

LESSON 39

Miriam

NUMBERS 12



BIBLE TRUTH

MOSES MEDIATED ON BEHALF OF MIRIAM

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 12 from the Scriptures or read story 39, "Miriam," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.
- 3. OBJECT LESSON 1** **10 MIN**
 Opposing the Plan
SUPPLIES:

 - ✓ several sets of dominoes
 - ✓ one dozen table tennis balls
- 4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION** **10 MIN**
- 5. OBJECT LESSON 2** **15 MIN**
 A Thank-You Card
SUPPLIES:

 - ✓ blank thank-you cards for the entire class
 - ✓ colored pencils
 - ✓ markers or gel pens
- 6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY** **5 MIN**
- 7. ACTIVITY TIME** **15 MIN**
 God's Presence
SUPPLIES:

 - ✓ colored pencils, crayons, and paper
- 8. CLOSING PRAYER** **5 MIN**
- 9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON** **10 MIN**
 Brought Back into the Camp
SUPPLIES:

 - ✓ dark, washable marker
 - ✓ basin of hot soapy water
 - ✓ roll of quality, durable, paper towels
 - ✓ masking tape

TOTAL 85 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Miriam and Aaron oppose Moses—God has already given Moses 70 elders to help him. Now, God pours out his Spirit on them and they begin to prophesy—to speak messages from God. Two other men also begin to prophesy, and Moses approves of it.

News of this seems to tempt Miriam and Aaron—Moses’ own sister and brother—to pride and jealousy. Aaron (who made the golden calf) was the high priest of Israel and was probably one of the elders. Miriam and Aaron want Moses to become less important so they can become more important. They want to be known as people who also speak words from God. Instead of being humbled by what God has already done for them, they become proud.

God pronounces judgment for their sin—In response to their pride, God humbles Miriam and Aaron. He calls them to the tent of meeting where he rebukes Aaron and Miriam for speaking against Moses. God makes it very clear that Moses is closer to him than any other person. They are foolish to think that prophesying can make them equal to Moses. As judgment for their sin, God strikes Miriam with leprosy. He wants them to know just how serious it is to grumble against Moses.

Moses never boasts about the fact that he meets with God face to face. God said that he was the most humble (or “meek”) person on the earth!

God extends his mercy—It may seem that God punished Miriam severely by giving her leprosy. But God would have been perfectly just in killing her for her sin.

Yet in response to Moses’ prayer, God heals Miriam of her leprosy. As a leper, Miriam has to spend seven days outside the camp. The fact that she is allowed back into the camp proves she is completely healed. Surely this reminded Israel of sin’s seriousness and of the greatness of God’s mercy.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Mediator

First Timothy 2:5 tells us that there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ. A mediator is a person in the middle who communicates from one person to another

person in order to resolve a problem or conflict. Jesus is the mediator between God the Father and us.

Moses was a mediator between God and the people of Israel, and Moses foreshadowed Jesus Christ. A mediator needs to be a representative for both sides, and Jesus is both fully God and fully man. As the last Adam who took the punishment we deserve, Jesus represents us to God.

Jesus also represents God to us. Jesus came to reveal his Father in heaven to us here on earth. Jesus is God and therefore could represent God fully to us.

WHERE IS JESUS? _____

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

Read Philippians 2:1–11.

Consider the pride of Aaron and Miriam and the humility of Moses who God said was the most humble (meek) man “on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). Moses, whose life and ministry is a picture of Jesus, is also a picture of Jesus in his humility. No one ever humbled himself more than Jesus, the Son of God, who came to earth and died on the cross for our sins.

Consider the humble response of Moses when Aaron and Miriam came before God in the tent of meeting and complained against him. Moses did not object to what they said about him, and when Miriam was struck with leprosy, Moses interceded with God for her. In the same way, Jesus prayed for those who mocked and crucified him. Jesus said, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

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 12 from the Scriptures or read story 39, “Miriam,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 **10 MIN**

Opposing the Plan

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ several sets of dominoes
- ✓ one dozen table tennis balls

The object of this lesson is to show how just two people trying to tear down what is being built can cause damage.

Aaron and Miriam spoke in opposition to Moses. When they did this, they were not just speaking against an ordinary man; they were, in fact, speaking against God. Moses was God's choice to lead the people, and as such was part of God's plan of redemption. To speak against Moses was ultimately to speak against God's plan to redeem mankind through Jesus.

Appoint two students to be the opposition and give them the table tennis balls. Recruit a group of five students to set up the dominoes in a line that can later be knocked down. While the five are setting up the dominoes, the two use the balls to hinder the building progress.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- How did the students with the table tennis balls hinder the group setting up the dominoes?
(They slowed the progress of the domino team by hindering their concentration, by diverting the team's attention from their task, and by actually knocking down dominoes that had been set up.)
- Why do you think God corrected Aaron and Miriam's opposition so severely?
(To allow them to continue complaining would undermine Moses' leadership. Moses was part of God's plan of redemption through Jesus, and God was not going to allow his plan to be thwarted.)

TEACHING/DISCUSSION **10 MIN**

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

OBJECT LESSON 2 **15 MIN**

A Thank-You Card

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ blank thank-you cards for the entire class
- ✓ colored pencils
- ✓ markers or gel pens

Even in the face of Moses’ complaining, God is kind to overlook his attitude and provide some real help by pouring out his Spirit on seventy elders. All forgiveness and withholding of punishment in the Old Testament is ultimately rooted in what Jesus accomplished on the cross.

Children are frequently disobedient to their parents. They are disrespectful and cause challenges for their parents. In return for these offenses, parents train them and regularly forgive them. When parents forgive their children and overlook their offenses, they model the same mercy that God extended to Moses. In fact, God compares his loving discipline of us to the discipline of earthly fathers (Hebrews 12:9–10).

Have the children write thank-you notes to their parents, thanking them for their loving discipline, forgiveness, and kindness in raising them.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- **God gave us our parents to train us and care for us. How can we make their job easier?**
(Children make their parent’s job easier by obeying and not complaining.)
- **How could Aaron and Miriam have made Moses’ job of leading easier?**
(Aaron and Miriam could have followed Moses without jealousy or complaining. Hebrews 13:17 says that when we obey those whom God has placed in authority over us, we make their work a joy.)

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 15 MIN

God's Presence

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ colored pencils, crayons, and paper

Have the children draw Moses, Miriam, and Aaron standing at the Tent of Meeting with God next to them as the pillar of cloud.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

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

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN

Brought Back into the Camp

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ dark, washable marker
- ✓ basin of hot soapy water
- ✓ roll of quality, durable, paper towels
- ✓ masking tape

Prior to class in an open part of the classroom, tape out a circle large enough for all the children to stand in.

After reading the Bible story for this week, explain to the children that Miriam's complaining against Moses and God is a picture of all of us in our sin. Invite the children to come inside the circle. Explain that because of the fall of Adam and Eve, we all have sinful hearts and lives. Draw a dark circle on the back of each child's right hand with the letter *S* in the middle. Tell the children that we, like Miriam, were under God's judgment and separated from the people of God. Miriam was sent outside the camp; we are unable to enter heaven. Send all the children outside the circle.

Now share the gospel with the children, and one by one, using the paper towels and the hot soapy water, wash their sin away, pointing them to what Jesus did. As their sin is washed away invite them back inside the circle.

Miriam's cleansing was only possible because God knew that one day he would send Jesus to die on the cross for Miriam's sin. Apart from what Jesus did, none of us could be cleansed and brought back into the family of God.