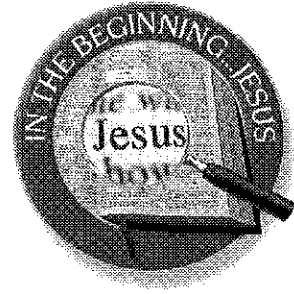


In the Beginning...Jesus



Lesson 22

Israel's Wandering in the Wilderness

Themes:

- God established a pattern of life for His covenant people to follow.
- God led Israel toward the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- God is faithful, merciful, and good.
- Because of the Israelites' unbelief, God made them wander 40 years in the wilderness.

Scripture:

Exodus 40:34-35; portions of Numbers

Memory Verse:

John 1:3 (and review verses 1-2)

Visuals for Lesson:

- Bible.
- *In the Beginning...Jesus* poster.
- Resource Packet:
 - PATTERNS Activity Sheet—Make one copy for each child.
 - GOD—MAN visual (from previous lessons).
 - JESUS IS THE KEY visual (from previous lessons).
 - GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM (from lesson 12).
 - ISRAEL CAMPING.
 - ISRAEL TRAVELING.
 - CLOUD COVERING TABERNACLE.
 - CLOUD LIFTED ABOVE TABERNACLE.
 - SET OUT, CAMP.
 - GOD IS FAITHFUL 1-2, GOD IS MERCIFUL 1-2, GOD IS GOOD 1-2, ISRAEL GRUMBLES, ISRAEL REBELS, GOD'S JUDGMENT 1-2.
 - Verse cards #1-6.
 - Bible Clue Card #25.
- Magnifying glass (for use in reading the clue card).
- Map of Sinai and Canaan.
- Tent stakes—Put the stakes into a brown paper bag.

PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY:

Before the lesson, have the children complete the **PATTERNS Activity Sheet**. Allow

about five minutes for this activity.

Lesson

Display a copy of the **PATTERNS Activity Sheet**. Quickly review the sheet, asking the children for the correct answer to each missing pattern piece. Explain that the reason you had the children do this activity before the lesson is because in today's lesson we will be looking for patterns in the Bible. But before we do this, we must briefly review what happened in the previous lesson.

Display the **GOD—MAN** visual and quickly review the following points: While God was still speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, the people of Israel made a golden calf to worship. In doing this, they broke God's covenant. God was right to punish the people, but God also remembered His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to make Israel into a great nation through whom the whole world would be blessed. (**Display GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM.**)

Ask: What did God re-make to show He was renewing His covenant with Israel? [The tablets containing the Ten Commandments.]

Point out that after the renewal of the covenant and the giving of the new set of tablets, Moses had the Israelites build the tabernacle just as God had instructed. When everything was finished and all the furniture was in place, something very special happened.

Have the children turn to **Exodus 40:34-35**:

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

Emphasize that God had done just as He had promised. His awesome glory came down into the tabernacle. The one true God would now live with His chosen people in a very special way.

Point out that this is not the end of the story. **Display** the bag with the tent stakes and tell the children that inside is a clue about what happened next. Choose a child to remove the stakes (or the visual) from the bag and ask:

What are these used for? [Holding a tent in place.] What was built to be like a tent? [The tabernacle.] Why was the tabernacle made to be like a tent and not like a strong stone building?

Display the map. Point to the area of Mount Sinai on the map. Was this the land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? [No.] Point to the area of Canaan on the map. Explain that God wanted the tabernacle to be moveable, just like a tent, because God wanted His people to move to the land that He had promised them. How were they going to do this? How would they find their way?

Have the children turn to **Numbers 9**. Explain to the children that the book of Numbers continues the story of the Israelites' journey from Mount Sinai to the land of Canaan. Throughout the book of Numbers there are certain patterns that can be found.

Read **Numbers 9:15**:

On the day that the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony. And at evening it was over the tabernacle like the appearance of fire until morning.

Choose children to read verses **16-18**:

So it was always: the cloud covered it by day and the appearance of fire by night. And whenever the cloud lifted from over the tent, after that the people of Israel set out, and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the people of Israel camped. At the command of the LORD the people of Israel set out, and at the command of the LORD they camped. As long as the cloud rested over the tabernacle, they remained in camp.

Display the **CLOUD COVERING TABERNACLE**. Tape this to the wall. Next, **display SET OUT** and **CAMP**.

According to the verses we just read, which sign should follow after the picture of the cloud covering the tabernacle? [CAMP.] Tape this sign to the right of the picture.

