

THE BIGGEST STORY CURRICULUM



April - June

Pentateuch

History

1st-3rd: Red Check Marks

4th - 5th: Green Check Marks

Kids Worship: Blue Check Marks



STORY 10

God's Tricky, Hairy, Blessed People

GENESIS 25; 27

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Genesis 25; 27.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

Do you remember a few weeks ago when we talked about family trees? A family tree is a picture of a tree that has names on it. On the trunk there might be the names of your great grandparents; on the first branches there might be your grandparents. Then, moving up the tree, there is your mom and dad and, above them, you and your siblings, if you have any. The book of Genesis, as we've seen, has its own family tree. But by the time we get to chapter 25, it's become quite twisted. Adam and Eve had three sons: Cain, Abel, and Seth. From Seth came Noah. Noah had three sons. From Noah's son Shem came Abraham. (You won't have to remember all these names for some test.) Anyway, Abraham, as

you will certainly remember, married Sarah and they had a son, Isaac, who married a girl named Rebekah; and like Sarah, she had a hard time having a baby. Isaac prayed, and the Lord heard his prayer: Rebekah became pregnant with twin boys! Imagine how big her belly was! They named their first son Esau; they named the second Jacob. Let's learn about them next. And as we learn the strange stories about them, we will learn that God blesses his people even when they keep getting things wrong.

TELL THE STORY

Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God blesses his
people even when
they keep getting
things wrong.

Do you remember the twins' names? The first was Esau; the second was Jacob. When Esau was born, his body was red and hairy. The name *Esau* actually means "hairy." Jacob was born holding Esau's heel. His name means "he takes by the heel" or "he cheats." It was the perfect name because he grew up to be quite a trickster.

Esau became a skillful hunter. He loved the outdoors! Jacob was the opposite: he "was a quiet man, dwelling in tents." Isaac (the dad) favored Esau because he would hunt animals and serve him yummy meat to eat. But Rebekah (the mom) favored Jacob. One day, Esau came back tired from a long day of hunting. Exhausted Esau saw that his brother was cooking stew. "Give me a bowl!" he ordered. "Hmm," tricky Jacob thought, "sure. But I want something in return. Trade me your birthright!" "My birthright," Esau said, "who cares about that? I'm starving to death!" Esau wasn't thinking about how amazing his birthright was, he was just thinking about what he wanted right then. You see, the birthright



Story

10

Genesis

25; 27

means, when the dad dies, the firstborn son gets everything his father owned. But Esau was so foolish that he followed his belly and agreed to Jacob's sneaky offer. He gave away his amazing birthright.

Jacob's next sneaky move comes when his dad is about to die and nearly blind. Before he died, Isaac wanted to give his oldest son Esau a blessing. Rebekah's love for Jacob made her a trickster too. She dressed Jacob up in Esau's clothes and stuck dead, furry animals on his skin so, when Jacob brought his father a yummy meal (like Esau did after hunting), his father would think he was his hairy brother. It worked! The tricky twin cheated the hairy one yet again. Isaac gave Esau's blessing to Jacob. Amazing!

Want to hear something even more amazing? Even before Jacob and Esau were born, God had told Rebekah that the older son would serve the younger son. That is, God had chosen Jacob, instead of Esau, to receive his promise of blessing. Jacob's sin didn't stop God's plan to bless him and keep his promise to Abraham.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

The Biggest Story isn't about God's people getting it right, as much as it's about God blessing his people even when they get things wrong. Abraham's family tree is a twisted mess. (Is your family any different?) There is Abraham's clueless son (Isaac), his sneaky daughter-in-law (Rebekah), and the twins—foolish Esau and sneaky Jacob. What can God do with such an awful family tree? Learn this lesson: God blesses the people of his promise. He makes even this twisted tree grow into something beautiful. Do you know how the New Testament begins? It begins with Jesus's family tree! "Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob" (Matt. 1:2). From that trunk comes over forty more names. And the final names listed? "Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born" (1:16). The Snake Crusher came from sinners like Rebekah and Jacob. And he came, the Bible tells us, to "save his people from their sins" (1:21). In fact, do you know what the name Jesus means? "Savior!" What a perfect name, for Jesus is our perfect Savior. Through Jesus, God chooses to save and bless people like you and me, even though we sin and get things wrong. Just like Jacob. Isn't that beautiful?

3

Engage

Memory Verse

Two nations are in
your womb, and
two peoples from
within you shall be
divided; the one
shall be stronger
than the other, the
older shall serve
the younger.

GENESIS 25:23

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What were some of the ways that Jacob was sneaky? Do you think he deserves God's blessing?

TAKEAWAY: Jacob kept getting things wrong and did not deserve God's blessing.

2. **QUESTION:** What did God tell Rebekah before the twins were born? Did God change his mind when he saw Jacob cheating his brother? What does this tell us about God?

TAKEAWAY: God blesses his people even when they keep getting things wrong.

3. **QUESTION:** What did Esau's name mean? How about Jacob's name? Do you remember what Jesus's name means? Why is it good news for us that Jesus is our Savior?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus's name means "Savior" because he saves us from our sins.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Blind like Isaac

Supply List: eight random items that could be easily mistaken for something else (small animal figures, action figures, etc.), eight brown paper bags

Before Class: Gather supplies. Put one item in each bag and close it.

Say, "Isaac grew old and lost his sight. Not being able to see would be hard! Let's see if you can use your sense of touch to guess what is in the bag without being able to see it." Have the children sit in a circle and pass one bag around and give each child an opportunity to feel the item (no peeking!). After each child has touched the item, ask for specific guesses of what they think the item is. Then reveal the item. Repeat with the other bags.



Option 2: "I Am Esau"

Supply List: none

✓ Choose one child to stand at the front of the group with their back to the class. That child is Isaac. The teacher then taps the shoulder of one child and that child tries to disguise their voice and say, "I am Esau." The child up front (Isaac) turns around and points to the person they think said "I am Esau." Give them two guesses and then reveal the person. Give all children an opportunity to be blind Isaac.

3rd-5th

Option 1: Make the Stew Relay

Supply List: six real or pretend stew ingredients per team, one bucket/pot per team

Before Class: Gather supplies.

✓ Divide children into teams. Teams line up on one side of the room with one pot per team. All the stew ingredients are in a single pile on the other side of the room. One person from each team races to the other side of the room and grabs an ingredient for their stew from the pile. They can only take one item and then run it back to their team's pot. Then they tag the next person on their team to race down and get another item. The first team to collect six ingredients and place them in their pot wins. Optional: Play three to four rounds and ask kids to race in different ways (backwards, hopping, skipping, etc.).

Option 2: Blind like Isaac

Supply List: eight random items that could be easily mistaken for something else (small animal figures, action figures, etc.), eight brown paper bags

Before Class: Gather supplies. Put one item in each bag and close it.

✓ Say, "Isaac grew old and lost his sight. Not being able to see would be hard! Let's see if you can use your sense of touch to guess what is in the bag without being able to see it." Have the children sit in a circle and pass one bag around and give each child an opportunity to feel the item (no peeking!). After each child has touched the item, ask for specific guesses of what they think the item is. Then reveal the item. Repeat with the other bags.

CRAFTS


Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: “Jesus Is Our Savior” Family Paper Chain

Supply List: construction paper (red and other colors), markers/crayons, tape/glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write “Jesus is our Savior” on four strips of red paper (one word per strip, one set per child). Cut the other colors of construction paper into strips for a paper chain (ten per child).



For the other strips, have them write their name, along with names of friends and family who love Jesus. If they can’t write, they can draw pictures. Form the strips into a paper chain and attach using tape or glue. Make sure the chain begins with the four red strips that say “Jesus is our Savior.” Because Jesus is our Savior, we are now part of God’s family.

Option 2: Macaroni Stew

Supply List: cardstock (one per child), markers, macaroni noodles, glue stick

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have the children draw a circle for the soup bowl, then glue macaroni noodles inside the circle. Remind them that God blesses his people even when they keep getting things wrong. Optional: Write “God blesses his people even when they keep getting things wrong” at the top or bottom of the cardstock.



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Option 2: Macaroni Stew

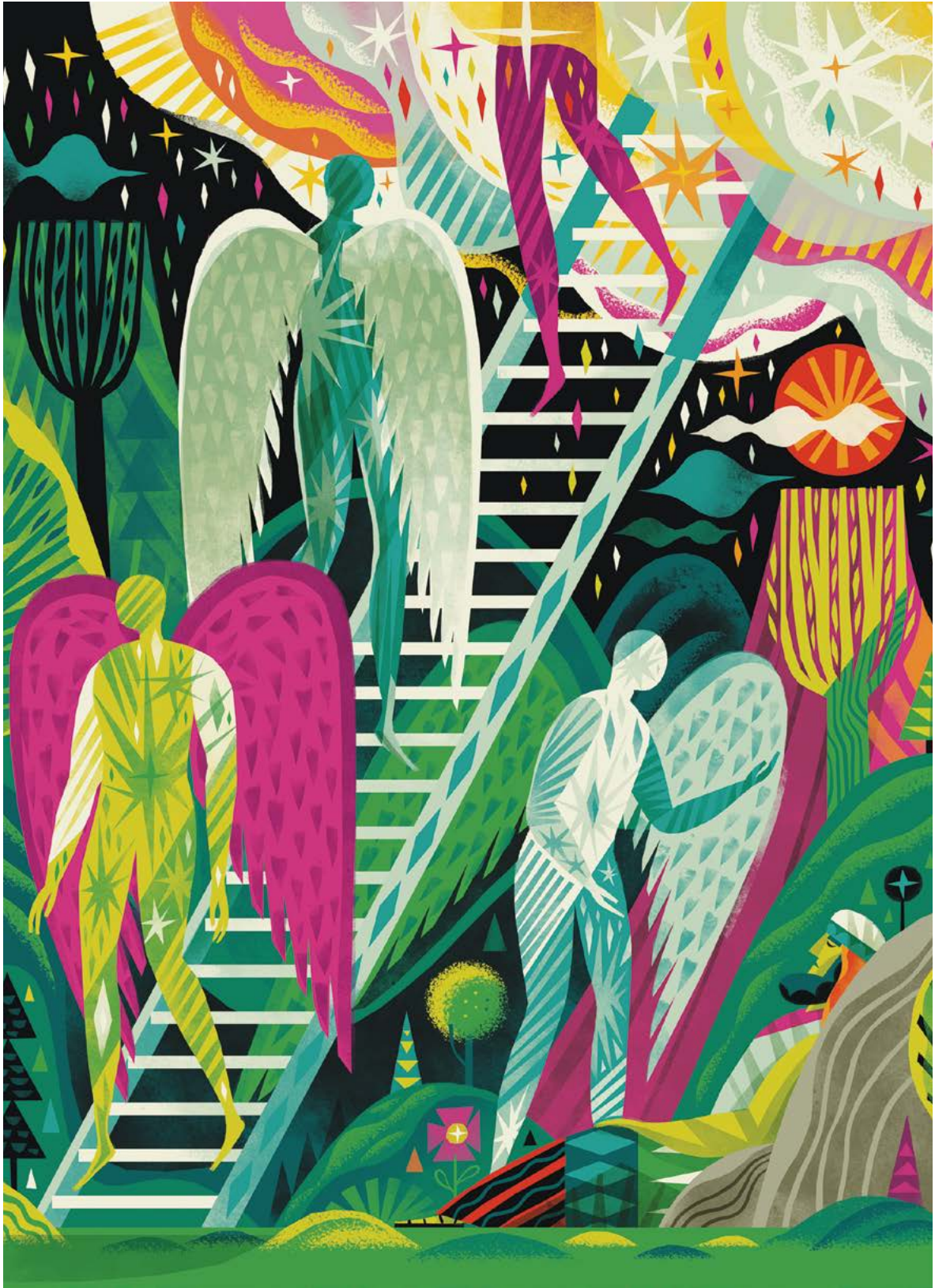
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Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 11

Blessings in the Night

GENESIS 28; 32

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Genesis 28; 32.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

We've been seeing how God keeps his promises, but not always in the way people expect. And he keeps them even when his people get things wrong. Do you remember the last lesson about the trickster twin (Jacob) and the two stories about how sneaky he was? Twice he stole his father Isaac's blessings from Esau, his hairy brother. While Esau was hunting, Jacob's mom Rebekah dressed him up to trick Isaac into thinking he was Esau. Jacob brought his father a yummy meal, and his trick worked because Isaac was nearly blind. Isaac blessed him, saying, "Let . . . nations bow down to you" and "blessed be everyone who blesses you!" (Gen. 27:29). As Jacob was receiving the blessing that should have been Esau's, his big brother returned to his father's tent. "Father, I'm back. The hunt was a success. I have some delicious food for you." "What! Who are you?" Isaac

said. “I am your firstborn son, Esau,” replied Esau. Isaac felt and smelt him. He smelled like the outdoors. Isaac’s jaw dropped. *Oh no*, he thought. “Your brother came deceitfully,” he said, “and he has taken away your blessing.” Esau cried out, “No!” and then he cried. What else did he do? Did he try to get even with Jacob? Let’s find out.

TELL THE STORY

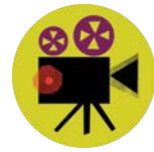
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the Bible passage together



Read from *The Biggest Story Bible Storybook*



Play *The Biggest Story* video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God reminds Jacob that he will keep his promise and that he will be with him.

Have you ever had someone take something really special from you? I bet you felt sad, hurt, or mad. The Bible tells us that after Esau learned Jacob stole his blessing, he was mad. So mad that he wanted to kill Jacob. Yikes! Rebekah told Jacob to leave town: “Get out of here now and stay with my brother Laban until Esau cools down.”

That’s what Jacob did. On his way, he stopped to sleep. God came to him in a strange dream about a ladder full of angels going up and down from earth to heaven. God stood above the ladder and reminded Jacob of his promises: “I am the God of Abraham and Isaac. I will give to you the land and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth and in your family all the families of the earth will be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised” (see Gen. 28:13–15). When Jacob awoke, he said, “How awesome! This is the house of God!” (see 28:17). There wasn’t an actual house, of course. Jacob meant God was with him and would stay with him.

During his time with Uncle Laban, God blessed Jacob with money; twelve sons; and sheep, goats, donkeys, camels, and cows. Baa. Maa. Neigh. Grunt. Moo. One



Story

11

Genesis

28; 32

night, as Jacob was leaving Laban's land, God came to him again. This time it wasn't in a dream but as a mysterious man who wrestled him all night. Jacob would not let go until he received a blessing. God gave him the blessing of a new name. Instead of Jacob, which means "he cheats," he became known as Israel, which means "he strives with God." The word *strive* means to work hard for something or to struggle. He also gave him a bad hip to remind him of this night. As Jacob limped away, he was amazed: "I have seen God face to face" (32:30). Struggling and striving Jacob was blessed with the confidence that God was with him.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

God's mercy knows no end! Jacob tricked his old, blind father and his hairy big brother. He never had a chance to say "Forgive me" to his father, because Isaac died. And he was still too afraid to get near angry Esau to say he was sorry. He had to flee his homeland all by himself. How lonely and scared he must have felt! No wonder he was so amazed that God came to him and made his home with him. And even more, God blessed him with lots of animals and a big family. And from that big family would come Jesus, who would bring blessing to all families. Because God always keeps his promises.

