the preschoolers that God blesses all of us. We can show our love for God and let God know we are thankful when we share our blessings with others. When we bless others, we also show that we are faithful to God.

Reading the Bible Story

God Bless Us All!

The Bible Story in the student folders is designed for preschool students to read. The Scripture Scene® is provided as a visual aid. Be sure to study the information on this Bible passage in the white pages of the Teacher Guide.

When Abram was 75 years old, God told him to leave his family and everything he’d ever known to go to a place that God would show him. God specifically said that He would bless Abram and make Abram a blessing to other people. God said that everyone in Abram’s family (or nation) would be blessed because of Abram. God also

indicated that people would be blessed if they blessed Abram, and they would also be cursed if they cursed him. That means if people did bad things to Abram, then bad things would happen to them, too.

Abram did what God said. He took his wife Sarai, his servants, and all of their belongings. He also took his nephew Lot along with them. Abram set out for a place called Haran. He didn't know anything about the place, but Abram trusted God. While Abram traveled, he saw places that looked really nice, and he wanted to stop. But he obeyed God and kept on going. He gathered more people in Haran to go with him.

Then they went on their journey to a land called Canaan and finally got there. “I will give that land to your children, but you must keep going.” Abram built an altar to God and kept going.

Abram obeyed God because he knew God had a blessing waiting for him. So he kept going on toward the Negev, a huge area of desert land in Israel.

EXPLORE THE MEANING

Memory Verse

"The LORD remembers us and will bless us,"
(from Psalm 115:12, NIV).

Action Time

Review the *Scripture Scenes*® poster for this week. Ask the preschoolers to describe what is going on in the scene. Then lead the children in singing “Father Abraham.” Lyrics with hand motions are in the *Teaching Success Kit*. Sing all of the verses and have the students go through the motions with you. Make sure to explain that Father Abraham is Abram from today’s lesson.

NEXT STEPS FOR APPLICATION

Knowing

God's Blessing

The preschoolers will trace the word “BLESS.” Then they will draw lines matching the objects with the same beginning sound as the letters in the word “BLESS.” **Answers:** B-bee, L-lemons, E-eggs, S-sun, S-star.

Growing

We Can Share With Others!

Ask the students to tell you some of the blessings they have received from God. Ask if they can think of ways to share those blessings with others. Have them color the picture of God's blessings, and then have them draw a picture of themselves using one of the blessings in the pictures (food, a home, or toys).

Worship Time

Have the children dance and praise God to an upbeat song from the *Sing-Along* CD. Afterward, pray with the children that they see God in His creation this week.

Craft Kingdom®

Craft Kingdom® provides directions to complete a craft that reinforces the lesson. Play the *Sing-Along* CD as students work.

NOTES

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Genesis

A BLESSING FOR ALL NATIONS

Focal Verses • GENESIS 12:1–9

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **ANALYZE** the story of God’s call and promise to Abram; **EMBRACE** the joy that Abram and Sarai’s faith gave to them from obeying the Lord; and **DECIDE** what we are willing to sacrifice to claim the promises of God.

In Focus

Warren and his wife, Deloris, have been married for over 25 years and live a very comfortable life. Warren is a respected corporate executive and community leader, and Deloris is a College Professor. Both are active and faithful members of their church and within their circle of friends. Lately, they both had been thinking about doing more for God, even in distant lands. One day during Warren’s morning devotion, he felt in his spirit that it was time to leave. When he felt it again as he was shaving, he immediately stopped what he was doing and inquired of the Lord. He knew in his spirit that it was time to move on to a new workplace assignment, which might include moving to another country to make a greater impact for God on the world. At work that morning, he learned that the company was in fact reorganizing. They were expanding operations to compete globally, and he was tapped to run overseas operations.

As we will see with Warren and Deloris, and Abram and Sarai in today’s lesson, a decision to follow God’s command continues to reap a reward for those who by faith in Jesus Christ become His seed.



