

LESSON 41

# Moses Disobeys God

NUMBERS 20



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**BIBLE TRUTH**

OUR ANGER AGAINST OTHERS IS ALSO A SIN AGAINST GOD

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. **OPENING REVIEW** . . . . . **5 MIN**  
Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.
2. **BIBLE STORY** . . . . . **10 MIN**  
Read Numbers 20:1–21 from the Scriptures or read story 41, “Moses Disobeys God,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.
3. **OBJECT LESSON 1** . . . . . **10 MIN**  
Don’t Follow My Example  
**SUPPLIES:**
  - ✓ drop cloth
  - ✓ three small bottles of sugar-free soda
  - ✓ paper towels
4. **TEACHING/DISCUSSION** . . . . . **10 MIN**
5. **OBJECT LESSON 2** . . . . . **10 MIN**  
Again and Again  
**SUPPLIES:**
  - ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase markers
6. **SWORD BIBLE MEMORY** . . . . . **5 MIN**
7. **ACTIVITY TIME** . . . . . **10 MIN**  
Coloring Activity  
**SUPPLIES:**
  - ✓ coloring page 41—one copy for each child
8. **CLOSING PRAYER** . . . . . **5 MIN**
9. **BONUS OBJECT LESSON** . . . . . **10 MIN**  
Water from a Rock  
**SUPPLIES:**
  - ✓ three rocks (one small, one medium, one large)
  - ✓ wooden staff
  - ✓ bag to hide the rocks

**TOTAL 75 MIN**

## PREPARING TO TEACH

### TEACHING POINTS

**The people grumble against Moses and Aaron again**—The Israelites are again out in the wilderness, thirsty. Once they had been on the brink of entering the Promised Land, but they had been turned away for their lack of faith.

They do not see that it is their own fault that they are back in the wilderness. They complain against Moses, and accuse him of bringing them to a place they call “evil.” But God is still with them there in the wilderness. To call the place where God dwells with them evil is an insult against God. In blaming Moses, God’s servant, they are blaming God himself.

**Moses goes to the Tent of Meeting and God speaks**—When the people complain that God has brought them to an evil place, Moses and Aaron go to seek God. Once again, despite the sin of the Israelites, God shows his faithfulness by displaying his glory to Moses and Aaron. God wants them to understand that he is with them. God’s presence makes even the wilderness not an evil place but a holy one.

Other times, when Moses prayed for the rebellious Israelites, the Bible says he interceded for them. This means he prayed and asked God for mercy. But this time Moses is so discouraged, all he can do is fall down before the Lord. God instructs him to speak to the rock, promising that it will produce water so the people and their animals can drink and be refreshed.

**Moses disobeys and strikes the rock**—Instead of speaking to the rock as God commands, Moses strikes the rock twice. In several ways, this is a serious sin against God.

First, Moses is acting in anger. We know this because he calls the people “rebels.” Moses strikes the rock because he is angry at the people’s sin. He may also be angry with God because leading Israel has been so difficult for Moses. Second, Moses and Aaron take the credit for producing the water when they say, “Shall we bring water for you?” Rather than delivering God’s message, Moses delivers his own. Third, ever since God used Moses’ staff as a tool for bringing plagues upon Pharaoh, it has symbolized judgment. So by striking the rock with his staff, Moses puts himself in the place of God the Judge without God’s direction to do so.

Moses’ sin with the rock is so serious that God prohibits him from leading the people into the Promised Land. No number of good deeds can save us. Even Moses, the great leader, disobeyed God’s plan and needed a Savior.

## WHERE IS JESUS? \_\_\_\_\_

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Read Hebrews 4:15.

Instead of speaking to the rock to draw forth the water, Moses strikes the rock in his anger. Here we see the fallibility of Israel's redeemer. Up until this point, Moses did what God told him to do. But Moses was a fallen mediator, unable to stand sinless in the gap for the people. Jesus is the perfect mediator.

Unlike Moses, the imperfect mediator, Jesus, though he was tempted like us, did not sin. He intercedes for us yet today. His blood covers all our sins, and he continually stands before God the Father testifying to our redemption.

### THE LESSON

#### OPENING REVIEW . . . . . 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

#### BIBLE STORY . . . . . 10 MIN

Read Numbers 20:1–21 from the Scriptures or read story 41, "Moses Disobeys God," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

#### OBJECT LESSON 1 . . . . . 10 MIN

##### Don't Follow My Example

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ drop cloth
- ✓ three small bottles of sugar-free soda
- ✓ paper towels

We learn in 1 Corinthians 10:1–13 that Israel's mistakes are recorded to help us not repeat their sins and mistakes. The warning comes to us that we should be careful and learn.