Did trickster Jacob deserve God's blessings? Of course not. Do we deserve the blessings that we have in Jesus—forgiveness of sins, a new heart, the Holy Spirit within, a big family (the church)? Of course not. What good news that in Jesus, God makes his home with us. We learned Jesus's name means "Savior" because he saves. He is also called Immanuel, which means "God with us." Jesus did not use a ladder to travel from heaven to earth, but he did travel from heaven to earth. Why? To be Savior and Immanuel. Isn't it wonderful that God saves and is always with us?

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** How do you think Jacob felt when he learned that Esau was trying to kill him? Do you think he wondered if God would still keep his promise? How did God reassure him? What do you remember about the dream God gave Jacob? What did Jacob learn about God?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: Jacob was blessed with the confidence that God was with him and would still keep his promise.

2. **QUESTION:** What did God promise Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would happen to all the families of the earth? Did God keep that promise? How?

TAKEAWAY: Through Jesus, God fulfilled his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and blessed all the families of the earth (including us!).

Memory Verse

Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

GENESIS 28:15



3. **QUESTION:** Who is called Savior and Immanuel (God with us)? How is the fact that Jesus saves a blessing to all people? How is the fact that Jesus is “God with us” a blessing to all people?

TAKEAWAY: God blesses all people through Jesus, who saves us from our sin and is Immanuel (God with us).

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Pin the Hip on the Socket

Supply List: large piece of paper, red and black markers, tape, red construction paper, scissors, blindfold

Before Class: Gather supplies. Draw a rough outline of a human on a large piece of paper and tape it to the wall. Draw a red circle to show where a hip would be. Cut out circles the size of the red circle (one per child).

Give each child one circle (which represents the hip). Put tape and the child’s name on each circle. Explain that the goal is to place their circle/hip as close to the red circle on the paper as possible (Pin the Hip on the Socket). Bring up one child at a time. Blindfold him, spin him one time, and point him in the direction of the paper. Instruct him to place his circle where he first touches the wall. The child whose hip/circle is closest to the red circle wins.



Option 2: Longest Challenges

Supply List: none

Before Class: Choose four to six challenges for the children to complete.

Tell the children you're going to give them some challenges to see who can persevere and last the longest. Here are some possible ideas: Who can stand on one foot the longest? Who can walk with a book balanced on their head the longest without touching it? Who can do a plank the longest? Who can do a wall sit the longest? Who can hop up and down on two feet the longest? Remind them that Jacob persevered and didn't give up when he wrestled with the mysterious man in the night.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Longest Challenges

Supply List: none

Before Class: Choose four to six challenges for the children to complete.

Tell the children you're going to give them some challenges to see who can persevere and last the longest. Here are some possible ideas: Who can stand on one foot the longest? Who can walk with a book balanced on their head the longest without touching it? Who can do a plank the longest? Who can do a wall sit the longest? Who can hop up and down on two feet the longest? Remind them that Jacob persevered and didn't give up when he wrestled with the mysterious man in the night.

Option 2: Thumb Wrestling Tournament

Supply List: none

Pair up the children. Have pairs come up one by one. Each pair should face each other and join their right hands together with their thumbs up. Say, "One, two, three, four, I declare a thumb war" and have them try to hold the other person's thumb down for three seconds until the teacher declares a winner. Record the name of the winner. Continue playing until all pairs have completed the first round. For round two, pair up winners from the first round. Continue with rounds of winners until you have a champion. Remind them that Jacob wrestled with the mysterious man in the night.

CRAFTS


Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Rock Painting

Supply List: small rocks, acrylic paints, paintbrushes (one per child), paper plates

Before Class: Gather supplies. Put blobs of paint on paper plates for each craft table.



Give every child a rock and a paintbrush. Encourage children to paint a rock as a reminder that God is with us. They can keep it or give it away and tell someone that through Jesus, God is with us. Remind them that Jacob laid his head on a rock and drifted off to sleep. When he was asleep, God came to him and told him he would be with him and would keep his promises to him.

Option 2: Create a Pillow

Supply List: light-colored felt rectangles (one per child), staples, stapler, stuffing (Poly-fil or cotton balls), markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give the children each one piece of felt and have them fold it in half. Have the teacher or child staple the sides closed, leaving one end open to stuff. Use markers to decorate the pillows. They can write “God is with us” on the pillow. Have them stuff the fluffy batting or cotton balls into the pillow and then staple it shut. Remind them that Jacob had a rock for a pillow and drifted off to sleep. When he was asleep, God came to him and told him he would be with him and would keep his promises to him.



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Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 12

Joseph's Mean Brothers and What God Meant to Do

GENESIS 37; 50

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Genesis 37; 50.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1
Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2
Teach

Remember the family tree in Genesis that began with Adam and Eve? It became a very messy family tree. Here are just a few examples. Before Abraham and Sarah gave birth to Isaac (the son God had promised), Abraham had doubted God's promise and taken matters into his own hands. As a result, he had children from two women who were not his wife, Sarah. What a mess! And if that wasn't messy enough, Isaac's son Jacob stole the birthright and blessing from older-brother Esau. But things got even messier. Jacob married beautiful-eyed Rachel, whom he loved very much. But he also married her sister, weak-eyed Leah, because he was tricked by her father. And the mess continues. God blessed

Leah with many children, but Rachel was sad because she had none. She gave her maid as a wife to Jacob so she could have children on Rachel's behalf. It worked. But that made Leah jealous, so she gave her maid to Jacob. Like Abraham and Sarah, they had taken matters into their own hands. Jacob had ten boys and a girl with Leah and the two maids, but still no child for Rachel. Finally, she got pregnant—twice! She had two boys: Joseph and Benjamin. Rachel and Jacob were so happy when Joseph was born. But Jacob was sad when Benjamin was born because Rachel died after giving birth to him.

Talk about a mess! Why are we talking about this messy family tree? Because God is able to work through our mess to bring about good. And our story today is one of the messiest (but best!) stories in all the Bible. Will God bring about good from this mess?

TELL THE STORY

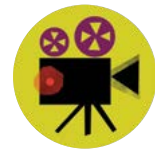
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God works all
things according
to his perfect plan.

As we just learned, Joseph was the firstborn son of beautiful-eyed Rachel—so his father Isaac favored him. Isaac's favorite son quickly became the least favorite brother. His eleven brothers hated him. And after Joseph told them his dreams about them bowing down before him, they really hated him. What the brothers did next was terrible. One day they grabbed him, ripped his fancy robe, threw him into a pit, and sold him into slavery. Then they lied and told their dad a wild beast tore him apart! Terrible, terrible, terrible.

But God had a good plan for this messy story. But before we see the good, the mess gets worse. Joseph was taken to Egypt and sold as a slave to an important Egyptian leader, Potiphar. Potiphar was so impressed by his new slave that he



Story

12

Genesis

37; 50

put Joseph in charge of everything. One day Potiphar’s wife did a terrible thing. She tried to kiss Joseph. Joseph refused and ran away. So she decided to lie and say that Joseph had come to kiss her. Potiphar was furious and threw Joseph into prison.

But God was with Joseph. God had given Joseph a special gift—the ability to interpret dreams. This gift came in handy. In prison he was able to tell two of the prisoners what their dreams meant. One of the prisoners eventually told Pharaoh (the king of Egypt). So when Pharaoh had a tricky dream, he asked Joseph to tell him what it meant. With God’s help Joseph was able to correctly interpret it. Pharaoh was so impressed by Joseph’s wisdom that he made him a big shot ruler over all of Egypt. How good is that? But it’s still a messy story. What might God be up to?

Years later, Joseph’s brothers and their families were desperate for food because there was a famine. God had helped Joseph store up food, so Egypt was prepared. Guess what Joseph’s brothers did? They travelled to Egypt to buy food so they wouldn’t starve. Next thing you know, Joseph had invited his brothers into his house and they were bowing down before him—just like in his dream. But the brothers didn’t understand who he was until Joseph said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt” (Gen. 45:4). Joseph could have thrown them in prison for what they had done to him. It was so terrible! But instead, he forgave them, gave them food, and let them share in his blessings. How beautiful! Because Joseph believed that God works all things according to his perfect plan, he said to them, “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive” (50:20). If not for this messy situation, God’s people would have died from the famine. If not for this messy situation, Abraham’s family tree would have been cut off. But Joseph was right: God intended the mess for good.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Remember how we told you at the beginning of the lesson that this would be a messy story? It sure was. But even through our messes, God works for his good. He intends for our mess to bring about his promised rescue plan.

But Joseph’s story isn’t the messiest in the Bible. Hundreds of years after Joseph, the religious and political leaders would reject God’s Son, whom the Father had sent into the world to save us. They beat him and mocked him.

They hung him on a cross to die. What a mess! It sure looked like the snake was going to win. But Jesus rose from the dead. He conquered sin. He crushed the snake. His purpose was for this mess to bring about salvation. What a great story! What a great salvation!

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What are some of the hard things that happened to Joseph? How did God use those things for good? What does this show us about God?

TAKEAWAY: God works all things according to his perfect plan.

2. **QUESTION:** What do you think Joseph was thinking when he was in the pit or in prison? Did Joseph know God's good plan at the beginning? How does Joseph's story give us confidence that God is with us and at work even during hard times?

TAKEAWAY: God was with Joseph, just like he is always with us—even when we don't sense his presence or understand what he is up to.

3. **QUESTION:** What mean things did Joseph's brothers do to him? What could Joseph have done to his brothers when they came to him for help years later? What can we learn from how Joseph actually responded?

TAKEAWAY: Like Joseph (and Jesus!), we should forgive those who sin against us.

4. **QUESTION:** How did God save the people of Egypt and surrounding areas from the famine? Like Joseph, Jesus was treated very badly by others. In fact, he was killed. How did God use Jesus's death for good?

TAKEAWAY: God used Joseph to save some people; God used his Son, Jesus, to save many people.

Memory Verse

And we know
that for those
who love God
all things work
together for good,
for those who are
called according
to his purpose.

ROMANS 8:28

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Colorful Coat Shuffle

Supply List: none

Every child but one brings a chair and puts it in a circle. The child without a chair is “It” and stands in the center of the circle. He or she calls out a color and anyone who is wearing that color has to get up and quickly change seats. The child who is “It” should also try to find a seat. The last child standing is now “It” and calls out the next color. At any point in the game, the teacher can shout “Colorful Coat Shuffle!” and all children have to get up and quickly change seats. Play continues as long as desired.

Option 2: Coat of Many Colors Relay

Supply List: construction paper, glue/tape, two large paper bags, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out large scraps of various colors of construction paper. Make two paper bag “coats” by cutting a slit down the middle of each bag and cutting holes for the arms and an opening for the head (the coat will resemble a vest).

Divide children into two teams. Choose one person from each team to be “Joseph.” The two Josephs stand at the other end of the room wearing the coats. Give each team one pile of construction paper scraps (make sure the number of scraps are equal). Each person on the team will take turns grabbing a piece of fabric, putting glue or tape on it, and running down to attach it to the back of their team’s coat. Players continue to take turns until the pile of scraps is gone. The first team to finish wins.



Story

12

Genesis

37; 50

3rd–5th

Option 1: Coat of Many Colors Relay

Supply List: construction paper, glue/tape, two large paper bags, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out large scraps of various colors of construction paper. Make two paper bag “coats” by cutting a slit down the middle of each bag and cutting holes for the arms and an opening for the head (the coat will resemble a vest).

Divide children into two teams. Choose one person from each team to be “Joseph.” The two Josephs stand at the other end of the room wearing the coats. Give each team one pile of construction paper scraps (make sure the number of scraps are equal). Each person on the team will take turns grabbing a piece of fabric, putting glue or tape on it, and running down to attach it to the back of their team’s coat. Players continue to take turns until the pile of scraps is gone. The first team to finish wins.

Option 2: Forgiveness Word Maker

Supply List: paper, writing utensils



Distribute a sheet of paper and a writing utensil to each child. Ask kids to see how many smaller words can be made from the word *Forgiveness*. Each letter can only be used as many times as it appears in the word *Forgiveness*. After a set amount of time, determine which child has created the most words. Have that child read the list to the class.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Rice Message

Supply List: dark cardstock paper, liquid glue, rice, small bowls, black marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write the words “Trust God” in large uppercase letters on pieces of dark cardstock (one per child). Portion rice into small bowls.



Distribute a sheet of cardstock to each child. Place bowls of rice and liquid glue on tables for children to share. Children will use the glue to trace the letters and then sprinkle pieces of rice over the glue.

Option 2: Coat of Many Colors

Supply List: white cardstock, scissors, paintbrushes, straws, watercolor paint, cups of water

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out the shape of a long coat from pieces of white cardstock (one per child).

Give each child a coat cut from cardstock, a paintbrush, ~~and a straw~~. Put watercolor paints and cups of water on tables for children to share. Have children dip their wet paintbrush in a color and ~~place a dot on their coat~~. ~~Have children direct their straws towards the dot of paint and blow, distributing the color.~~ ~~Children repeat the process until their coats are covered.~~

We will paint the paper with watercolor like normal

3rd–5th

Option 1: Coat of Many Colors

See above.

Option 2: Rice Message

Supply List: dark cardstock paper, liquid glue, rice, small bowls, black marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write the words “Trust God” in large uppercase letters on pieces of dark cardstock (one per child). Portion rice into small bowls.

Distribute a sheet of cardstock to each child. Place bowls of rice and liquid glue on tables for children to share. Children will use the glue to trace the letters and then sprinkle pieces of rice over the glue.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 13

God Raises Up a Deliverer

EXODUS 1–3

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Exodus 1–3.*
- *Pray for God’s help. Ask for the Spirit’s help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children’s eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1
Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week’s story. {5 minutes}

2
Teach

The book of Genesis ends with the story of Joseph. Remember that messy story and its happy ending? The last line in Genesis, however, ends on a sad note: “So Joseph died . . . and he was put in a coffin in Egypt” (Gen. 50:26). The book of Exodus starts on the same sad note: “Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation” (Ex. 1:6). And while the next generation had lots and lots of children (“the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them,” 1:7), matters went from bad to worse, or sad to sadder. “There arose a new king [a new Pharaoh] over Egypt, who did not know Joseph” (1:8). Remember how the old Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all of Egypt? This new Pharaoh didn’t even know who Joseph was. The memory of the hero who saved Egypt quickly faded. This new Pharaoh cared only about the Egyptians. And because “the Egyptians

were in dread of the people of Israel” (1:12) and they feared the Israelites would outnumber them if a war broke out, Pharaoh made God’s people slaves for over four hundred years. So very sad.

TELL THE STORY

Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God raises up a
leader to deliver
his people out
of slavery.