Keep in Mind

“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV **Genesis 12:1** Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him: and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had

gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

The People, Places, and Times

Abram. The significance of God's call for a nation through Abram was that up to this point, there was no distinction between people and races in the manner that we think of today. After the Flood, the people were dispersed at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9). The Bible depicts a detailed review of Shem's descendants—Noah's eldest son. It is out of Shem's lineage, through Abram, that God would call out a people unto Himself to be witnesses in the earth of His greatness. They would receive the blessing for serving the one true and living God in the midst of universal idolatry. Ultimately, Abram's seed through 42 generations would bring forth the Messiah who would reconcile the world back to the Father (Matthew 1:1–17). Abram exemplifies the faith necessary to obtain righteousness and access to the promises of God through Jesus Christ.

The Land of Canaan. The Hebrew word for "Canaan" (*Kena`an*, ken-**AH**-an) means

low region or lowland. Its name denotes that the country resides west of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, between those waters on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Named after Noah's fourth son Ham, the land was given by God to Abram's posterity, the Children of Israel, as promised. In modern geography, Canaan is now Palestine.

Background

In the preceding chapter (Genesis 11:10–32), we learn of Abram's lineage as a descendant of Noah's son Shem. In Genesis 9:26, Noah prophesied over Shem, after he and his brother Japheth covered his nakedness, declaring that he would be blessed and that Canaan would be his servant. Genesis 11 ends with Abram's father, Terah, leading his family's migration from his native land Ur of the Chaldees to make their way to the land of Canaan, but instead, the group settles in Haran (Genesis 11:31). It is noted in verse 32, however, that Terah remained in

Haran until his death. Geographically, scholars maintain that Haran was perched between Ur and Canaan, so they were in the middle of their intended destination. Terah's name was believed to mean "delay," and as referenced in a review of Israel's history (Joshua 24:2), he was an idol worshiper. We will see why Abram and Sarai's faith and obedience were pivotal to the blessing for all nations as God separates him from his people.

At-A-Glance

1. God's Call for a Blessed Nation (Genesis 12:1-3)
2. Abram's Response to God's Call (vv. 4-6)
3. God's Promise of Generational Blessings (v. 7)
4. Abram's Obedience in Answering God's Call (vv. 8-9)

In Depth

1. God's Call for a Blessed Nation (Genesis 12:1-3)

Abram was the youngest son of Terah. He was a descendant of Noah's son Shem. According to Stephen's account in Acts 7:2-4, the God of glory appeared to Abram while he was in Mesopotamia, which was before he settled in Haran. Therefore, when Abram heard God's call in Genesis 12:1, this was his second encounter with the Lord Jehovah, and it's believed to be not long after his father's death. Abram was told to leave his country and his family and uproot his home to go to a place the Lord would soon reveal. The Scripture does not indicate that there was a discussion after this command was given, but that Abram moved at God's word. Abram was surrounded by people, including his own family, who were polytheistic (worshiped multiple gods).

For him to hear the voice of the true and living God was monumental. Because of his obedience, Abram is forever etched as "the father of faith." With this second encounter, however, God made Abram a promise to bless him and make him a great nation, to make his name great and for him to be a blessing (v. 2). This promise from God was astounding due to Abram's age (v. 4), and as first noted in Genesis 11:30, his wife Sarai was barren. God gave Abram further motivation to adhere to His command with the pronouncement of future blessings. For leaving his father's house, Abram would receive a father's blessing—a namesake. God told Abram His sovereign promise to fulfill His word to make a great nation from him and to make his name great. Abram went from not having any children and with no hope of ever being a father to having the promise of an entire nation coming from his loins.

In Genesis 12:3, God established His relationship and the power of this connection by stating that He would bless those who blessed Abram and curse those who cursed him. God's presence is marked in the lives of those chosen by Him. Verse 3 ends with the most important component of this promise: God commits to blessing all the families of the earth through Abram. Abram's seed birthed three world religions; Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Ishmael) all lay claim to him as father. However, the ending of this verse points to the coming Christ who would bring salvation and restoration to the world. Abram's seed is the divinely appointed channel through which blessing would come to all humankind by faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:6-7, 14).

2. Abram's Response to God's Call (vv. 4-6)

Abram followed God's spoken command and departed from his familiar surroundings to a place unknown. Abram, after having departed once with his kindred from his native land of Ur, was once again a nomad at the age of 75,

leaving Haran. He took with him his wife, all their possessions, his nephew Lot, and his servants. We can imagine how very unsettling it must have been for Abram to be uprooted again and to move everything he owned to answer God's call. However, in spite of the circumstances, Abram walked in obedience and trusted God based on what God had revealed to him. He went forward and began the journey. His father, Terah, stopped short his migration to Canaan (see Genesis 11:31, NIV). When God declares a call on your life, not everyone is privy to seeing the revelation of God's plan. Therefore, even close relatives may need to be left behind.