## ■ LOWER ELEMENTARY LESSON 41

Take a bottle of soda in your hands, and ask the class what will happen if you shake it up. They will of course tell you that it will fizz over. Explain to them that although that has happened to you before, you heard that there is a secret that will prevent that from happening. Someone told you that if you tap the top it will keep it from fizzing over. Explain to them that you are going to do it because you think that it will work.

Shake the bottle vigorously. Tap the top then shake it some more and then tap it again. Play this up. Tap it again then open it quickly to let out some (but not all) of the soda on your hands.

Explain to them that you think you did something wrong. Repeat the same exercise a second time and then, finally, a third time.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:11–12, and ask the class the following questions:

- **What can you learn from my experiment with the soda?**  
*(We can learn not to shake a soda and then try to open it. We learn that tapping a soda bottle does not stop it from fizzing over, etc.)*
  
- **Why did God record the stories of the mistakes of the people in the Old Testament?**  
*(First Corinthians 10:11 tells us that God recorded these mistakes as an example for us on whom the end of the ages, Jesus, has come.)*
  
- **So what does Paul mean when he says, “If you think you are standing firm be careful?”**  
*(Paul is telling us that we are a lot like the Israelites. We often repeat our sins. But God helps all true Christians to put aside more and more sin.)*

### **TEACHING/DISCUSSION . . . . . 10 MIN**

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

### **OBJECT LESSON 2 . . . . . 10 MIN**

#### **Again and Again**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase markers

The object of this exercise is to help the children see that they are more like Israel than they realize.

Ask the children to think of the sin that they commit most often (use the whiteboard to list some of the common sins). Ask for volunteers to share their sin. They are likely to offer items like disrespecting their parents, getting angry with their siblings, etc.

Ask them to think for a minute and tell you how many times they have done this sin. Ask the class if anyone else has repeated this sin several times.

Then ask the following questions:

- **Who are we most like in the Bible story?**  
*(We are most like Israel who kept on sinning by not trusting God.)*
  
- **Why did God give Israel water even though they complained and even though their leader, Moses, disobeyed?**  
*(The answer is grace! God was merciful to give them what they did not deserve. Psalm 103:10 tells us that God does not treat us as our sins deserve.)*

**SWORD BIBLE MEMORY . . . . . 5 MIN**

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

**ACTIVITY TIME . . . . . 10 MIN**

**Coloring Activity**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ coloring page 41—one copy for each child

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

- **How did God make water come out of a rock?**  
*(We don't know how God did it. It was a miracle.)*

- Can you think of some of God’s other amazing miracles?

*(Accept any legitimate answer: Moses parting the Red Sea, Joshua parting the Jordan, making Balaam’s donkey talk, Jesus or Peter walking on water, Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, etc.)*

- Why did Moses disobey God’s command?

*(He became angry when the people did not obey. Moses then took things into his own hands.)*

**CLOSING PRAYER . . . . . 5 MIN**

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day’s scripture passages.

**BONUS OBJECT LESSON . . . . . 10 MIN**

**Water from a Rock**

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ three rocks (one small, one medium, one large)
- ✓ wooden staff
- ✓ bag to hide the rocks

After telling today’s Bible story to the children, pretend that you are getting thirsty, very thirsty. Act this up and look around for a glass of water. When you find none, pretend to come up with an idea. Turn to the bag with the rocks inside and pick out the smallest one. Set it on a table and speak to it and say, “Water come out of the rock.” Then stand back and wait. When nothing happens, reason out loud to yourself saying, “I can’t understand, it worked for Moses. Maybe I need a bigger rock.”

Take out the medium rock and repeat the exercise; do it one more time with the largest rock. Then say, “Oh, I remember now, Moses disobeyed God. He didn’t speak to the rock; he struck the rock with a staff.” Go and retrieve your staff and raise it above your head like you are going to smash the largest rock with all your might. But then stop and reason out loud, “If I strike the rock I won’t be able to get into the Promised Land. Wait a minute! I don’t need to get into the Promised Land.” Then strike the rock (not too hard).

When nothing happens, ask the children why you couldn’t bring water from the rock. The answer is that it was God and his power who brought forth the water. Neither Moses nor his staff had any power. God told Moses that he was going to do something amazing and bring water from the rock for his people. You, on the other hand, came up with the idea yourself.

LESSON 41 - MOSES DISOBEYS GOD