What if your parents asked you to spend the whole weekend cleaning the house? Would you like doing it? Of course not. It would be hard work! Well, life for God’s people was very hard. They probably wished they only had to clean their own home. Instead, they had to work as slaves for the Egyptians every day in the hot sun. And they didn’t have a choice. They couldn’t throw a fit and say, “No! I won’t do it.” They would be whipped if they said something like that! Each day they arrived at work and the Egyptians “made their lives bitter with hard service” (1:14). Some slaves had to make, carry, and set bricks in place; other slaves had to farm the land.

Despite all of this, the people of Israel kept growing in number. Do you think Pharaoh liked that? No way! He was already worried that if the Israelites outnumbered the Egyptians, they would win against them in a war. That fear made him meaner. So mean that he even issued an order to kill all the baby boys of Israel. “If it is a son,” he told the women who helped deliver babies, “you shall kill him” (1:16). Because the women feared God, they secretly disobeyed the Pharaoh and let the babies live. And God blessed them for it. Moms and dads also tried to save their sons from Pharaoh’s cruel command. One mom hid her boy in a basket and placed him in the Nile River. His name was Moses. Do you know what happened to that helpless baby? Did a crocodile eat him? No. Did he fall into the water?



Story

13

Exodus

1-3

No. Did Pharaoh's daughter, when she was taking a bath in the river, find him and raise him as her own son? Yes! Incredible! Oh how God protects his people!

God would deliver the Israelites through that baby Moses. When Moses grew up, he did something foolish and violent. The Egyptians were so mean to the Israelites. This upset Moses. One day, he saw an Egyptian hurting an Israelite, and Moses killed him. Another Egyptian saw the murder, so Moses feared for his life. He escaped into the wilderness and lived there forty years. He got married, had children, and learned to take care of sheep. One day, he encountered God in a bushing bush. Our always-and-forever God called himself "I AM WHO I AM" (3:14) and said to Moses: "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I have come to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians" (see 3:6-8). Then he told Moses that he had chosen him to save his people. But how? Moses would be the deliverer, but God would do the rescuing.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher. {5 minutes}

Remember what God called himself in the burning bush? "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex. 3:14). God is the always-and-forever God. He always was and always will be. When our Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, came to earth, he sometimes called himself "I AM"—the same words God used when he was talking to Moses! Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12) and "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25). Just in case we were missing the point, he told the Pharisees, "Before Abraham was, I am" (8:58). Jesus existed before Abraham because he has always existed, and he will exist forever. And he exists forever to deliver his people. Just as God called Moses to deliver Israel from their slavery in Egypt, God sent Jesus to deliver sinners from their sins. "Thanks be to God," the apostle Paul writes, "that you who were once slaves of sin have . . . been set free from sin" (Rom. 6:17-18). In Jesus, we are rescued from sin so we can live for him—the great "I AM."

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What did Pharaoh command to be done to the Israelite baby boys? Did all the women delivering babies obey that command? What does

3

Engage

that tell us about who they feared more—God or Pharaoh? How should we be like these brave women?

TAKEAWAY: Like the women who helped to deliver babies, we should “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Memory Verse

I will bring
you up out of
the affliction
of Egypt to . . .
a land flowing
with milk
and honey.

EXODUS 3:17

2. **QUESTION:** What bad things could have happened to baby Moses? How did God protect him? God protects all his people. How do you feel knowing that God protects you?

TAKEAWAY: God protects his people, just like he protected baby Moses.

3. **QUESTION:** What are some ways the Israelites were treated badly? Had God forgotten about them? What did God do to show that he had not forgotten about them? Whom did he say he would use to deliver the Israelites? Whom did God send to deliver us?

TAKEAWAY: God sees his people suffering and sends Moses to deliver them from slavery, just as he sent Jesus to deliver us.

4. **QUESTION:** What do you think it means when God calls himself “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex. 3:14)? How is that different from any other person in the world? Why do you think Jesus used the same phrase to describe himself?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the great “I AM,” which means he is the always-and-for-ever God.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Baby Moses and the Crocodiles

Supply List: none

Have the children line up on one side of the classroom. Choose one or two children to be the “crocodiles” and have them come to the middle of the room. Tell the other children that they will each play the role of baby Moses. Their goal



is to get to the opposite wall (safely down the Nile) without being tagged by a crocodile. Tell the crocodiles that the goal is to tag as many kids as possible. If a crocodile tags someone, that child becomes one of the crocodiles. Go until there is either only one student left (baby Moses wins!) or the crocodiles are left (crocodiles win!).

Option 2: Pin the Baby in a Basket

Supply List: large piece of paper, black marker, tape, white construction paper, scissors, blindfold

Before Class: Gather supplies. Draw a simple baby shape on the white construction paper (one for each child). Cut out the baby shapes. Draw a basket in a river on the large piece of paper. The basket should be the size of the baby.

Give each child a paper baby. Put tape and the child's name on his or her baby. Explain that the goal is to place the baby as close to the basket as possible. Bring up one child at a time. Blindfold him, spin him one time, and point him in the direction of the paper. Instruct him to place his baby where he first touches the wall. The child whose baby is closest to the basket wins.

3rd-5th

Option 1: Can You Float a Boat?

Supply List: tin foil, straws, pennies, scissors, tape, large plastic container, water

Before Class: Gather supplies. Fill a large plastic container with water.

Distribute tin foil, straws, scissors, and tape to children. Challenge pairs of children to make a boat that floats out of the given supplies. When the boat is successful at staying afloat, see how many pennies you can add to the boat before it sinks. The pair whose boat floats with the most pennies in it wins the challenge.

Option 2: How Good Is Your Memory?

Supply List: different baby items on a tray with fabric to cover (diaper, pacifier, rattle, bottle, baby food, baby monitor, etc.) paper, pencil

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children sit in a circle. Tell the children that you are going to show them a tray of baby items for twenty seconds and that they should try to remember

as many items as they can. Place the covered tray so that all children can see it. Uncover items for twenty seconds, then cover items back up. Give each child a piece of paper to write down as many items as they can remember. Then show the children the items one at a time. If they had that item on their list, have them circle it. After revealing all the items, the child with the most circles wins.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Burning Bush

Supply List: white paper, colored pencils or crayons, red and orange pieces of tissue paper, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children draw a bush on a piece of paper. Use glue to adhere red and orange pieces of tissue paper to the bush to represent the burning bush where God spoke to Moses. On the top of the paper write “I AM WHO I AM.”

Option 2: Baby in the Reeds

Supply List: white paper, brown construction paper (one per child), crayons, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out inch-wide strips of brown construction paper (five to six strips per child).

Give each child a sheet of white paper and five to six strips of brown paper. Have the children draw a baby in a basket on their paper. Then have them lay the strips of brown paper on top of the paper and glue one end of the strips to the bottom of the paper (so the “reeds” hide the baby). Remind them that God protected Moses so that he could deliver the Israelites from slavery.



Option 1: Paper Weaving

Supply List: brown and one other color of construction paper, scissors, tape, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out 1" x 8.5" strips from the nonbrown construction paper. Make a sample craft.

Give each child one piece of brown construction paper and a pair of scissors. Have the children fold the paper in half to form a 5.5" x 8.5" rectangle. Have them make four cuts starting at the folded edge. Make sure children stop cutting when they are an inch from the edge. Unfold the paper. Distribute the cut strips of paper and tape. Show children how to weave the strips of paper by alternating over and under the lines that they cut. Use tape as needed to secure strips of paper. Write "God protects his people" on the basket.

Option 2: Burning Bush

Supply List: white paper, colored pencils or crayons, red and orange pieces of tissue paper, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children draw a bush on a piece of paper. Use glue to adhere red and orange pieces of tissue paper to the bush to represent the burning bush where God spoke to Moses. On the top of the paper write "I AM WHO I AM."



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 14

Free at Last

EXODUS 4–15

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read the focus passage (Ex. 12:21–14:31) or the whole passage (Exodus 4–15).
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

Imagine being a slave your whole life. Each day you wake up, get out of bed, have a quick breakfast, and spend the rest of the day doing whatever your taskmaster tells you to do. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for over four hundred years! What do you think they thought about while they made pyramids for the Egyptians? Perhaps some thought about a new pharaoh that would get rid of slavery. Others may have thought about how to escape. One thing we know for sure is that some remembered God and prayed that he would deliver them.

As we learned last week, God saw their suffering and he came up with a plan to save them. Remember the burning bush? Remember when our always-and-for-ever God called himself "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex. 3:14)? This God said to Moses: "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I have seen the affliction of my

people who are in Egypt, and I have come to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of Egypt into a land flowing with milk and honey” (see 3:6–8). God always keeps his promises. Today we learn the exciting story of the promised rescue.

TELL THE STORY

Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
focus passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God saves his
people from the
Egyptians.

Remember the burning bush? Remember how Moses learned God would use him to rescue Israel? How would our hero respond? Not like a hero should! He asked God to send someone else. But God gave Moses everything he needed to deliver his people. By using powerful signs, God proved to the Israelites that he had sent Moses to rescue them. And the people believed.

When God told Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, Pharaoh’s heart was hard and he refused. But God is always in charge, and nothing can stop him from rescuing his people. God sent ten terrible plagues on the Egyptians. First came blood, then frogs and gnats and flies, then dead animals, then boils and hail and locusts, then darkness, and finally death. Each plague made the gods and goddesses of Egypt look weak and showed that the God of Israel was in charge. When the final plague came, God provided a very peculiar form of protection for his people. Moses told them to kill a “lamb . . . without blemish” (Ex. 12:5) and to spread its blood on the doorposts of their houses. The lamb’s blood would save them. Strange. Strange, but important. God said, “I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. . . . And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you” (Ex. 12:12–13). To this day, people remember this peculiar protection by calling it the Passover. But death



Story

14

Exodus

4–15

fell on the homes of all without the blood; even Pharaoh's firstborn son died. Finally, Pharaoh let God's people go.

"Free at last!" Moses and the Israelites thought. But Pharaoh's hard heart grew hard again, so he and his army chased after them. When they cornered Israel at the Red Sea, God showed his power. He blew the water into walls, and the Israelites escaped through the sea on dry ground. The Egyptians chased them, but again God showed he was in charge. He made the walls of water crash down on those mighty men. On the shore the Israelites danced and sang praises to the Lord. Finally, free at last! God had answered the cries of his people and delivered them by the hand of Moses.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher. {5 minutes}

Have you noticed a pattern in how God works? Trouble before triumph. Suffering before salvation. Danger before deliverance. The story of our rescue in Jesus is no different. He is rejected by his people. He is arrested, sentenced to die, mocked, spit on, slapped, and finally crucified on a cross. Trouble. Suffering. Danger. But the story isn't over. Next comes triumph, salvation, and deliverance! Jesus rises from the dead. He triumphs over the grave. Jesus saves everyone who believes in him. And he will return to deliver us from trouble, suffering, and danger.

And do you remember that peculiar way God saved the Israelites? Death passed over those who put the blood of a lamb on their doorposts. He did that to give us all a clue about how he would save the whole world later on. Through the blood of a more perfect Lamb, God passes over our sin. Everyone who accepts the blood of Jesus, our sinless Passover Lamb, will be saved. If you believe in Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for your sin, God will pass over you on judgment day. You too can be free at last!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What was Pharaoh's response to God's command to let his people go? What happened when he refused to obey? What does this teach us about how we should respond to God's commands?

3

Engage

Memory Verse
The blood shall
be a sign for
you. . . . And
when I see the
blood, I will
pass over you.

EXODUS 12:13

TAKEAWAY: God will punish all those who refuse to obey him, just as he punished the Egyptians.

2. **QUESTION:** How did we see God as more powerful than Pharaoh? How did we see God’s power over creation? What did God use his power to accomplish?

TAKEAWAY: God is all-powerful and nothing can stop him from delivering his people from evil.

3. **QUESTION:** What happened when the Israelites put the blood of a lamb over their doorpost? What are we saved from when we trust that the blood of Jesus perfectly covers our sin? How is Jesus like the lamb in our story?

TAKEAWAY: The blood of Jesus saves us from sin and death; he is the perfect Passover Lamb.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Let My People Go!

Supply List: ten balloons, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up ten balloons. Divide the room in half with masking tape.

Explain that half of the room is Egypt and the other half is the wilderness. Divide the children in two teams and give each team half of the balloons: “Pharaoh’s army” stands in the wilderness, and “the Israelites” stand in Egypt. Explain that the balloons represent the Israelites trying to escape from Egypt. The teacher shouts “Let my people go!” to begin the game. The Israelites hit the balloons into the wilderness, and Pharaoh’s army hits the balloons back into Egypt. Players are not permitted to hold balloons; they can only hit them. After three to five minutes, the teacher ends the game and the team with the most balloons on the opposite side of the room wins. Remind children that Pharaoh could not stop God from delivering his people out of Egypt.





Option 2: How Strong Is Your Wind?

Supply List: plastic cups, straws, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Use masking tape to mark a starting line and a finish line on a flat surface.



Give every child a plastic cup and a straw. Have the children place their cup at the starting line. You may want to have each child take a turn and time him or her with a stopwatch. Their goal is to be the first one to blow their cup across the finish line using the straw (or the one to do it in the shortest amount of time). Say, “On your mark, get set, blow!” Remind children God sent a strong wind to make the Red Sea part so the Israelites could walk on dry land.



3rd–5th

Option 1: Water to Blood Relay

Supply List: packet of red fruit punch, two water pitchers, two small cups, large bucket or bin

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a line at the same height on each water pitcher and sprinkle red fruit punch in the bottom. Fill the bucket with water.

Divide children into two teams on one side of the room. On the opposite side of the room, place both pitchers. Give each team one cup. One player from each team scoops water out of the bucket and carries it to the empty pitcher and pours it in. She returns the cup to the next player. Play continues until one team reaches the line on their pitcher. Remind children that one of the plagues God sent was to turn water into blood.

Option 2: Let My People Go!

Supply List: ten balloons, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up ten balloons. Divide the room in half with masking tape.

Explain that half of the room is Egypt and the other half is the wilderness. Divide the children in two teams and give each team half of the balloons: “Pharaoh’s army” stands in the wilderness, and “the Israelites” stand in Egypt. Explain that the balloons represent the Israelites trying to escape from Egypt. The teacher shouts “Let my people go!” to begin the game. The Israelites hit the balloons into

the wilderness, and Pharaoh's army hits the balloons back into Egypt. Players are not permitted to hold balloons; they can only hit them. After three to five minutes, the teacher ends the game and the team with the most balloons on the opposite side of the room wins. Remind children that Pharaoh could not stop God from delivering his people out of Egypt.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Passover Craft

Supply List: popsicle sticks (five per child), sheets of paper (one per child), glue, red watercolor paint, cups of water, paintbrushes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place paper horizontally and write “Jesus is our Passover Lamb” at the top. Make a sample craft.

Give each child five popsicle sticks, a sheet of paper, and a paintbrush. Place paints, glue, and cups of water at each table. Have the children glue three of the sticks on the paper to form a door frame, and two of the sticks to form a cross (doorposts on left, cross on right). Have them paint the sticks with the red paint. Remind children that Jesus is our Passover lamb.