In Genesis 12:6, Abram arrives in Canaan and the land is already occupied by the Canaanites. He is yet again a stranger in a strange land. He was put in an uncomfortable position by coming into a land that was promised to him but was already inhabited, which could have been a reason to give up. But Abram continued to follow God and remain confident he heard God correctly. Oftentimes, when God gives us a directive, it may not come with full disclosure of the details—like what we have to go through to get to the promise. Just like Jesus, Abram teaches us to keep moving forward by focusing on God's promise (Hebrews 12:2).

3. God's Promise of Generational Blessings (v. 7)

In this instance, rather than just speaking to Abram, God appeared in the form of a theophany—God appeared in human form. Some scholars believe this appearance was Christ in His pre-incarnate state. He showed Abram once again the land He was going to bless Abram with and reinstated His promise to give him seed or offspring. Abram yet again heard a word from the Lord declaring that he would not only receive this land that is already occupied but that his children would live in it. In response to God's appearance, Abram built an altar unto the Lord. The proper

response to God's presence and confirmation of His promise is worship. Abram had God's continued assurance that he would receive that which God had spoken, and by making a personal appearance, it further sealed the guarantee.

4. Abram's Obedience in Answering God's Call (vv. 8–9)

Abram continued to move forward at God's command and thus declared his own allegiance to serve God alone. In spite of the culture around him, which had a god for everything, Abram is the father of a monotheistic religion that is based on a relationship with the true and living God. Abram pitched his tent, and wherever he pitched his tent, he built an altar unto the Lord. He remained in constant contact with Him through worship and prayer as he called on the name of the Lord. Abram lived a disciplined life of worship and walked in obedience by listening for the voice of the Lord God. Abram's faithful response to God's promise to make him a great nation required a close relationship and strict adherence to God's instructions. Abram would have been shortsighted if he thought only of the personal impact of this promise, but because the call was greater than he could ever imagine, he was willing to make the sacrifice with his wife by his side.

Search the Scriptures

1. What was God's instruction to Abram (Genesis 12:1)?
2. What was God's promise to Abram (vv. 2–3)?
3. What was Abram's response to God's call (vv. 4–5)?

Discuss the Meaning

How would you respond if God told you to uproot your life and leave behind all you know to follow Him with only a promise of what's to come?

Liberating Lesson

Today, we are reaping the benefits of the blood, sweat, and tears of our heroes and heroines of the Civil Rights Movement, as well as the ancestors before them who sacrificed so that we might have the freedom to be whatever God called us to be. Like Abram, Dr. Martin Luther King did not live to see the fullness of this vision of freedom, but he moved at God's Word and did as he was instructed, walking in love. He trusted God and sacrificed his own personal comfort and gain by believing that God would do what He said. We can continue to honor Dr. King's legacy by showing our willingness to submit to God's plan no matter where it takes us as we serve others and strive to move toward lives of freedom.

Application for Activation

As you reflect on today's lesson, what has God promised in your life that will bless you and others now as well as in generations to come? What are you willing to risk to follow through with God's plan and bring Him glory, even at the risk of your own comfort? Pray and assess your own ambitions, goals, and interests to see if they line up with God's Word. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you about anything that needs adjustment.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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Say It Correctly

Canaan. **KAY**-nuhn.
Haran. **HAY**-ran, -ruhn.
Moreh. **MOH**-ray.
Sichem. **SHEE**-kem.

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 1

Genesis 1–3

DAY 2

Genesis 4–7

DAY 3

Genesis 8–11

DAY 4

Genesis 12–15

DAY 5

Genesis 16–18

DAY 6

Genesis 19–21

DAY 7

Genesis 22–24

Notes

OBEYING THE RULES

WEEKLY THEME:

OBEYING GOD'S LAW

BASED ON:

Exodus 20:1–17, NIV

KEY VERSE:

Exodus 20:24, NIV

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Knowledge: Preschoolers will demonstrate that they understand the first three commandments by crossing out illustrations that do not depict God's commands.

Attitude: Preschoolers will show their desire to worship God by drawing and coloring how they worship.