*Every time Israel stopped to camp, God had a pattern as to how they should organize the camp. **Display ISRAEL CAMPING** and tape it to the right of **CAMP**. Quickly point out the location of the tabernacle, the Levites, and the other tribes as shown on the visual.*

[**Note:** The children may note that there are 13 tribes (names) listed. You should explain that Jacob's 12 sons became "11 full tribes + 2 half tribes." This came about because, in honor of Joseph, Jacob blessed Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and counted them as two half tribes instead of having only one tribe of Joseph.]

Display the **CLOUD ABOVE TABERNACLE**. Tape this to the right of **ISRAEL CAMPING** and ask the children what sign should follow this new picture. [**SET OUT.**]

Tape this to the right of the picture.

*God also made a pattern for them to follow as they set out. **Display ISRAEL TRAVELING.** Every time they traveled, they were to arrange themselves in this order. (Tape **ISRAEL TRAVELING** to the right of **SET OUT.**)*

The visuals should now look as follows:

CLOUD COVERING TABERNACLE—CAMP—ISRAEL CAMPING—CLOUD ABOVE TABERNACLE—SET OUT—ISRAEL TRAVELING

Emphasize that God had planned everything. He had a pattern for how Israel would journey to the land He had promised them, and in doing this, God was showing His people another pattern. **Display GOD IS FAITHFUL, GOD IS MERCIFUL, GOD IS GOOD.** Tape these signs on the wall in left to right order, and underneath the series of previous visuals. Even after the people of Israel had broken the covenant, God was faithful in keeping His promise. He didn't reject them but had mercy on them. He was good to them and dwelt in their midst and led them through the wilderness to the promised land.

But as Israel traveled, another pattern was revealed. It was a pattern about how Israel responded to God's faithfulness, mercy, and goodness.

Choose three children to come up to the front. Hand each of them a **Verse Card** to read. Tell them to read only the verse printed on the card and not the large letters underneath. As they read their cards, the children in the class are to listen for a pattern.

Card #1

And the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes. (Numbers 11:1a)

Card #2

And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!" (Numbers 14:2)

Card #3

And the people quarreled with Moses and said..."And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place?" (Numbers 20:3a, 5a)

*Do you hear a pattern in these verses? [Israel is complaining.] Have the children **display** their verse cards in left to right order (1, 2, 3) to the class so that the children now see: **GRUMBLE & QUARREL.** Is this something*

new? [No.] *When have we seen this pattern before?* [In the wilderness after they left Egypt, etc.] Tape **ISRAEL GRUMBLES** to the right of **GOD IS GOOD** on the wall.

Point out that there is another piece to this pattern. Have the children turn to **Numbers 13**. Explain that in this chapter, Moses sent out 12 spies, one spy representing each tribe of Israel. They were to travel ahead to the land of Canaan to find out what the land was like, what the people who lived there were like, and what kinds of buildings they lived in. Tell the children to listen carefully to the report the spies brought back.

Read **Numbers 13:27-28a, 30-31**, and **14:7-9a, 10a**:

And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large."

But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it." Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are."

Did the people of Israel believe they would be able to enter the land God promised them? Why not? What was this showing about what they thought of God and His promises? Can you predict what happened next? Are the Israelites following a predictable pattern in their actions?

And [Joshua and Caleb] said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD"...Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones.

What did Joshua warn them not to do? [Not rebel against God.] Did they listen to his warning? What was this showing about their attitude toward God?

Display ISRAEL REBELS. Ask the children if Israel's rebellion is part of a pattern. Had Israel rebelled against God before? Can you give an example? [Making the golden calf and breaking the covenant, etc.] Tape **ISRAEL REBELS** to the right of **ISRAEL GRUMBLES**.

God has shown His people a pattern of who He is and what He is like. He has shown them He is faithful, merciful, and good. And they have shown

God a pattern of who they are and what they are like in their response: they grumble, quarrel, and rebel against God.

Ask the children if they might be able to predict what might come next in the pattern. Will God just act as if nothing has happened? Here are three things God said and did in response to Israel's grumbling and rebellion:

Choose three children to come up to the front. Hand each of them a **Verse Card** to read. Tell them to read only the verse printed on the card and not the large letters underneath. As they read their cards, the children in the class are to listen for the pattern.

Card #4

None of the men who have seen My glory and My signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed My voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. (Numbers 14:22-23a)

Card #5

And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. (Numbers 14:33)

Card # 6

Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. (Numbers 21:6)

How did God respond to Israel's pattern of grumbling and rebellion? Have the children turn over their verse cards in left to right order (4, 5, 6) to spell out: **JUDGMENT**. Tape **GOD'S JUDGMENT** to the right of **ISRAEL REBELS**. Explain that Israel's rebellion against God was not okay with God. He is right to bring judgment on sinful and rebellious people.