We will use red
popsicle sticks

Option 2: Red Sea Craft

Supply List: paper plates (one per child), brown paper, glue, crayons, marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut three-inch strips of brown paper the length of the paper plate. Write “God saves his people” on each strip with the marker. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate and have them color it blue like the sea. Give them the brown strip to glue to the center of their plate. Have them fold the sides of the plate up like two walls of water. Remind them that God sent a wind to blow the water so that the Israelites could escape on dry land.



Option 1: Hard/Soft Heart

Supply List: popsicle sticks (one per child), cardstock, glue, scissors, sandpaper, cotton balls, pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out hearts on cardstock (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Distribute a popsicle stick, scissors, glue, and heart to each child. Place sandpaper, pencils, and cotton balls at each table. Have the children trace the heart onto a piece of sandpaper and cut it out. Then have them glue the popsicle stick to the bottom of the cardstock heart. Glue the sandpaper heart on top of that side. Have them glue the cotton balls to the other side of the heart. Remind children that God wants us to have soft hearts toward him.

Option 2: Passover Craft

Supply List: popsicle sticks (five per child), sheets of paper (one per child), glue, red watercolor paint, cups of water, paintbrushes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child five popsicle sticks, a sheet of paper, and paintbrush. Place paints, glue, and cups of water at each table. Have the children glue three of the sticks on the paper to form a door frame, and two of the sticks to form a cross (doorposts on left, cross on right). Have them paint the sticks with the red paint. Have them write “Jesus is our Passover Lamb” on the top of the paper.

We will use red
popsicle sticks



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 15

The Way to Stay Free

EXODUS 19–20

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Exodus 19–20.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1
Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

In Egypt God saved his people twice. First, he passed over houses with the lamb's blood on their doorposts. Second, he opened and closed the Red Sea when they were leaving. God commanded his people to remember this rescue. Once a year the Israelites had a week-long feast called Passover to celebrate what God had done in saving them from slavery and death. Do you know that just like God commanded the Israelites to remember their rescue, God commands Christians to remember our rescue? When Christians take part in the Lord's Supper, they celebrate what God has done. By his life and death, Jesus was the perfect Passover Lamb, saving us from slavery to sin and death. Seems like something worth remembering! God's command to remember is good.

2
Teach

But the command to remember wasn't the only good command God gave. In Exodus 20 God gave Israel the Ten Commandments. These ten rules show God's people what it means to serve and worship God. How can a list of rules be good? They not only show us what God is like but also keep his people free—free from the ways of the world, free from the slavery of sin, and free from our own silly, made-up rules.

TELL THE STORY

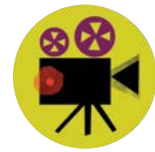
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God gives us
his good rules
so we can live
free lives that
reflect him.

God loved Israel. They were his treasured possession! So, when he heard their cry in Egypt, he saved them from slavery. He saved them because he wanted them to know him and love him and show his goodness to the world. But how could sinful people know how to do that? That's where the Ten Commandments come in. God gives Israel ten rules to live by.

Here's what happened. God called Moses and told him to climb a mountain called Sinai. Then God told Moses to tell the people to get ready because he was going to "come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people" (Ex. 19:11). When God arrived, there was thunder! Lightning! A loud trumpet blast! A thick cloud covered the top of the mountain. "Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire" (19:18). The people gathered at the foot of the mountain. Everyone trembled before their holy God. Even the mountain trembled. God is so powerful!

Powerful and good. So good. And why did he, this good God, come down? To give his people ten commands. Some people don't like commands. But God's commands aren't just hard rules to make our lives even harder. No! These good



rules show us what God is like and how to live so we are truly happy. The first four focus on loving God above anyone or anything else—with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (20:3–11).

1. One God. *“You shall have no other gods before me.”*
2. No idols. *“You shall not make for yourself a carved image.”*
3. Watch your mouth. *“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.”*
4. Take a rest. *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”*

The last six focus on loving others as much as we love ourselves (20:12–17).

5. Honor your parents. *“Honor your father and your mother.”*
6. Don’t murder. *“You shall not murder.”*
7. Don’t cheat on your husband or wife. *“You shall not commit adultery.”*
8. Don’t steal. *“You shall not steal.”*
9. Don’t lie. *“You shall not bear false witness.”*
10. Don’t dream about other people’s stuff. *“You shall not covet.”*

What good rules that free us to serve our good God!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

God didn’t give the Ten Commandments and then save Israel. The order matters. First he saved Israel, then he gave the Ten Commandments. The same pattern is true today. God doesn’t tell us to be good so that he can save us. If he did, we’d all be in a real bad spot. Instead, he saves us first, as a gift. Because of God’s great love, Jesus came into the world to crush the snake. He saves us from the power of the devil and forgave all our sins. All we have to do is believe in the Snake Crusher and we’re saved!

But Jesus saves us for a reason. The Bible says that he saved us to be a special people (a kingdom of priests and a holy nation; see 1 Pet. 2:9–10). You see, Jesus didn’t just rescue us from the penalty of our sins. He also saved us from the power of them. When we believe, he gives us new hearts—hearts that want to love God and love others. So when the Bible gives us commands, we don’t see them as a way to earn our salvation. We see them as the good things that the Snake Crusher’s death freed us to do. As God’s special people, Christians have a special job. What a privilege!

3

Engage

Memory Verse

I am the LORD
your God, who
brought you
out of the land
of Egypt. . . .
You shall have
no other gods
before me.

EXODUS 20:2-3

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What did the people hear and see when God came down the mountain? How did the people respond? What does it tell us about God that both people and mountains tremble before him?

TAKEAWAY: God is holy and awesome.

2. **QUESTION:** What are some reasons that the Israelites loved God? What are some reasons that we love God? What does it mean that we should love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength?

TAKEAWAY: We should love God above everything and everyone else.

3. **QUESTION:** Can you name the Ten Commandments? Whether you can or cannot, why is it important that we know them? How can we work on learning them?

TAKEAWAY: Freedom comes from obeying God's commands, so we should know them.

4. **QUESTION:** Can any of us keep all of God's commandments perfectly? Why should we go to God for help? How do you think God feels when we ask him for help?

TAKEAWAY: We need God's help to obey his commands, and God happily helps us when we ask.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10-15 minutes}

K-2nd

Option 1: Simon Says

Supply List: none

Have the children stand. The leader gives an instruction like "Simon says, 'Jump up and down'" or "Simon says, 'Turn in circles.'" Alternate by sometimes giving





a command without starting with “Simon says.” Say something like, “March in place.” If any child does this action, she has to sit down because you didn’t say, “Simon says.” Continue until only one child remains standing. Remind students that we should obey God’s commands.

Option 2: Ten Commandment Relay Race

Supply List: copy paper, scissors

Before Class: Print the Ten Commandments on a piece of paper (use the simplified version of the commandments from the lesson and number each commandment). You will need one copy for every two to three students. Cut each copy into pieces with one commandment on each piece.

Divide the children into teams of two to three people. Each team will need a set of the numbered commandment pieces placed at the other end of the room. One at a time, a team member will run, grab a Ten Commandment piece, bring it back, and tag the next person. Children will continue until they have all ten commandments. Then each team must put the commandments in the correct order. When they finish, they should shout “Ten Commandments!” Check to make sure it is correct.


3rd–5th


Option 1: Ten Commandment Relay Race

See above.

Option 2: Ten Commandments Memory Game

Supply List: large index cards, markers, tape

 *Before Class: Write each commandment on one of the index cards (use the simplified version of the commandments from the lesson). Make two cards of each commandment. Shuffle the twenty index cards and tape them randomly on a whiteboard or wall with the words facing down.*

 Divide the class into two teams. Explain they are going to play a memory game, and the goal is to find the most matches. Have one team start by choosing two index cards to flip over. If the cards match, remove the cards and give that team a point. The team continues choosing two cards until they don’t find a match. Play then switches to the other team. Once all of the matches have been found, the team with the most matches wins.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Love God/Love Others Fan

Supply List: cardstock, crayons/markers, glue, craft sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut out large hearts on cardstock (two per student). Make a sample craft.



Children should each get two hearts and a craft stick. On one heart they can write “Love God.” On the other heart they can write “Love Others.” Have children decorate the hearts. Glue the craft stick to the back of one heart. Then glue the back of the second heart to the back of the first heart (so the words face out).

Option 2: Ten Commandments Banner

Supply List: large sheets of paper, copy paper, printer, scissors, tape/glue, string, markers/crayons, decorations (sequins, stickers, pom-poms, etc.)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut large, long rectangles to form vertical banners (one per child). Print copies of the Ten Commandments on a piece of paper (use the simplified version of the commandments from the lesson and number them). Cut the commandments into strips that would fit on the banner. Cut pieces of string about three to four feet long (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a rectangular banner, a string, and a set of the numbered Ten Commandments. Place decorations and tape or glue on tables. Have children tape or glue the commandments in order on the banner, leaving room at the top. Have children decorate the banner. When completed, help children fold the top of their banner over their string and tape to secure. Tie the string together so children can hang their banners at home.



Option 1: Ten Commandments Bunting

Supply List: colored and/or patterned paper, copy paper, scissors, string, glue sticks, tape, markers/pens

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut ten triangles from different paper (one set of ten per child). Print copies of the Ten Commandments so that each one will fit onto a triangle when cut out (use the simplified version of the commandments from the lesson and number them). Cut pieces of string about three to four feet long (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a set of ten triangles, a string, the commandments, scissors, and a glue stick. Have children cut out and glue one commandment on the bottom two-thirds of each triangle. Have children lay their commandments in order from left to right. Lay out the string and starting on the left side, have children take a triangle and fold the wide part of the triangle over the string and glue to secure. Attach the rest of their triangles in order.

Option 2: Ten Commandments Fan

Supply List: copy paper, construction paper, scissors, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print copies of the Ten Commandments (use the simplified version of the commandments from the lesson and number them). Print so children can cut each commandment into a long, narrow strip. Make a sample craft.

Give each child construction paper, a Ten Commandments sheet, scissors, and a glue stick. Show children how to fold the construction paper “accordion style” to create a fan with at least ten sections. Have them cut the commandments into strips and glue the commandments inside the sections of the fan (in order from left to right).



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 16

A Fancy Tent and a Foolish Cow

EXODUS 32–34

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Exodus 32–34.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

God delivered his people out of slavery in Egypt. Then he saved them from the Egyptians. The Israelites crossed the Red Sea. The Egyptians, however, did not. Their chariots are buried in the mud under millions of gallons of water. Next, he gave his people the Ten Commandments, ten rules to keep them free. Ten rules that taught them to love God and love others. Do you remember those rules?

One God.

No idols.

Watch your mouth.

- Take a rest.
- Honor your parents.
- Don't murder.
- Don't cheat on your husband or wife.
- Don't steal.
- Don't lie.
- Don't dream about other people's stuff.

Great rules from our great God. But, what do you think? Do you think God's people will keep his great rules? No, just like Adam and Eve and just like us, they won't. Today we will hear a story about a cow that almost killed a nation. A cow? Well, a baby cow. A baby cow! Yes, a golden calf that Israel made and worshiped. Hmm, sounds like they forgot the second commandment: no idols. Yes, indeed. Like the bad nations around them, they made gods they could see with their eyes and touch with their hands.

TELL THE STORY

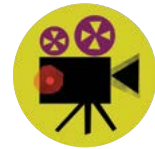
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the Bible passage together



Read from *The Biggest Story Bible Storybook*



Play *The Biggest Story* video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
 God's people
 should worship
 God the way he
 commands us to.

After God met with the Israelites and gave Moses the Ten Commandments, he called Moses to return to the mountain. He told Moses to have the people make a tent for him called the tabernacle. God doesn't have a body, so he doesn't need a place to live. So why did he want them to build a tent? God wanted a place where the Israelites could meet with him and know that he was always with them. This was a place to worship the true God! It would remind them of who he is (holy), how he acts (forgives sins), and what he wants (to be present with them).



Moses was gone on the mountain for forty days, and the people began to wonder what had happened to him. Rather than waiting for God and Moses to lead them, the Israelites decided to create a god (idol) of their own—not only create one but also bow down and worship it! A bad idea. As bad as eating from the off-limits tree. They said to Aaron, “Make us gods who shall go before us” (Ex. 32:1). Aaron agreed. Do you know what they did? It was so foolish. So sinful too. They made an idol of gold that looked like a baby cow and they shouted, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” (32:4). How ridiculous! The one true God had saved them! They broke the first and second commandments: One God. No idols.

When God Almighty saw them worshipping the golden calf, he was mighty mad and wanted to destroy everyone. But Moses pleaded with God to remember his promise and not destroy the people. Then Moses went down the mountain and saw the people singing and dancing before the idol. “Moses’ anger burned hot” (32:19) too. He burnt the idol, ground it into powder, mixed it with water, and made the sinful people slurp their silly cow. Yuck! And God punished some by the sword. “The next day Moses said to the people, ‘You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin’” (32:30). Moses prayed for them. And God had mercy. Even though he sent a plague, he gave them a second chance: “I will be gracious,” God said, “to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” (33:19). Later God would renew his covenant with Israel, and God’s people built that tent to worship God the way he commanded them.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Earlier in Exodus, Israel had been saved from the big, bad Egyptians. But now Israel came face-to-face with another enemy: the sin within them. Salvation comes when God defeats his enemies, but salvation also comes when God is gracious and merciful with us in our sin.

But why was God able to forgive Israel? Was it simply because Moses was such a good mediator? No. There had to be something more. And that more would come in Jesus, when he paid the penalty for our sin.

Do you know we have the same enemy as the Israelites? No, not the Egyptians. Our own sin. So we need the same rescuer—Jesus!

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Why did the people of Israel create and worship their own gods? How did this break God's commands? How should we worship God?

TAKEAWAY: We should worship God the way he commands us to.

2. **QUESTION:** What did the Israelites do to make God and Moses mad? How did God punish them for disobeying him?

TAKEAWAY: God is just; he punishes false worship.

3. **QUESTION:** When Moses asked God to not completely destroy the people for their sin, what did God decide? How does God respond to us when we say we are sorry for our sin? What does this show us about God?

TAKEAWAY: God is merciful; he forgives those who repent of their sin.

4. **QUESTION:** In what ways is Jesus like Moses? In what ways is Jesus better than Moses?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is a greater rescuer than Moses.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Get Rid of Idols Game

Supply List: statue/stuffed animal, music

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Children should sit in a circle. Explain that the object represents an idol. When the music begins, they should gently pass the idol to the person beside them. When the music stops, the person holding the idol is out.

Memory Verse

Little children,
keep yourselves

from idols.

1 JOHN 5:21





Option 2: God Not Idols Game

Supply List: masking tape, music

Before Class: Mark a line down the middle of the room with masking tape.

Have children stand on the line. Explain that one side represents worshipping God and the other side represents worshipping idols. When the music starts, they must hop back and forth over the line. When the music stops, they must freeze. If they are on the idol side, they are out. Play continues until you have a winner.

3rd-5th

Option 1: Destroy the Idols

Supply List: large plastic cups; small, soft ball (one per team); permanent marker

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write Idol on each cup (ten cups per team).