Action: Preschoolers will review the commandments by walking to designated areas that represent the commandments.

DEAR TEACHER

Your preschoolers are learning the first three commandments God gave Moses. They are learning how to honor God with their worship.

SUPPLY LIST

SECTION	MATERIALS
Focused Learning Center	Chess set
Action Time	Cardstock numbers (with pictures): 1 (heart), 2 (child worshipping), and 3 (mouth)

OPEN THE LESSON

Focused Learning Center

Set out the pieces to the chess game. Let the children talk about how they think the game is played. Give pairs a minute each to try and play the game. Ask, "Do you know how to play this game? Can you play the game the correct way if you don't know the rules? Would it be easier if you knew the rules of the game?"

PRESENT THE SCRIPTURES

Life Application Story

(Distribute student folders.)

Before reading, ask, "What happens when people don't know the rules?" Tell them that today's story is about some children who needed rules.

During reading, pause after the sentence, "No one could hear." Ask, "What is going on?"

(The children in the story are not taking turns talking.) "What could the zookeeper do?"

After reading, ask, "What might be some good rules for the children at the zoo?" Tell the preschoolers that today's Bible Story is about some rules that God gave us for our lives.

ABC Connect: *These questions help children with early reading comprehension*

Reading the Bible Story

Obeying the Rules

The Bible Story in the student folders is designed for preschool students to read. The Scripture Scene® is provided as a visual aid. Be sure to study the information on this Bible passage in the white pages of the Teacher Guide.

God gave His people rules for life. He said, "I am a forever God. I know what is best. I make good rules. Remember, I saved you from slavery.

I have cared for you. Now you need to obey Me.

Rule 1: Put Me first.

Rule 2: Worship only Me.

Rule 3: Speak My name with respect. It is the most special word.

Follow My rules. I will bless you. I will bless your family, too."

EXPLORE THE MEANING

Memory Verse

"I, the LORD your God ... [show] love to... those who love me and keep my commandments" (from Exodus 20:5–6, NIV).

Choose four children to come up front to practice. Have the first child point to the ceiling. Practice saying, "I, the LORD your God." Next, have the second child make a heart shape with both hands in front of his or her chest. Practice saying, "show love to." Have the third child also make a heart shape and then point to everyone. Practice saying, "those who love me." Last, have the fourth child hold out a Bible. Practice saying, "and keep my commandments." Explain that "commandments" are rules for a good life. Then practice the verse all together with the children a few times.

Action Time

To prepare, put a "1" and a heart on one piece of cardstock. Put a "2" and an image of a child worshipping on another piece of cardstock. Put a "3" and an image of a mouth on the last piece of cardstock. Put each cardstock number in a different area of the class.

Review the three commandments with the children. Say, "We are going to play a game. Listen to the commandment I read, choose which number it is, and then walk to that area of the classroom." Read the commandments through a few times and give the children time to walk to the correct area. Then play the game a new way. Make up a scenario for each commandment, and let the children figure out which cardstock number to walk to. For example: Theo knows God's name is special. He is careful to only say it in a way that honors God (Rule 3). Gia loves art, but she puts away her art supplies to listen to Bible stories (Rule 1). Ben knows he should only worship God. He prays to God every day (Rule 2).

NEXT STEPS FOR APPLICATION

Knowing

X It Out

Read the directions aloud. Point to the illustrations together and talk about what each one is (a person worshipping a statue, a child praying, a grandparent singing praises to God, an angry person misusing God's name). As you discuss the pictures, decide as a group which ones do not follow God's rules. The following ones should have X's on them: a person worshipping a statue and an angry person misusing God's name.

Growing

How Do I Worship God?

Read the directions. Have the children offer suggestions for how they show love to God (singing praise songs, telling God "Thank You," praying, dancing to worship music, tithing, caring for nature, telling a friend about Jesus). Give the children some time to create their own pictures. When they are done, have them tell a friend how they show love to God.

Worship Time

Sing to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star":

I will worship only God

And speak His holy name with love

I will serve Him every day

And put Him first in every way

I will worship only God

And speak His holy name with love

Pray together to end the class.

Craft Kingdom®

Craft Kingdom® provides directions to complete a craft that reinforces the lesson. Play the *Sing-Along* CD as students work.