Is this the end of the story? Had God finally had enough of His sinful people? Are the fiery serpents going to be the end of Israel?

Display Bible Clue Card #25. Choose a child to come up and insert the card under the red paper in the **JESUS IS THE KEY** visual to reveal:

*Scripture: Numbers 21:7-9
Clue under Window # 18*

Have the children turn to **Numbers 21:7-9** and give them a few moments to read the verses to themselves.

Ask: Do these verses describe God's judgment or God's mercy? How did

*God make a way for His sinful people to be healed? (Allow the children to respond and then open Window #18 on the poster to reveal: **THE BRONZE SERPENT**.) Does this seem like a strange way for God's people to be healed? Why? Why would God provide healing for a grumbling and rebellious people?*

Display GOD IS FAITHFUL, GOD IS MERCIFUL, and GOD IS GOOD. Tape these signs to the right of **GOD'S JUDGMENT**. Point out that the pattern found in Numbers did not stop with God's judgment on a grumbling and rebellious people. It continued because God's faithfulness, mercy, and goodness are greater than His people's grumbling and rebellion. And some day far, far in their future, the pattern of their grumbling and rebellion would come to an end. But the final solution would not be found in looking to a bronze serpent that was lifted up but something much more special.

Application

- Most Bibles have a map in the back section that outlines the journeys of the patriarchs and the people of Israel. Help the children to find this map in their Bibles (or use your own). Quickly review the promise God made to Abraham in **Genesis 12:1-3**. Remind the children that God repeated this promise to Isaac, Jacob, and Israel. Just as in the time of Abraham, there were evil and powerful people living in the land. But was this a problem for God? What had the Israelites seen God do to the powerful Egyptians? Recall the sending out of the spies and their reports. Point out that all 12 spies reported the same thing except Joshua and Caleb who had a very different response. Why? (See **Numbers 14:8-9**.) Why was God so angry with the people? Read **Numbers 14:11**. Ask: *Have you ever faced a difficult situation with fear because the situation looked like a "giant" and you felt like a "grasshopper"?* What does God promise for those who trust in Him? Read and discuss one or more of the following promises: **Hebrews 13:6; Psalm 46:1; Isaiah 41:10; Philippians 4:13**.
- **WORKBOOK**—Have the children turn to Lesson 22 in their workbooks. Have them write today's clue in the notebook. Recall **Numbers 21:6-9**. If possible, show the children a small bronze or other metal sculpture or have the children look at the clue picture of the bronze serpent. Ask the children: *Could a piece of metal actually heal anyone? Did God's command to Moses seem like a silly way to heal the people? Why? Why did God have Moses do this then? What was God teaching His people?* [To trust Him in all things. To believe God will decide what is true and right even when it seems foolish to us. To have confidence in God, no matter what.] *How could this clue point to something about Jesus and the cross?* **[Note:** DO NOT refer to John 3:14 at this time. Just get the children to

ponder the connection between the bronze serpent and the cross.]

- ❑ **WORKBOOK**—Have the children look at the workbook page. Look up the Bible passage listed in each box. Do the children see a pattern? [Each event is either an example of God's mercy or judgment.] Have the children write the correct answer, either judgment or mercy, in each box. In two of the boxes there are no pictures but a Bible passage listed and God's Mercy. Have the children look up the two passages and then draw a simple picture depicting each event.
- ❑ Ask the children if they have ever gone to the grocery store with a parent. Propose the following story: *Suppose you are walking down the aisles with your mom as your mom places the groceries in the cart. You look in your pocket and realize you only have 27 cents. You start to worry about not having enough money for the groceries. Would you stop your mom and say: "Stop mom! We have to put everything back. I don't have enough money?"* Why would this be a silly story? Are YOU expected to have enough money for the groceries? Why not? Who would you not be depending on to meet your needs? Would your attitude be right or wrong? When the people of Israel refused to go into the land God promised them, what was their attitude toward God? What was the consequence of their attitude? [God's judgment.] Point out that this judgment included many things, most notably, Israel would wander in the wilderness for 40 years (a trip that should have taken only 40 days!) and all of the people who had been delivered out of Egypt, including Moses and Aaron, would die and never enter the promised land (Joshua and Caleb were the only exceptions).

Send Home

- Parent Resource Page