Set the cups right-side up in a bowling pin formation about fifteen feet from the starting line. Divide children into teams of two to three. Give each team a ball. At “Go!” one person from each team rolls the ball down and tries to knock over their team’s cups (like bowling). They carefully retrieve the ball and hand it to the next player on their team. Play continues until all the “idols” are knocked down. The first team to knock them all down wins. To make it more challenging, add another cup to each team that says “God” and challenge the children to knock the other cups down without knocking down the “God” cup.

Option 2: God Not Idols Game

Supply List: masking tape, music

Before Class: Mark a line down the middle of the room with masking tape.

Have children stand on the line. Explain that one side represents worshipping God and the other side represents worshipping idols. When the music starts, they must hop back and forth over the line. When the music stops, they must freeze. If they are on the idol side, they are out. Play continues until you have a winner.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Ten-Minute Creations

Supply List: paper, glitter, stickers, pom-poms, decorative papers, felt, pipe cleaners, and the like

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Tell the children they have ten minutes to create whatever they want with the materials provided. Give them an opportunity to share their creation with the class. Remind children that while we can create beautiful things, there is nothing that we create that is worthy of our worship.

Option 2: STOP! Sign

Supply List: marker, ~~gold glitter~~, glue sticks, paper plates, red crayon, craft stick, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write STOP! on each plate (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a plate and a craft stick. Place crayons, glue, and ~~glitter~~ on each table. Have children color their plate and attach the craft stick to the back using tape. ~~Have them trace STOP! using glue and sprinkle glitter on the letters, shaking off excess.~~ Remind children when we are tempted to worship idols, we must stop!

We won't use glitter
but they can write
stop on the plate
and decorate it



Option 1: Put God First

Supply List: paper plate, construction paper, scissors, glue, markers, brass fasteners

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut arrow shapes out of construction paper, one larger than the other (one set per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate, set of arrows, and a fastener. Place markers and glue on each table. Have the children write *God* at the top of the plate. Have them glue the large arrow in the middle of the plate pointing towards God (like the minute hand of a clock). They should write *First* on the large arrow. Have them attach the base of the smaller arrow to the center of the plate using the fastener, allowing it to swing around the plate. Around the outside of the plate, they should write things they love (family, sports, friends, school, etc.). Remind them that while these are good things, God should always come first.

Option 2: Ten-Minute Creations

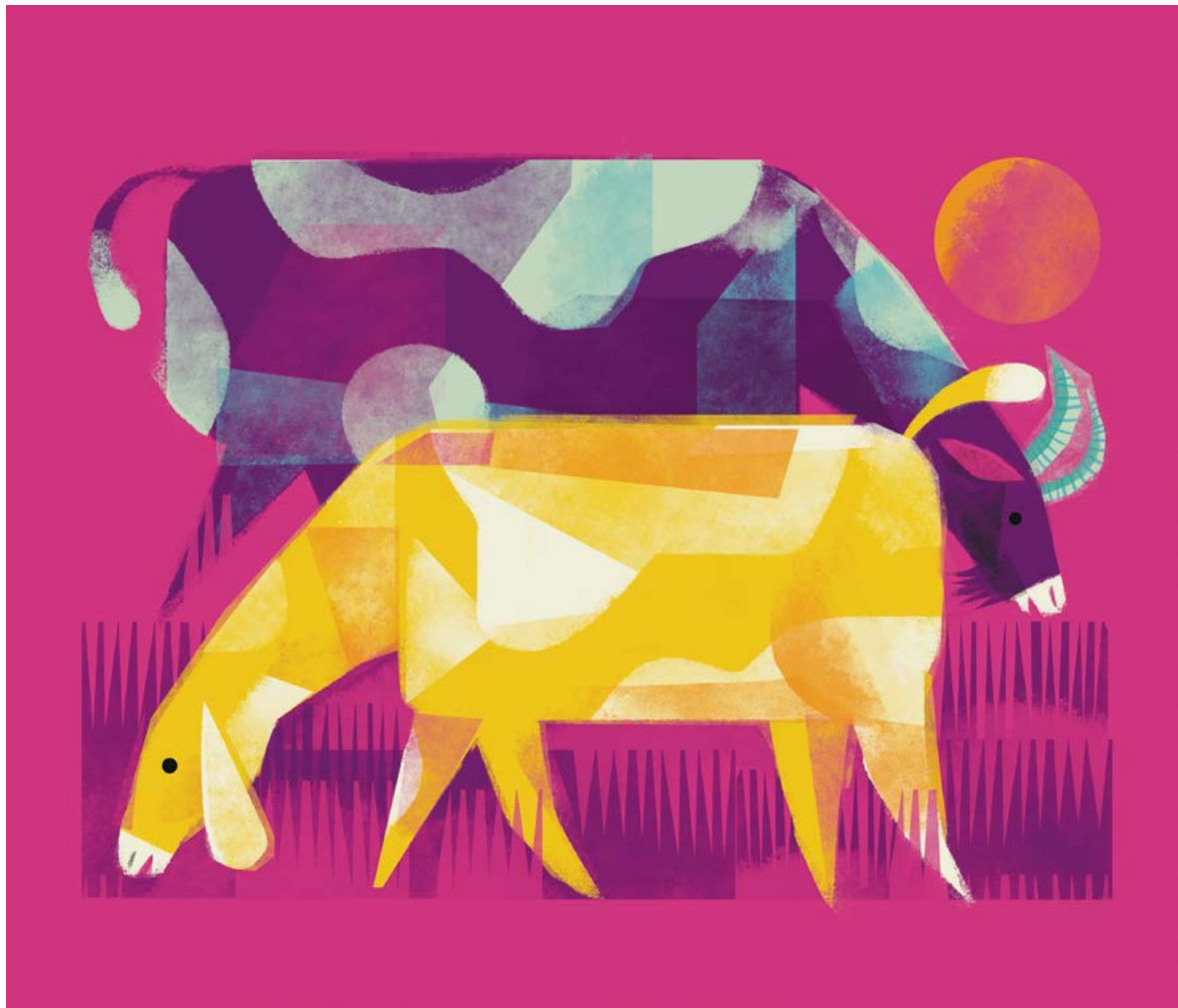
Supply List: paper, glitter, stickers, pom-poms, decorative papers, felt, pipe cleaners, and the like

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Tell the children they have ten minutes to create whatever they want with the materials provided. Give them an opportunity to share their creation with the class. Remind children that while we can create beautiful things, there is nothing that we create that is worthy of our worship.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 17

A Tale of Two Goats

LEVITICUS 16

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Leviticus 16.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1
Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

The book of Exodus is an exciting book filled with great stories. Remember the story about baby Moses being rescued from the Nile River? Remember the burning bush, where God spoke to Moses? Remember the ten plagues? Remember the Passover, when the angel of the Lord passed over those who had the blood of the lamb on their doorposts? Remember the crossing (and closing!) of the Red Sea? Remember the giving of the Ten Commandments? (Can you still hear the roar of God's thunder?) Remember the golden calf? Remember how foolish that was? Sinful! And, listen carefully, do you remember the tent that the Israelites built to worship God the way he wanted to be worshiped? That last remember is important. Because the book of Leviticus picks up on the idea of worshiping God the right way. And while it has some

2
Teach

stories, most of its chapters focus on laws. Lots of laws! Good laws. God’s laws for God’s nation. Some of the laws were about what the priests (Aaron and his sons) were to do in the tabernacle (God’s tent for worship). One of those laws was about two goats. Maa. Maa. Sound a little strange? Well, let’s learn about these two goats.

TELL THE STORY

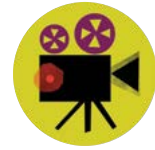
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the Bible passage together



Read from *The Biggest Story Bible Storybook*



Play *The Biggest Story* video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God forgives
and forgets
our sins.

In the book of Leviticus God gave his people laws about sacrifices. Some of the sacrifices were offered as thanksgivings to God; other sacrifices were offered to pay for sins against God. One day a year the holiest person in Israel (the high priest) would put on his holy clothes (called garments) and go into the Holy Place of the holy tent to stand before our holy God and make a sacrifice for God’s unholy people. This special day—called the Day of Atonement—was a *holy* day, kind of like the *holidays* of Christmas, Easter, and, especially, Good Friday. The priest’s job that day was to offer a special sacrifice for sin.

Now, here’s where the two goats come in. Let’s call one of them Forgive and the other Forget. God is perfect. Absolutely good. Holy. People, even God’s people, are not. We are not! Israel was not! We all sin. There is a big separation between a holy God and unholy people. So how does a loving God fill that big gap? A sin substitute! That’s how. A substitute teacher is a teacher who takes the place of the regular teacher. A sin substitute is someone or something that takes the penalty our sins deserve. But what or who would be that sin substitute? On the Day of Atonement, the high priest took two goats. He confessed to God the sins of his people and then offered one goat on the altar as



a sacrifice for those sins. This means that the goat took the punishment for the people's sins. That's Forgive. He died for sins so the people didn't have to. Forget, the other goat, was taken outside the camp into the wilderness and set free. He was so far away from Israel's camp that he would never return there. This goat was a symbol to the people that their sins were forgotten. It was a reminder of just how serious our sin is. Forgive and Forget are just the kind of sin substitute we need because our sin is a big deal. And we should understand that what happened to Forgive and Forget serve as symbols of our own salvation.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

The Israelites were almost ruined by a cow (remember last lesson?), but once a year they were rescued by two goats. Remember Forgive and Forget? How could we forget them? But of course, we're not actually rescued by goats. The animals were just symbols or signs. Like a street sign that tells you, "This way to New York," these two signs pointed to the perfect, final sacrifice that would be offered for our sins: Jesus Christ. Our Savior. Our sin substitute! "For our sake [God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). Like the first goat, Jesus would die for our sins. Like the second goat, Jesus's death would cause our sins to be forgotten. Because of Jesus—the only perfectly holy man, our high priest—God says, "I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more" (Heb. 8:12). That should make us so happy! Our holy God loves us so much that through Jesus he made a way to be in a relationship with us. What good news!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- QUESTION:** Who was allowed to enter the tabernacle to meet with God? How often could that person meet with God? How did he have to prepare? What does this tell us about God?

TAKEAWAY: God is holy.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
We have been
sanctified through
the offering of
the body of Jesus
Christ once for all.

HEBREWS 10:10

2. **QUESTION:** Why do you think the other Israelites couldn't go into the tabernacle? Why was a sacrifice needed? Can sin be in the presence of a holy God?

TAKEAWAY: We are sinful and therefore separated from a holy God.

3. **QUESTION:** Because our holy God cannot be in the presence of sin, how did he make it possible for the Israelites to be in relationship with him? What did the two goats symbolize for the Israelites about their sin?

TAKEAWAY: Through a substitute sacrifice, God forgives and forgets our sin.

4. **QUESTION:** How is Jesus like the two goats on the Day of Atonement? How is Jesus better than the two goats?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the ultimate substitute sacrifice.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: String Search

Supply List: string, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut one extremely long length of string, and sixty different lengths of string (from a couple inches to a foot). Hide the smaller lengths of string all around the room.



Show the long length of string and explain that it represents Jesus's perfect holiness. Tell the class that you have hidden strings all around the room. When you say "Go" they need to collect as many as they can. Once they've all been found, have each child line up the string pieces he or she found to form one long string. The child with the longest length wins. Then bring out the string that represents Jesus. Be sure that this string will be longer than any of their lengths. Make the point that, no matter how good we are, we will never measure up to Jesus's perfect holiness. We need his holiness.



Option 2: Jesus Paid It All Relay Race

Supply List: large number of coins, bowl, two equal-sized jars, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Put a bowl of coins at the far end of the room. Set two jars by a starting line. Mark a “toss line” one foot away from each jar.

✓ Divide children into two teams. At “Go” the first child from each team runs down, grabs a coin from the bowl, then runs to the “toss line” to try and toss the coin into his jar. If the coin doesn’t go in the jar, leave it. After the toss, the child tags the next person in line to go. Relay continues for five minutes. Then, count the number of coins in each jar and the team with the most coins wins. Remember: Jesus paid it all!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Set Me Free Goat Tag

Supply List: masking tape, index cards

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write the word Goat on one out of every five index cards and shuffle them into the stack. Using masking tape, create a section of the room that is the “jail” (able to hold five to eight kids). Place the stack of cards face down inside the jail.

Assign two children to be “It.” Begin a game of tag. If someone is tagged, she must go to jail and draw one index card. After reading it, place it at the bottom of the stack. If the card is blank, she stays in jail. If the card says “Goat,” everyone in the jail gets to go free. Continue play until everyone is in jail or a set amount of time has elapsed. If you begin a new game, shuffle the index cards before starting.

Option 2: Jesus Paid It All Relay Race

Supply List: large number of coins, bowl, two equal-sized jars, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Put a bowl of coins at the far end of the room. Set two jars by a starting line. Mark a “toss line” one foot away from each jar.

Divide children into two teams. At “Go” the first child from each team runs down, grabs a coin from the bowl, then runs to the “toss line” to try and toss the coin into his jar. If the coin doesn’t go in the jar, leave it. After the toss, the child tags the next person in line to go. Relay continues for five minutes. Then, count the number of coins in each jar and the team with the most coins wins. Remember: Jesus paid it all!

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Forgive/Forget Goat Puppet

Supply List: brown lunch bags, copy paper, crayons, cotton balls, googly eyes, glue sticks, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Search online for a goat face drawing and sketch (or print) a simple face on a piece of paper (roughly 4" x 6"). Make copies for each child. Open the bottom flap of each brown bag (one per child) and write "Forgive and Forget" inside the mouth. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a brown bag and goat face paper. Place crayons, cotton balls, glue sticks, and googly eyes on each table. Have the children color and cut out the goat face and glue it on the bottom flap of the bag (to create a goat puppet). Have them glue the googly eyes and cotton balls to the goat face. Remind them that the goats were a symbol that our holy God will forgive and forget our sin by means of a substitute sacrifice.

Option 2: Forgive/Forget Wheel

Supply List: paper plates, brass fasteners, watercolor paints and brushes, markers, straws, cups of water

*Before Class: Gather supplies. Set aside two plates for each child. With one plate, cut a wedge (one-sixth of the plate) out (without cutting to the very center). On the other plate, write *orgive* on one side (write the letters from the center to the edge so they will show when the wedge plate is placed on top of it), and *orget* on the other side (in like manner but with the word written upside down). Make a sample craft.*

Give each child their two plates. On the plate with the words, have children make dots of red paint on the plate, and then blow on them with a straw so the paint (representing blood) spreads around the plate. While that dries, have them write a large *F* on the other plate, just to the left of the cut-out wedge. Have them attach the *F* plate to the other plate by attaching the brass fastener in the center. The wheel will form the two words *Forgive* and *Forget* and remind them

of the blood sacrifice (first with a goat and finally with Jesus) that made a way for us to be in relationship with our holy God.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Forgive/Forget Goat Puppet

Supply List: brown lunch bags, copy paper, crayons, cotton balls, googly eyes, glue sticks, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Search online for a goat face drawing and sketch (or print) a simple face on a piece of paper (roughly 4" x 6"). Make copies for each child. Open the bottom flap of each brown bag (one per child) and write "Forgive and Forget" inside the mouth. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a brown bag and goat face paper. Place crayons, cotton balls, glue sticks, and googly eyes on each table. Have the children color and cut out the goat face and glue it on the bottom flap of the bag (to create a goat puppet). Have them glue the googly eyes and cotton balls to the goat face. Remind them that the goats were a symbol that our holy God will forgive and forget our sin by means of a substitute sacrifice.