NOTES

Exodus

OBEYING GOD'S LAW Focal Verses • EXODUS 20:18–26

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: EXPLORE the divine manifestations and warnings that accompanied the giving of the Ten Commandments; ASPIRE to live in more perfect obedience to God's laws; and SHARE one way to show God that we are serious about obeying His laws.

In Focus

Arron and Regina were married right out of school and rented a walk-up apartment near Regina's parents' brownstone. After several years of paying their bills on time, raising their credit score, and saving what they could, they decided it was time to buy their first home. They found an inexpensive house in the best school district in the city and set off to see the loan officer at the only African American bank in town.

"Banks are imposing, and bankers intimidate me," Regina told Aaron the morning of their appointment. "Don't worry," Aaron replied, "we are also meeting my uncle, who invests in real estate, and he can help us understand the documents and explain our rights and obligations. As for the bank building, those marble columns, high ceilings, and ornate wooden desks are all meant to assure us that the bank is solid, stable, and invested in our community." Excited, yet a bit apprehensive, Regina held Aaron's hand tightly as they walked through the massive brass and glass doors of the local bank.

On their way back to their apartment, Regina commented, "I feel so much better. The people at the bank were welcoming and willing to trust us with this loan. Let's pray together, right now, that God will help us to honor our part. Let's ask God to enable us to show the bank that their trust in us is well placed."

Describe a time when someone didn't do their part to honor an agreement. In this lesson, we will find out how the Israelites were called to honor their covenant agreement with God.



Keep in Mind

"In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee"
(from Exodus 20:24, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV **Exodus 20:18** And all the people saw the thundering, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.

19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

22 And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

23 Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

24 An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and they peace offering, they sheep, and thine oxen: In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

25 And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up they tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

26 Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon

The People, Places, and Times

Moses. Moses plays a prominent role in the events of this passage. Born a Hebrew slave, Moses was later raised in the home of the Pharaoh, God chose Moses to return to Egypt and lead the Hebrew people out of slavery. In the process, God shaped and molded Moses into His faithful servant who became an outstanding leader of His people.

Mount Sinai. The events of this passage take place at Mount Sinai, often referred to as “the mountain of God.” It is believed by some to be located about fifty miles north of the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, in an area now controlled by Egypt. On this mountain, Moses met God in the burning bush, and here God called Moses to go to Egypt and lead His people out of slavery (Exodus 3). Many years later, the prophet Elijah would return to this mountain (which is also called Horeb) and hear from God in the gentle whisper of a still, small voice (1 Kings 19:8–13).

How would you evaluate Moses’ relationship with God? Did God direct Moses’ life in ways that helped Moses mature and become the leader that He needed?

Background

The events of this Scripture take place in the third month after God had led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. For nearly three months, a vast multitude of men, women, and children had been slowly moving across formidable deserts. All the miraculous events that God had ordained in Egypt, including the night of the Passover and the parting of the Red Sea, were certainly still fresh in their minds. In the past few months, they had seen the presence of God in the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day. They had been miraculously fed by the manna and quail. God had provided water when none was to be found. The Israelites were constantly aware of the presence and power of God in their midst. Now they were camped at the foot

of Mount Sinai, where God would once again show His mighty power and give the Law to His people through their leader Moses. Through the process, the people would learn more about God and what He expected of them.

How would you evaluate the importance of the Ten Commandments in the lives of the Israelites, as well as all modern-day believers?

At-A-Glance

1. God Makes His Presence Known (Exodus 20:18)
2. The People Show Reverent Fear (vv. 19–21)
3. God Encourages Proper Worship (vv. 22–26)

In Depth

1. God Makes His Presence Known (Exodus 20:18)

For three months, God had made His presence known through miraculous physical phenomena such as the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. He led them to stop at Mount Sinai, where He would give His people the Law.

The Israelites' stopping at Mount Sinai mirrors what happens in a believer's life. We worship the Lord and come to know who He is before we are given commands to obey. The Law outlined how they were expected to live as His people in relationship with Him and in relationship with each other. They were expected to fulfill these covenant requirements. This is in line with the commands that Jesus put forth as the first and second greatest commandments for us—to love God and to love people.

It was important for God to make sure His people knew that it was He, Almighty God, the God of their fathers, who was giving the Law.

