

LESSON 41

Moses Disobeys God

NUMBERS 20



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**
A Desert or a Fertile Land
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ a small prickly cactus (choose one with big needles not small ones that can easily come out and stick to fingers like splinters)
 - ✓ an African violet plant
- 4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN**
- 5. OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN**
Examining Moses’ Sin
- 6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN**
- 7. ACTIVITY TIME 15 MIN**
Striking the Rock
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ colored pencils, crayons, and paper
- 8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN**
- 9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 20 MIN**
Act Out the Story
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ one large rock and staff
 - ✓ costumes for Moses and the Israelites (a few inexpensive fake beards, a couple of old flat sheets, rope for a belt, and a few large branches for staffs)

TOTAL 90 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.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Believe

Believe means to trust. God judged Moses because he did not believe (Numbers 20:12). Romans 10:10 tells us that we believe with our hearts. To believe is to agree that something is true and be willing to place your trust in that truth. Believing in Jesus is how we are saved from our sins.

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

A Desert or a Fertile Land

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ a small prickly cactus (choose one with big needles, not small ones that can easily come out and stick to fingers like splinters)
- ✓ an African violet plant

Use the two plants as an illustration of the difference between the land to which Israel was going and the desert in which they were currently wandering.

Have the children touch the two plants and describe which one they like better. The idea is to get the children to express the idea that the cactus is less desirable because it is dry, prickly, and uncomfortable.

Ask the class the following questions:

- **How do you think Israel felt about wandering in the desert rather than going into the Promised Land?**
(They probably regretted their unbelief, which had prevented them from entering the Promised Land.)
- **What does the Promised Land represent?**
(The Promised Land represents a land of rest where the people could enjoy all that God had given them. The Promised Land is a picture of heaven.)
- **What can we learn from Israel?**
(Those who were delivered from Egypt didn't have faith in God's plan and as a result, never entered the land of promise. If we have faith in God's plan, the gospel, we can share in God's eternal rest in heaven.)

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

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

OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Examining Moses' Sin

Have the children look up 1 Corinthians 10:4. Remind them that the first time the Israelites complained to Moses for lack of water (see Exodus 17) they were in the same location. At that time, they charged Moses and were prepared to kill him. God instructed Moses to strike the rock rather than judge the people. That was a foreshadowing of God receiving the judgment for our sin.

Now, Moses takes it upon himself to disobey God. Rather than speak to the rock as God instructs, he strikes the rock in anger twice. Rather than tell the people that God is the one providing water, Moses tells them that he and Aaron will bring the water out of the rock.

Ask the children the following questions:

- **Why do you think God saw Moses' disobedience as serious enough to keep him out of the Promised Land?**

(By striking the rock, Moses was judging Christ, who God intended the rock to represent.)

In John 4:7–14, Jesus tells the woman at the well to ask him for a drink of water. He promises to provide an endless supply. The religious rulers refuse this kind of teaching and take it upon themselves to judge and crucify Jesus.

- **Is Moses more like the woman at the well or the angry Pharisees who crucify Jesus? Why?**

(As special as Moses was, he was still a sinner and needed a Savior. Here, Moses acts more like a Pharisee than the woman at the well. She believes and is changed; the Pharisees do not believe and end up judging Christ.)

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

Striking the Rock

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ colored pencils, crayons, and paper

Have the children draw a picture of Moses striking the rock.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

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

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 20 MIN

Act Out the Story

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ one large rock and staff
- ✓ costumes for Moses and the Israelites (a few inexpensive fake beards, a couple of old flat sheets, rope for a belt, and a few large branches for staffs)

Divide the class into teams of six to eight students. Have them read the story in Numbers 20:8–12 and put together a short skit depicting what happened. Go around to each group and guide them through the process.

Passing around the staff and costume articles, have each group do their skit before the class. Take the best skit on the road to the younger aged classes. Take your whole class and have them all play the thirsty Israelites.

When you return, talk about what Moses did wrong and why God would not allow him to go into the Promised Land.