Option 2: GOAT Acrostic

Supply List: paper, colored pencils or markers, stickers

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Give each child a paper. Set markers and stickers on each table. Explain that GOAT stands for "Greatest of All Time." Jesus is the true GOAT. Have children write GOAT in large letters vertically on the left-hand side of the paper. Then have children come up with adjectives for each of the letters in GOAT to describe Jesus (e.g., Gracious and forgiving, Only Savior, Absolutely perfect, Totally amazing). Children can decorate their acrostic using provided materials.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



Story

17

Leviticus

16



STORY 18

Big People, Little Faith

NUMBERS 13–14

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Numbers 13–14.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1
Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2
Teach

Remember Abram of Ur? He followed God's *plan* and became Abraham. And do you remember three things that God promised? First, a great nation. Check! Israel left Egypt with over a million people. Second, God's presence. Check! Remember that special tent that allowed a holy God to dwell with his people? Third, the promised land. Um, not quite check. That was still on the divine to-do list. For four hundred years Israel had lived in Egypt, and they had spent most of that time as slaves. Hardly the promised land. Then came the great rescue: Moses, ten plagues, the parting (and closing) of the Red Sea. (Whew! What a lot to remember. Shall we take a small stretch?) And then the moment we've all been waiting for: rescued from the land of Egypt, Israel enters . . . the wilderness. What a major letdown, wandering and wandering for forty years.

(At least it wasn't four hundred!) Yes, God was with them. Yes, he fed them and gave them good laws. He even provided a sign of his presence and a place to worship (a traveling tent). But he hadn't yet given them the land. That is, not until today's lesson.

TELL THE STORY

Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
Believing God's
promises makes
us brave.

What are some of God's promises to us? Do you ever forget those promises? Sure, it is easy to do. Do you ever doubt God's promises will come true? That too is easy to do. How about this one: Do you ever want to disobey God because obedience is really, really hard? Sadly, of course. Today's story is about promises. It's about God keeping his promises and about God's people remembering his promises. But it goes one step farther than just remembering God's promises. It's about being brave enough to trust that God will keep his promises, even when it seems impossible.

After forty years of wandering, Moses finally brought Israel to the edge of the promised land. Then Moses sent twelve spies into the land. What do you think their job was? To spy! The spies carefully spied out the land. They returned and gave some good news. Milk. Honey. Figs. Pomegranates. And the world's *biggest* grapes! They also gave some bad news. Ten of the spies said, "The *big* cities have *big* walls guarded by *big* people. We will look like grasshoppers! We can't go into the land. They'll crush us under their *big* feet!" The people cried out loudly in fear. Joshua and Caleb, two of the spies, disagreed. They said, "The people are *big*. True enough. But our God is so much *bigger*. Listen, our big God is with



Story

18

Numbers

13–14

us, and he will give us the land!" Many grumbled because they were afraid. So Joshua and Caleb said, "God delights in us and promised us this land. Do not fear the people living there!" But the scared people replied: "We believe the ten not the two! We want to go back to Egypt." What!? Can you believe that? Yes, sometimes people, even God's people, choose the bad things we know over the good things we can't see yet.

How happy do you think God was with Israel's decision *not* to enter the land? *Not* so happy. In fact, God was angry. Moses had to step in again. He prayed for the people. And once again, God did not destroy the people like they deserved. But he still punished those who doubted God after all he had done for them. He told them, "No one who said no to entering the promised land will see it." The people had more lessons to learn in the wilderness. God was on their side, but the people could not take the land that he had promised until they were brave enough to trust his promises.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher. {5 minutes}

We are a lot like Israel. Too often we doubt God's promises and are too afraid to do the hard things he's called us to do. But Caleb and Joshua teach us what true faith looks like. True faith is brave. It trusts that God will keep his promises. If he kept his promise to send the Snake Crusher to rescue us from our sins, we can count on him to keep his other promises. So what do we do when our faith is small? There is a simple prayer we learn from Mark 9:24. It goes like this: "I believe. Help my unbelief." Even such small faith in a big, promise-keeping God is enough because God is, well, big!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- QUESTION:** What promises did God make to Abraham? Did God fulfill these promises right away? What promise were the Israelites waiting on in the wilderness? How do we know God hadn't forgotten this promise?

TAKEAWAY: God never forgets to keep his promises.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
The LORD is with
us; do not fear.

NUMBERS 14:9

2. **QUESTION:** What were the two reports from the spies? Since all the spies saw the same thing, why do you think some of the spies were afraid and Joshua and Caleb weren't?

TAKEAWAY: Don't be afraid to do the hard things God calls us to do.

3. **QUESTION:** How are Moses and Jesus similar? Why is Jesus greater?

TAKEAWAY: Praise God for Jesus, a deliverer greater than Moses!

4. **QUESTION:** Where did God promise to bring the Israelites? Where has God promised to bring those who believe in Jesus? If we believe in Jesus, can anything stop us from getting there?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus will bring us safely into the promised land of heaven.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: "I Spy"

Supply List: none



Have one child start by saying "I spy with my little eye, something that is red (or other descriptive word)." Have the other children try to guess what that person spies. The person who guesses correctly gets to think of something that he or she spies and the others guess. Give all children an opportunity to say what he or she spies.



Option 2: A Bunch of Grapes Team Relay

Supply List: green/purple balloons, rolls of clear tape



Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up balloons (two per child).

Divide children into teams with a maximum of five children in each group. Give each team a roll of tape and ten balloons. One person from each team should be



a “stem” and stand on the other end of the room. When you say “Go!” the first person on each team should race to her team’s “stem” and tape a balloon onto him. The child returns to her team and hands off the tape to the next player, who grabs a balloon, runs down to the stem, and adds another balloon. The first team to get all of their balloons on the stem without any falling off for ten seconds is the winner. If a balloon falls off, a team member needs to run down and retape it to the stem.

3rd–5th**Option 1: A Bunch of Grapes Team Relay**

Supply List: green/purple balloons, rolls of clear tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up balloons (two per child).

Divide children into teams with a maximum of five children in each group. Give each team a roll of tape and ten balloons. One person from each team should be a “stem” and stand on the other end of the room. When you say “Go!” the first person on each team should race to her team’s “stem” and tape a balloon onto him. The child returns to her team and hands off the tape to the next player, who grabs a balloon, runs down to the stem, and adds another balloon. The first team to get all of their balloons on the stem without any falling off for ten seconds is the winner. If a balloon falls off, a team member needs to run down and retape it to the stem.

Option 2: Guard Your Faith

Supply List: balloons, string

Before Class: Gather supplies. Blow up balloons (one per child). Make sure each balloon is inflated to roughly the same size. Attach a twelve-to-sixteen-inch string to the end of each balloon.

Give children a balloon and have them tie it to their ankle. Tell children that their balloon represents their faith in God’s promises. They want to guard it at all costs. Have children try to pop other children’s balloons while simultaneously preventing theirs from being popped. When only one balloon that is not popped is left, that child is declared the winner.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Fingerprint Grapes

Supply List: purple paint, paper plates, markers, paper, baby wipes

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place a small amount of purple paint on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of paper. Place markers and paint on tables. Have children dip one finger in the purple paint and make a fingerprint on the paper. Continue to make fingerprints until it looks like a cluster of grapes. Use markers to add a stem. Clean children's fingers with baby wipes. Remind children that God always keeps his promises, just like his promise to the Israelites about the promised land.

Option 2: "I Spy" Binoculars

Supply List: toilet paper rolls (two per child), markers, stickers, yarn, stapler, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut yarn into 18-inch lengths (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child two toilet paper rolls and a piece of yarn. Put markers and stickers on tables. Have children decorate binoculars with provided materials. Staple or tape the two toilet paper rolls together to form binoculars. Tape string to the sides of the binoculars so they can hang around the child's neck.





Option 1: Secret Spy Message

Supply List: colored construction paper, copy paper, white crayons, washable markers, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write out the Memory Verse so all the children can see.

Give each child a piece of paper, a piece of colored construction paper, a white crayon, and a marker. Place glue sticks on the tables. Encourage children to write the Memory Verse (“The LORD is with us,” Numbers 14:9) on the white paper using the white crayon and decorate with doodles that no one can see. Then have them trade their message with another child. Have them glue the message to their piece of colored construction paper. Then have them color over the message with a marker to reveal the spy message.

We'll use watercolor instead of markers

Option 2: “I Spy” Binoculars

Supply List: toilet paper rolls (two per child), markers, stickers, yarn, stapler, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut yarn into 18-inch lengths (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child two toilet paper rolls and a piece of yarn. Put markers and stickers on tables. Have children decorate binoculars with provided materials. Staple or tape the two toilet paper rolls together to form binoculars. Tape string to the sides of the binoculars so they can hang around the child’s neck.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 19

You're Not the Boss of Me

NUMBERS 16

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Numbers 16.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*



THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

Moses has been God's chosen leader over the Israelites for a long time. He set the people free from slavery. He delivered them from Pharaoh and through the Red Sea. He gave them the Ten Commandments. He performed signs and wonders. And twice, when God was about to destroy them, Moses prayed to God and asked him to forgive the Israelites instead of destroying them. And both times, God listened and forgave.

Moses had been an amazing leader and had done all that God asked him. And the people loved him for it, right? Wrong. They grew impatient when Moses disappeared on Mount Sinai and wondered what had become of him. Remember the golden calf? They grumbled against him for bringing them out of Egypt to the wilderness. And they questioned Moses for bringing them towards a



land full of big, scary people. Remember the ten fearful spies and how all the people sided with them and not the godly spies? God chose Moses to lead, but the people's frustration with Moses only grew with time. They didn't see what was so special about Moses. Wasn't he a person just like them? Again and again they rebelled against him as their leader and insisted, "You're not the boss!" What would God do?

TELL THE STORY

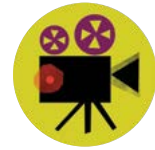
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God judges
those who
reject his plan
and his chosen
leaders.

One day three men—Korah, Dathan, and Abiram—decided they'd had enough of Moses and his brother, Aaron. Now God had chosen Moses to lead, and Aaron to be the high priest. But Korah, Dathan, and Abiram gathered 250 important men and said to God's chosen leaders, "What makes you so special? We are all God's holy people. Aaron isn't more holy than us! We are tired of you. We want someone else to lead!"

God does not like when his people rebel against his plan. And Moses knew that. So Moses said to them, "You have gone too far! Why are you grumbling? It is not against us that you have gathered, but the Lord. I know how to settle this matter. Tomorrow, everyone must show up at the tabernacle and God will settle this argument. Aaron, the high priest, will come with burning incense in his censer (a golden pot). And everyone who thinks they could be the high priest must do the same. God will make clear who he has set aside to lead and sacrifice" (see Num. 16:4–7, 11). Dathan and Abiram replied, "Who made you boss? Why would we listen to the man who almost killed us in the wilderness?"



Why would we listen to the man who has *not* brought us into the promised land?” (see 16:12–14).

Their response pushed Moses over the edge. He was mad. The Lord was mad too—they had rejected his chosen leaders and laws. The next day, Korah and his 250 followers showed up to prove they knew better than God’s leaders (and, really, God himself). But God showed up and proved he was the boss. The ground under Korah (and Dathan and Abiram too!) “opened its mouth and swallowed them up” (16:32). Then “fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men offering the incense” (16:35). Aaron, God’s chosen high priest, stood untinged.

The next day, the people gathered and accused Moses and Aaron of killing the people of the Lord! This made God so angry that he began to destroy them with a plague. (After all, they were acting like the Egyptians.) God warned Moses and Aaron to flee, but instead Moses told Aaron to offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people so God’s anger would be turned away. And in that moment, our merciful God stopped the plague.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

There was a lot of destruction in this story, but also mercy and deliverance. When God sent the plague, only Aaron the high priest could stop it by atoning for the people’s sins. “Take your censer,” Moses told him, “and put fire on it from off the altar and lay incense on it and carry it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them” (16:46). Because Aaron hurried to do this, God forgave the people’s sins and stopped the plague. At the risk of his life, Aaron stood between the living and the dead and saved the people. Wow! What a faithful and amazing leader. But do you know what’s more amazing? Jesus is even better than Aaron.

Jesus delivered people from the slavery of sin, gave them good rules, and performed signs and wonders. And was he accepted by all the people? No! Like Moses and Aaron, he was rejected. They hated him so much he was crucified on the cross. But on the cross, like Aaron, he asked for forgiveness for God’s people (“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” Luke 23:34). Like Aaron, he did this by making atonement for their sins (“Christ . . . offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins,” Heb. 10:12). Aaron risked his life to save the Israelites, but Jesus actually died and gave his life to save all people. So much greater than Aaron. Our great Savior and high priest!

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Whom did God choose to lead his people out of Egypt and through the wilderness? Whom did he choose to offer sacrifices as the high priest? Did the people think Moses and Aaron were good leaders? How does this show that the Israelites don't trust God?

TAKEAWAY: Trusting God includes trusting his plan and the people he chooses to carry it out.

2. **QUESTION:** How did God react to the Israelites rejecting Moses and Aaron as his chosen leaders? What did he do?

TAKEAWAY: God will judge those who reject his plans and the people who he has chosen to carry them out.

3. **QUESTION:** How did Aaron save the people? How are Jesus and Aaron alike? How is Jesus greater?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is greater than Aaron; he perfectly atoned for our sins with his life.

Memory Verse

Know therefore
today that he who
goes over before
you as a consuming
fire is the LORD
your God.

DEUTERONOMY 9:3

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Who Is Swallowed Up?

Supply List: paper, marker, tape

Before Class: Take four pieces of paper and write the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 on them (one number per paper). Tape one paper to each corner or wall of the room.



Pick one child to stand in the middle of the room and close his eyes. He should wait one minute while the rest of the children go stand under whatever number they choose (every child chooses his or her own number). Then the person in the middle calls out, "Korah and his followers in number [1, 2, 3, or 4] have been



swallowed up!” The children who are under that number are “out” and have to stand to the side. Play continues until one child remains. Remind children that Korah and his followers rejected God’s chosen leaders and so were swallowed up by the earth.

Option 2: Race to Atonement

Supply List: two spoons, two plastic eggs, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Mark two starting lines with tape and place one spoon and one egg there. Place a table or chair (the “altar”) at the opposite side of the room.

Divide the class in two equal teams. The first child from each team will pick up the spoon and place the egg on it (the “censer”). When the teacher says “Go!” they both race around the altar and back to their team without dropping the egg. If a child drops their egg, he must go back to the start and do it again. The race continues until every player has raced around the altar. The first team to complete the race to atone wins!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Listen and Obey Line Game

Supply List: masking tape, paper, marker

Before Class: Place a long line of tape on the floor. Write Obey on one sheet of paper and Listen on another. Place the Obey sign on one side of the line and the Listen sign on the other side. Have the children stand on the Obey side facing the Listen side.