So He used spectacular divine manifestations to cause them to respond in fear and reverence to keep their covenant commitment. He used smoke, thunder, the sound of heavenly trumpets, and lightning. God's manifestation of His presence had the desired effect. The presence of God and the recognized authorship of His commands also cause us to reverence God, receive His words, and obey them.

What has caused you to fear and revere God lately?

2. The People Show Reverent Fear (vv. 19–21)

The people withdrew in fear, knowing they were truly in the presence of Almighty God. Yet Moses told them, "Fear not, for God is come to prove you" (v. 20). What Moses was telling them was that they should not withdraw from God in terror; God intended to use this experience to instill in them a reverent awe of Him. It was as if God were saying, "I want you to know I really mean business here!" Thus, "fear of the LORD" would prompt His people to want to keep the Law, and never sin. God also used the divine manifestations to underscore the importance of His commands that He would be their only God, and that they were never to make any idols. After all they had seen, heard, and experienced, it is hard to imagine that any of the Israelites would ever consider following any other god! They had heard His voice and seen His power, yet they had not seen Him in any physical shape or form. But God knows the fragility of human nature, and no matter how many times they experienced God's miracles and presence, they turned to idols. It is the same way with us. We often forget who God is and turn to less-than-satisfactory idols.

What motivates you to modify your behavior and respond to God in obedience?

3. God Encourages Worship (vv. 22–26)

Finally, God gave instructions on the building of altars to be used in worship. While this command seems unusual to us, it was fitting for the culture of the time. From the beginning, God has always desired worship, and at that time worship included sacrifices and burnt offerings. What God wanted to make clear with the commands of verses 24–26 was that the altars were to be temporary and portable. They were not yet in the Promised Land, and their focus was to be on the object of their worship rather than the place of their sacrifice. The stones were to be unhewn, perhaps so that no one would be tempted to carve the stones into some image or idol. And the altars were not to have steps leading up to them so their sacrifices would be made in humility and modesty. Again, the focus was then, and is now, on the object of our worship, not on the means, place, or structure.

How and where can we create opportunities to worship God in addition to Saturday and Sunday worship services?

Search the Scriptures

1. Moses says that God appeared in the way He did so the people would not sin (Exodus 20:20). How does God's presence keep us from sinning?

2. Why did God want them to make an altar of unhewn stone (v. 25)?

Discuss the Meaning

In this Scripture, we learn a lot about God, His power, and His desire for us to live in obedience and fellowship with Him. What can we do to achieve and keep a proper attitude of awe, reverence, fear, and love for Him?

Liberating Lesson

Places such as banks, courtrooms, and churches are intentionally built to inspire awe,

respect, and even proper fear in us. And in those places, we often enter into agreements where we make certain promises and receive certain privileges. The awe, respect, and fear generated by our surroundings, as well as our faith in God, should prompt us to live up to the promises we have made, and joyfully comply with agreements into which we have entered. In this way, we will enjoy more blessings and peace in our relationship with God and with our neighbors.

Some years ago, Tavis Smiley helped to develop a book titled *The Covenant with Black America*. The book outlines strategies for the betterment of the African American community. This book addresses the problem on a structural level, but there also could be a solution to improving the African American community on a personal level. We need to tackle some of the weightier economic, educational, and health issues that plague our communities. At the same time, we also need to fear God and treat Him with reverence and respect. We need to live up to the agreements we have made in our churches, businesses, and relationships.

How can we prioritize our relationship with God and seek to improve our dealings with others?

Application for Activation

God's greatness and awesomeness compel us to honor our commitment to Him. Here are some ways we can remember to honor Him and what He has done in our lives:

- Go outdoors and look up at the sky to remind yourself of the greatness of God.
- Bring a special offering in thanksgiving to God.
- Spend time each morning reading God's Word and writing down a Bible verse on a card that you take with you.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

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Enns, Peter. *The NIV Application Commentary, Exodus.* Zondervan, 2000.

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Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1990.

Say It Correctly

Hewn. **HEE**-yoon.

Altar. **AL**-ter.

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 8

Genesis 25–26

DAY 9

Genesis 27–29

DAY 10

Genesis 30–31

DAY 11

Genesis 32–34

DAY 12

Genesis 35–37

DAY 13

Genesis 38–40

DAY 14

Genesis 41–42

Notes