Explain that they must immediately go to (or remain on) whatever side you call out. Otherwise, they fall into the earth and are out. Call out “Obey, Listen, Listen, Obey, Obey, Obey . . .” (you decide the order). Increase the speed of the commands as you play to make it more challenging. The game ends when only one child is left.

Option 2: Who Is Swallowed Up?

Supply List: paper, marker, tape

Before Class: Take four pieces of paper and write the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 on them (one number per paper). Tape one paper to each corner or wall of the room.

Pick one child to stand in the middle of the room and close his eyes. He should wait one minute while the rest of the children go stand under whatever number

they choose (every child chooses his or her own number). Then the person in the middle calls out, “Korah and his followers in number [1, 2, 3, or 4] have been swallowed up!” The children who are under that number are “out” and have to stand to the side. Play continues until one child remains. Remind children that Korah and his followers rejected God’s chosen leaders and so were swallowed up by the earth.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd


Option 1: The Earth Opened Up

Supply List: brown paper (one per child), white paper (one per child), colored paper, scissors, glue, crayons/markers, pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut small rectangles out of colored paper (one per child). Make a sample craft. Write “God is the Boss” where children can see it.

Give each child one sheet of brown paper, one white paper, one rectangle, scissors, a pencil, and a glue stick. Place markers or crayons on each table. Have the children fold the brown sheet in half. They cut six slits halfway into the sheet towards the fold. Then open the paper up and wrap each strip around a pencil so that it curls inward. Glue the brown paper to the white paper. Have the children draw Aaron on the rectangle and fold the bottom (just below his feet) and glue that flap to the white paper so that Aaron is standing upright. Have children write, “God is the Boss” in the middle of the brown paper (if needed, they can copy what you wrote).

Option 2: Thank a Leader Card

 *Supply List: paper, markers/crayons/colored pencils, stickers*

Before Class: Gather supplies.



Have children fold a piece of paper in half and make a card for someone in church leadership to encourage and thank them for the way they lead and serve the families at church.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Fire of Incense Candle Holder

Supply List: jars (one per child), paintbrushes, colored tissue paper, plates, glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft. Put white glue in small amounts on paper plates.

Give each child a jar, paintbrush, and colored tissue paper. Place plates with glue on each table. Have children rip different colors of tissue paper into small pieces. Then have them dip their brush in the glue and paint it on the outside of their jar. Have them place pieces of tissue paper on top of the glue, like stained glass. Continue this process until all the sides of the jar are covered with tissue paper. Be sure to glue down the edges. Remind them that only Aaron was chosen by God to offer incense.

Option 2: Thank a Leader Card

Supply List: paper, markers/crayons/colored pencils, stickers

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children fold a piece of paper in half and make a card for someone in church leadership to encourage and thank them for the way they lead and serve the families at church.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



PART 2

HISTORY

JOSHUA–ESTHER

The historical books cover almost a thousand years of history, from the conquest of the Promised Land to the return from exile in Babylon and the building of the second temple. The history of God's people is marked with moments of great faith and triumph and moments of spectacular disobedience and failure. Through it all, God's promises remain true as the Lord prepares his people for the coming of the Snake Crusher.



STORY 21

The Walls Came Tumbling Down

JOSHUA 6

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Joshua 6.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

Does anyone remember the names of the two spies who trusted God's promises and gave the good report? Their names were Joshua and Caleb. After Moses died, God chose Joshua to lead his people into the promised land. The Lord said to Joshua, "Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous" (Josh. 1:5–6), for Joshua had to take over and destroy every city in the land. Joshua obeyed God. And the people followed his lead. They said, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go" (1:16).

Joshua sent new spies into Jericho, a city in the promised land. When the king of Jericho found out, he sent his men to capture them. But a woman named Rahab hid them. She did this because she had faith in God, even though she wasn't from Israel. She had heard of God's power, and she knew he would keep his promises, including giving Israel the promised land (which is where her city was!). The spies told her that if she tied a scarlet (red) cord in the window then they would be kind to her and her family when the Israelites came. When the spies returned safely, they gave this good report, "The LORD has given the land into our hands. Let's go!" (see 2:24).

TELL THE STORY

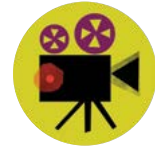
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God fights
for those who
trust in him.

The first step to entering the promised land was for Israel to cross the Jordan River—no easy task for a nation of over a million people. How would they do that? God would make a way. Remember when he parted the Red Sea? He also parted the Jordan River! Here's what happened. The priests went first, carrying the ark of the covenant. This ark was not a big boat, but a small golden chest that was used in the tabernacle. Inside were two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments, and two other reminders of God's faithfulness: Aaron's rod (used when they left Egypt) and a pot of manna (the daily bread from heaven that God provided in the wilderness). When the priests stepped into the Jordan River, the flow of water stopped and, all of a sudden, there was a clear path to walk. All of Israel crossed over on dry ground. What a miracle!

That wasn't the only miracle! Because the second step to entering the promised land was to take over and destroy Jericho. This might have been harder than



crossing the river with over a million people. You see, Jericho had these thick, tall city walls to protect them. How would Israel get past the mighty big walls? Dig under them? No, too hard. Jump over them? No, that's impossible. Knock on the front door and asked to be let in? Don't be silly. Who would let them in? God had a better plan, one of those crazy plans that works only because it's God's plan. "Tell the soldiers in Israel's army to march around the city," God told them. "Have seven priests hold seven trumpets as they walk in front of the ark of the covenant." God continued, "Then, on the seventh day march around the city seven times, blow the trumpets, and have the people shout." The people actually obeyed this crazy plan! They believed that God would fight their battle. Do you know what happened next? The big walls came tumbling down. Crash! Victory! Israel walked over the rubble. The city was conquered. Everyone was destroyed. Except Rahab (remember the scarlet cord?) and her family. God saved them because of Rahab's faith.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

*Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}*

God's people have always faced enemies. Sometimes it's people who oppose God and his ways. Other times it's things like sin, death, and Satan. Through Jesus all our enemies will be defeated. Sin forgiven. Death killed. Satan crushed. And, yes, people brought down in judgment. Hallelujah! We have the victory in Jesus! And someday soon we will enter a far better promised land, the new heaven and new earth. There may be grapes the size of watermelons to eat. A clear and clean river to swim in. Hills with green grass to roll down. Big and beautiful trees to climb. Secret places to discover. And there will be people from every nation to eat with and play with and explore with and sing with. And there will be never-ending joy! Never-ending peace! Never-ending love! And the best part? Never-ending face-to-face fellowship with God!

Unlike the first promised land, this amazing place isn't just for the people of Israel. It is for anyone who believes God's promises and trusts in Jesus for salvation. It's for you and for me. Remember Rahab? Rahab wasn't an Israelite. She was an enemy of God's people. But when she heard about God and his mighty acts, she believed he'd keep his promises. She asked to be saved from the coming destruction. And God saved Rahab. And even more, God gave her special honor. We will see her name again because she is in the family tree of the promised Savior, Jesus.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
Be strong and
courageous. Do
not be frightened,
and do not be
dismayed, for the
LORD your God is
with you wherever
you go.

JOSHUA 1:9

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Even though Joshua, the Israelites, and Rahab believed God's promises, what fears might they each have had? How did they bravely act on what they believed?

TAKEAWAY: Believe God's promises and obey his plans.

2. **QUESTION:** Have you ever been afraid to follow God or do what he commands? How can believing God's promises help us be strong and courageous in those situations?

TAKEAWAY: Because of God's promises, we can be strong and courageous.

3. **QUESTION:** How would most armies defeat their enemies and destroy the thick walls of a city? What did the Israelites do? Why did that work?

TAKEAWAY: God is powerful and defeats his enemies.

4. **QUESTION:** What enemies has Jesus defeated for all who trust in him? Could we defeat them without him? How does that make you feel?

TAKEAWAY: We have victory in Jesus!

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10-15 minutes}

K-2nd

Option 1: The Quiet Game

Supply List: none

Have the children march behind you in complete silence. Tell them they need to do just what you are doing, but without making a sound. Do silly things with your arms, or march/waddle like a duck. If a child talks or makes any noises, she is out. Continue until one child is left or you are ready to appoint a different leader. Remind them that it would have been hard to obey God and keep marching in total silence around Jericho for all those days.





Option 2: Walls Tumble Down Game

Supply List: plastic cups, paper, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Mark a line down the center of the room using masking tape.

Divide the children into two teams. Give each team an equal number of plastic cups and have them place them around their territory, right-side up. Then give each child two pieces of paper. When a teacher says “Go!” the children crumple their paper into balls to try to knock down the opposing team’s “wall” (their plastic cups). They must stay in their territory. If they cross the line into the other team’s territory they must sit out and they can no longer throw paper balls. The children should continue picking up paper balls and throwing them to try and knock down the other team’s wall. When one team has succeeded in knocking down all the other team’s wall, they win!

3rd–5th

Option 1: Knock Down the Wall Battle

Supply List: wood/cardboard blocks or cans (approx. forty), masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Mark off the center of the room with masking tape; mark two lines on the opposite sides of the room at an equal distance from the center line.

Divide the children into two teams. Give each team an equal number of blocks/cans and have them place them along the tape on their side. This is their “wall.” Have the children stand along the center line. When the teacher says, “Go,” children run and try to take a block from the other team’s wall and add it to their own wall—then they need to run back and get another block. They may only take one “brick” at a time. After three minutes, say “Stop!” Count up the bricks on each side and see which wall is bigger. If there is time, play again. Remind them that no one took bricks from Jericho’s wall; God alone knocked it down.

Option 2: Walls Tumble Down Game

Supply List: plastic cups, paper, masking tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Mark a line down the center of the room using masking tape.

Divide the children into two teams. Give each team an equal number of plastic cups and have them place them around their territory, right-side up. Then give each child two pieces of paper. When the teacher says “Go!” the children

crumple their paper into balls to try to knock down the opposing team’s “wall” (their plastic cups). They must stay in their territory. If they cross the line into the other team’s territory they must sit out and they can no longer throw paper balls. The children should continue picking up paper balls and throwing them to try and knock down the other team’s wall. When one team has succeeded in knocking down the other team’s wall, they win!

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Paper Horns

Supply List: cardstock, clear tape, crayons/markers, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Draw a horn template on cardstock and write the words “God keeps his promises!” down the center of the template. Make copies on cardstock for each child. Make a sample craft.

Distribute horn template and scissors to each child. Set tape and coloring supplies on each table. Children should decorate the horns and then cut them out. Explain how to assemble them by forming a cylinder that tapers to a small hole at one end, then taping at the seam to hold it in place. Remind the children that when Joshua obeyed God and marched around the city of Jericho and blew the horn, the walls came down.

Option 2: Pennant Flag

Supply List: markers/crayons/colored pencils, cardstock, straws, tape, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Draw a pennant flag template on a piece of cardstock. Write “God gives the victory!” along the bottom edge. Make a copy for each child.

Distribute pennant template, straw, and scissors to each child. Set coloring supplies and tape on each table. Have them decorate their flag as they desire and then cut them out. Have them attach a straw to the side with tape. Remind them that God gave Joshua the victory over enemies in the promised land.



Option 1: Build the Walls of Jericho Craft

Supply List: cardstock, glue sticks, colored paper, permanent marker, straightedge, scissors, red yarn (optional)

Before Class: Gather supplies. On a piece of cardstock, draw a template of a city wall (with different heights along the top) using a straightedge and a permanent marker. Along the top of the page write “God gives the victory!” Make copies for each child. Cut out small squares and rectangles of colored paper of varying sizes. (One sheet of colored paper per child will ensure that there are enough squares for the craft). Cut 3-inch lengths of yarn for each child (optional).

Give each child the wall template, glue stick, and an assortment of colored squares (enough to fill in the wall). Have them all “build” the wall by gluing the squares on the wall template until it is completely filled in. Optional: Have kids attach red yarn to a part of the city as a reminder of Rahab’s salvation.

Option 2: Make a Red Cord Bookmark

Supply List: red yarn, tape, beads (large enough holes to fit on yarn)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut red yarn into fifteen-inch pieces, three per child. Make a sample craft.

Distribute three pieces of red yarn to each child. Set tape and beads on each table. Have children knot the three pieces together at the top and tape the knot to the table so you can begin beading and braiding. Start by sliding beads onto each of the strings. Then braid the yarn until there’s 4 inches left. String beads onto each string and then knot the three pieces together to close. Tell children that the bookmark can remind them of Rahab’s faith and God’s salvation.



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 22

The Fight of Gideon and the Flight of Midian

JUDGES 6–7

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Judges 6–7.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

Think back on all that we have learned about God's people. Let's consider three questions. First, do God's people get in trouble when they rely on their own strength instead of God's? Yes. Every time they rely on their own strength, bad things happen. Second, do God's people have victory over their enemies when they trust in God's strength? Yes, they certainly do! Remember the walls of Jericho? Third, how often did Israel trust in God's strength? Not often enough. Israel's history is like a teeter-totter: up and down, down and up. Israel rebels and God disciplines. They cry out for help and God rescues. They grow comfortable and start sinning again. And then the whole thing repeats itself. This

pattern is especially true in the book of Judges, which records stories about the time of the judges—God’s leaders who ruled after Moses and Joshua and before Saul, David, and Solomon. These judges didn’t wear black robes, bang gavels, and say, “Order in the court!” They were warrior-rulers. And when they relied on their own strength, they lost their battles. But when they relied on God’s strength, they were victorious.

TELL THE STORY

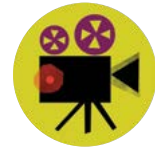
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God strengthens
those who know
their weakness.

God loves to humble big shots and save the little guy or girl. He loves to show himself to be strong when we are weak. This is true in the story of Gideon. The Midianites were big shots and really bad people. They stole Israel’s food and animals. Israel was brought low. And they did what humble people do: they “cried out for help to the LORD” (Judg. 6:6). Judge Gideon was God’s answer to their prayer.

But when God first found him, Gideon was a scaredy-cat. He was hiding from Israel’s enemies. The Lord said to him, “I am with you. Go and save Israel from the cruel Midianites” (see 6:12–13). But he was still scared. “Lord,” he said, “How can I save Israel? I come from the weakest family, and I am the weakest person in my family? You’ve got the wrong guy” (see 6:15). But the Lord replied again, “Don’t worry, I will be with you.”

Gideon agreed to lead, but he was still scared. One night, God asked him to tear down an altar to a false idol and build in its place an altar for him. Gideon did that, but only with the cover of night. He didn’t want anyone to catch him. Another night, he asked God for a sign that he would be with him. He placed his coat made of sheep’s wool (a fleece) on the ground. “God,” he said, “If there



Story

22

Judges

6-7

is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand” (6:37). Sure enough, the next morning the fleece was wet and the ground dry. But Gideon was still afraid to fight the Midianites. “Um, Lord, how about the same sign in reverse?” God was gracious again. The next morning the fleece was dry and the ground wet. God was kind to weak Gideon, because God was going to work through him to show everyone that God is strong.

Gideon gathered a huge army. But God wanted a little army to do big things so that God would show that he—not Gideon or his army—was the real warrior. So, God gave Gideon a plan to take his huge army and make it small. They went from twenty-two thousand men to three hundred. That’s a lot smaller! But when this tiny army blew their trumpets and smashed their jars, the mighty Midianites got scared and ran away. Gideon’s army chased them down and conquered them. A total victory for God and his people!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher. {5 minutes}

“In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” Four times in the book of Judges a similar refrain is repeated. Those sentences mean the Israelites did not view God as their King and had decided to call their own shots. They did whatever they wanted to do. That may sound like the best way to live, but it’s actually the worst way to live. Doing whatever you want leads to broken hearts, broken families, and broken promises—our promises, that is, not God’s. All God’s promises are true as true can be.

One of the best promises that God gave us was the promise of a coming king. This king would save God’s people. This king would lead God’s people. This King is Jesus, the Snake Crusher. Without King Jesus, we’d all be our own kings, doing whatever it is we think is right. But King Jesus changes our hearts so that we actually want to do what God wants. There’s even a fancy name for it: regeneration. King Jesus makes us new!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** Why were the Israelites afraid of the Midianites? Who did the Israelites turn to for help? How did God answer their call for help?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: God is with us; the weak become strong when they call on God.

2. **QUESTION:** What was Judge Gideon doing when God asked him to lead his army? What did God do to Gideon's big army before the battle? Why do you think God chose a weak judge and a small army to win his battle?

TAKEAWAY: God loves to show his strength by using weak people to win his battles.

Memory Verse
But when the
people of Israel
cried out to
the LORD, the
LORD raised
up a deliverer
for the people
of Israel, who
saved them.

JUDGES 3:9

3. **QUESTION:** What were some fears that Gideon had? When God asked Gideon to battle the Midianites, how did Gideon gain the courage he needed to obey?

TAKEAWAY: Be brave and ask God to give you courage to do what he asks.

4. **QUESTION:** How many times is the refrain "there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" repeated in the book of Judges? What's the problem with everyone doing what's right in their own eyes? Instead of making ourselves the king, who is the king we should follow?

TAKEAWAY: Follow King Jesus instead of doing whatever you want.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Army Exercises

Supply List: none

Have the children stand with space between them. The leader tells the children that they are now in the army and should follow the orders of the commander. If they fail to follow instructions, they will be out of the army. Give orders to do push-ups, jumping jacks, run in place, march in place, hit the deck, and the like. Any child that does not quickly do the instructed exercise is out. Continue until only one child remains standing.





Option 2: Everybody Freeze

Supply List: paper towel roll, red construction paper

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a paper torch from a paper towel roll with red construction paper coming out of the top to look like flames.

✓ Instruct the children that they should march around the room, but keep an eye on the leader because when the leader holds up the paper torch, they should immediately freeze. If a child moves when the torch is up in the air, he is out. Play continues until only one child remains.

3rd-5th

Option 1: Pass the Torch Relay

Supply List: paper towel rolls, red construction paper

Before Class: Make paper torches out of paper towel rolls and red construction paper. You will need one torch for every four to six children in your group.

Divide the children into equal teams of four to six people. When the leader says "Go!" the first child from each team will run with the torch to the opposite side of the room and back, and then he or she will pass the torch to the next player on their team. After each player has run with the torch, play again challenging them to crawl (while keeping the torch up) to the opposite side of the room. The race continues until every player has raced. The first team to complete the race wins!

Option 2: Everybody Freeze

Supply List: paper towel roll, red construction paper

✓ *Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a paper torch from a paper towel roll with red construction paper coming out of the top to look like flames.*

Instruct the children that they should march around the room, but keep an eye on the leader because when the leader holds up the paper torch, they should immediately freeze. If a child moves when the torch is up in the air, he is out. Play continues until only one child remains.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Paper Torch

Supply List: empty paper towel rolls (or cardstock and tape), markers, stickers, strips of red and orange tissue paper, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Provide empty paper towel rolls, or roll pieces of cardstock into a cylinder and tape shut. Cut red and orange tissue paper into strips approximately 2" x 5". Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper towel roll. Provide an assortment of markers and stickers for children to use to decorate the paper towel rolls. After the rolls are decorated, have the children glue strips of tissue paper to the top inside of the roll to resemble flames. Tell the children that when Gideon and his men blew their trumpets and smashed their jars, inside the jars were torches that helped confuse the Midianites who got scared and ran away.

Option 2: Paper Plate Visor

Supply List: paper plates, elastic thread, scissors, hole punch, "God Is in Control" papers, glue sticks, markers/crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut paper plates into a crescent shape, punch a hole near the two points of the crescent, and tie a piece of elastic thread through both holes to create a wearable visor. Print out the words "God Is in Control" in large print on copy paper and cut to fit onto visors. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper plate visor and "God Is in Control" word strip. Have them all glue the strip to the visor and decorate the visor as desired with markers or crayons. Visors help people to see in the sunlight. We don't always see things the same as God does; it is in those times that we trust God, knowing that he is in control and sees all things clearly.



Option 1: Paper Mosaic

Supply List: crayons/markers, colored construction paper, glue sticks, copies of paper with words “I Trust You, God!”

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write the words “I Trust You, God!” in bubble letters on paper (cardstock preferred) and make copies. Cut small pieces of a variety of colored construction paper. Make a sample craft.

Give children a copy of the “I Trust You, God!” paper. Have them color the bubble letters with markers or crayons. Have them glue the pieces of construction paper around the outside of the words to fill the paper.

Option 2: Word Web

Supply List: “Gideon” paper, colored pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write the name Gideon in large letters on the center of a paper. Make a sample craft.

Have the children brainstorm with you some words that describe Gideon and write them on a whiteboard. Write the words in a way that represents the word (e.g., *fleece* written in a fluffy way, *scared* in small letters with wavy lines, *leader* written in solid, bold letters, etc.).



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.



STORY 23

Samson's Strength

JUDGES 13–16

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read the focus passage (*Judg. 15:9–16:31*) or the whole passage (*Judges 13–16*).
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1
Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2
Teach

Israel was a great nation now. God's promises were being fulfilled. They had twelve tribes with thousands and thousands of men, women, boys, and girls. And they had cows and lambs and goats and camels too. Joshua had led them into the promised land—the land flowing with milk and honey. Yum. But there was still a big problem: there were lots of bad people living in the land. God brought judgment on these people by raising up judges. Remember how the Midianites were defeated by Gideon? He and the other judges led God's people in battles to defeat their enemies in the promised land. This helped them remember God's promises and receive them. The most famous of these judges was Samson. He was so famous because he was so strong! He was also famous because he made so many mistakes. We know God will keep his promises. But will Samson obey? Will he find his true strength in the Lord? Let's find out.

TELL THE STORY

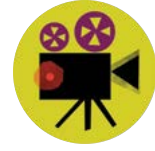
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
focus passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
True strength is
more about faith
than muscles.

Samson’s parents, before they were parents, struggled to have a baby. Then one day, the Lord told Samson’s mother, “You shall conceive and bear a son” (Judg. 13:3). This baby would be set apart for God from the first day of his life to the last. He would save Israel from the big, bad Philistines. As a sign that he was set apart by God, he drank no wine and he wasn’t allowed to have a haircut. Whenever the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, he possessed incredible strength. But if he drank wine or his hair was shaved, God’s strength would leave him. His strength was legendary. He tore a furious lion apart with his bare hands and struck down a thousand wicked men with the jawbone of a donkey. And his strength gave Israel relief from her enemies. What a hero!

But before you run out and buy his action figure, you need to know that this strong hero had flaws. He fell in love with Delilah, a woman who was not from Israel and who did not love God. (Samson often did what seemed right in his own eyes instead of what was right in God’s.) Some leaders from the big, bad Philistines thought Delilah could help them figure out the secret to Samson’s strength. To convince her to do it, they each gave her 1,100 pieces of silver. Samson knew she was up to something tricky. So he lied the first three times she tried to trick him into sharing his secret. The fourth time, however, he finally told her the truth: “My hair is the secret of my strength.” That night, while he was sound asleep, his hair was shaved off by one of his enemies. Samson’s Spirit-powered superpowers were gone! The Philistines captured him and poked out his eyes. What evil people! But as time passed, Samson grew stronger and stronger.



Story

23

Judges

13–16

One night, the Philistines threw a big party in a big house. To mock the once mighty Samson, they had him stand between two pillars to entertain them. To mock Samson’s God, they cheered about how their false god was the strongest. Weak Samson heard this and asked God to make him strong one final time: “O Lord God, please . . . strengthen me” (16:28). God answered his prayer. Judge Samson decided to judge the Philistines by sacrificing himself. He shouted, “Let me die with the Philistines!” (16:30), and then he pushed apart the pillars. The roof collapsed and everyone died. In his death Samson was victorious over God’s enemies.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Do you have a favorite *superhero*? Maybe Superman, Wonder Woman, Black Panther, or Batgirl? Do you have a favorite *hero*? Maybe your mom, older brother, teacher, or athlete? The Bible has lots of heroes. Moses and Joshua, for example, are heroes. Samson too. But the Bible has only one superhero—Jesus! He is not a superhero just because he can do things that most people cannot do: read minds, walk on water, give sight to the blind, raise the dead. He is a superhero because he is *super good*. Perfectly good. The best heroes in the Bible—and the heroes that you know—set an example for us in faith, hope, and love, but they all have weaknesses. Some, like Samson, have lots of them. Only Jesus—the Son of God, the Savior, the Snake Crusher—was without sin. And only Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice. Like Samson, he was mocked. Like Samson’s enemies thought they had defeated Samson, God’s enemies thought they had defeated God. But unlike Samson, Jesus wasn’t captured because he was foolish. And unlike Samson, Jesus didn’t stay dead! He rose again. He conquered his enemies and ours—sin, death, and the devil. He is the only superhero we need.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** What amazing things was Samson able to do with God’s strength? Why did Samson lose his strength? When did he get it back and how? Where should we find our strength?

3

Engage

TAKEAWAY: It is foolish to rely on our own strength—our true strength is in the Lord.

Memory Verse
O Lord GOD,
please . . .
strengthen me.
JUDGES 16:28

2. **QUESTION:** What evil things did the Philistines do to Samson? How did God judge them for all the evil things they did?

TAKEAWAY: God gives strength to defeat his enemies.

3. **QUESTION:** Who are some of your heroes who love Jesus? What are they like? Are any of them perfect? Who is the one perfect superhero who saves us from our sins?

TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the only superhero who can save us from our sins.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from *TheBiggestStory.com*, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Strong Samson Relay Race

Supply List: large sweatshirt (one per team) and balloons (two per team)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Inflate balloons to a size that can fit in the sleeve of the sweatshirt. Place sweatshirts and balloons on the far side of the room.

Divide children into teams and have them line up on one side of the room. When the leader says “Go!” the first child from each team will run to the opposite side of the room, put on a sweatshirt, and place one balloon under the sleeve of each of his arms like big bicep muscles. Then he must run back to his team without the balloons falling out of the shirt. If the balloons fall out, he must stop and replace them before continuing. When he gets to his team, he should take off the sweatshirt and balloons and pass them to the next person. (Note: the sweatshirt will alternate the side of the room where it is put on and taken off.) The next team member should put the shirt and balloons on and run to the opposite side of the room, where she takes it off and runs back to the start. Each member will run one length of the room with the sweatshirt on and one without. The first team to get all their members to complete the race wins.



Option 2: Cool It Game!

Supply List: one hot item, one cold item

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children sit in a circle. Give one child the cold item and another child the hot item. Start the music. As the music plays, children pass the items around the circle to the person on their right. When the music stops, the person holding the hot item is out, but the person holding the cold item can continue to play. Play continues until one player remains. Remind children that Samson was a strong and heroic man in many ways, but he was not perfect. Sometimes he was out of control and his choices had serious consequences. We honor God when we demonstrate self-control even when we feel hot and angry.

3rd-5th

Option 1: Two Truths and a Lie

Supply List: none

Have children sit in a circle. Give them a minute to think of two true things and one lie about themselves. Go around the circle allowing each child to share his or her three statements (e.g., "I have a pet turtle. I sing in the shower. I went to Iceland for my birthday."). Other children raise their hands and guess which statement the child shared is a lie. Remind the children that three times Samson lied to Delilah about what the source of his strength was, but the fourth time she begged and he finally gave up his secret.

Option 2: Samson Picture Guessing Game

Supply List: paper, pencils

Before Class: Gather supplies. Write words that relate to the story of Samson on pieces of paper (e.g., muscles, foxes, donkey jawbone, strong, Delilah, lion, long hair, blind, pillars, prayer, etc.).

Divide children into two teams, with each team sitting at a table together. To begin, the first person from each team goes to the teacher and looks at the word on the paper at the same time. Then the players run back to their team's table and draw a picture of the word. The first team to guess the word correctly gets a

point. Continue to play with a different child from each team viewing the word and drawing the picture each time. The team with the most points after all the words have been completed wins.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Samson's Planter

Supply List: paper/plastic cups (one per child), grass seed, potting soil, permanent markers (optional: wiggly eyes, glue)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Put soil in containers for each table (enough to fill the cups for each child). Place grass seed in smaller containers for each table. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a cup. Set soil and grass containers on each table, along with markers. Have children draw a face on their cup (optional: glue wiggly eyes to the cup instead of drawing eyes). Have them fill their cup with dirt and add grass seed. Instruct the children to water the seeds regularly at home. When the grass starts to grow it will remind them of Samson's growing hair.

Option 2: Lion Face Puppet

Supply List: small white paper plates (one per child), paper bags (one per child), glue, crayons, yarn (yellow, orange, or gold)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut pieces of gold or yellow yarn (about 3 inches in length). Make a sample craft.

Have children draw a lion face on the center of the paper plate. Glue yarn pieces all around the outside edge of the plate to make a lion's mane. Glue the paper plate to a paper bag to make a puppet. Remind children that God gave Samson incredible strength; one time he even tore a lion apart!



Option 1: Rope Bracelets

Supply List: twine, scissors

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut pieces of twine in 10-inch segments and knot together in groups of three (one set per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a set of twine. Have children braid the three pieces of twine together to make a bracelet. Tie the bracelet onto the child's wrist when completed. Remind the children that Samson lied to Delilah and told her if he was bound with ropes, he would lose his strength.

Option 2: Paper Chain

Supply List: construction paper, glue sticks, scissors, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut construction paper into strips (six per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child six strips of paper, a marker, and a glue stick. Have children write one word from the Memory Verse ("O Lord GOD, please . . . strengthen me"; Judg. 16:28) on each strip. Then have them glue the strips together to make a paper chain. Remind children that Samson was captured and chained between two pillars, but when he prayed for strength one last time, God granted his request. Samson pushed apart the two pillars and showed that even in death he could judge God's enemies.



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