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Manna from Heaven

Scripture: Exodus 16:1-36

Theme: God provides for our daily needs

4th-6th Grade (Ages 9-11)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: The Bronze Serpent , Look and Live Introduction (Engage the Heart): Start with a quick, visual storyteller moment, hold up a small toy snake or serpent (or draw one in the air!) and ask: "What happens if you look at something scary and stare at it? What if you look at it in faith and trust God instead?" Point to the Bible: "The Israelites were angry, but God sent them a sign, a bronze serpent, so they could trust Him instead of fearing their problems." (Numbers 21:8, 9) Lesson 1: A Problem Too Big to Handle (Numbers 21:4, 5) The Israelites grumbled against God, even though He'd led them safely through the wilderness. Their problem, fear, made them ask for quick answers. "Lord, just take care of us!" But God gave them a test: "You must look to the serpent on the pole, or you'll die." This wasn't just a physical cure; it was a lesson in faith. Just as the snake had poisoned them before, their fear had poisoned their trust in God. Question for reflection: When have you felt so scared you wanted to take control instead of looking to God? How did God show you a better way? Lesson 2: The Power of Looking (Numbers 21:6, 9) The Israelites had to look up, to the serpent, not down at their fears. The brass snake (called Nehushtan in Hebrew) was a reminder: God's love isn't hidden; it's visible in His promises. When they obeyed, God healed them! This wasn't just about healing bodies, it was about healing hearts. The serpent became a symbol: God's love points us toward Himself. Personal application: Where in your life do you need to "look" to God instead of running away? Today, ask Him to show you His love in a new way. Lesson 3: Why This Matters Today (Connection to Jesus) Years later, Jesus would use this story to explain salvation. "Just as people looked to the serpent for healing, they must look to Me for forgiveness." (John 3:14, 15 paraphrase) The bronze serpent was a shadow of Christ, the ultimate Savior. Discussion question: How is Jesus different from the bronze serpent? Why is He worth looking to fully? (Hint: He doesn't just heal us; He saves us!) Closing: Trust and Take a Leap (Challenge & Encouragement) End with a simple ritual: Have kids raise their hands and pray, "Lord, help me trust You like the Israelites trusted You at the snake. Show me where to look for Your love today." Share this truth: God doesn't send serpents to kill us, He sends them to show us how to look and live in faith. Final question: What's one thing you'll trust God for this week, even if it feels scary? Volunteer Tips: - Use props (a toy serpent, a "golden pole" poster) to keep it visual. - Play "Look and Live" music (e.g., "Faith of Our

Fathers" or "Trust in You" by Hillsong) during the story. - End with a group prayer: "God, thank You for Your love that's always available!"

Bible Story

Sunday School Lesson: "The Bronze Serpent , Look and Live" (Based on Numbers 21:4, 9)

One long, dry summer, the Israelites were traveling through the wilderness with Moses leading them. After wandering for years, they were tired, thirsty, and angry. "Why is this so hard?" they groaned. God heard their complaint and sent venomous snakes among them, a judgment from heaven. Many people got sick, and some even died because they didn't know what to do. Moses, heartbroken, knelt in prayer, begging God to help. God answered by telling Moses to make a bronze serpent, attach it to a pole, and place it where everyone could see it. When people looked at the serpent, they were healed!

At first, the Israelites were confused. Why did they have to look at a snake to get better? But soon, they began to understand, just like God's people today, they needed to trust in Him, not in their own strength. The story shows that sometimes God uses unexpected ways to bring healing and hope. The bronze serpent wasn't a magic cure, it was a symbol that reminded the people to trust in God's promises. When they looked up, they didn't just see a snake; they saw God's power working through Moses.

Deeper Questions for Discussion: 1. Why do you think God sent snakes instead of just telling the people to trust Him? 2. What was one thing the Israelites didn't do that they should have done? 3. How can we "look and live" like the Israelites did?

Personal Application: This story reminds us that God often uses symbols (like the Ten Commandments, the cross, or even a Bible verse) to show His love and power. Just as the Israelites looked up to heal, we can trust God by reading His Word, praying, and believing in His promises. Even when things feel hard, He wants us to remember: Healing comes from looking up to Him, not to a snake, but to His love!

Why This Story Matters: This passage teaches us that faith isn't always about doing something perfect, it's about choosing to trust God, even when it feels scary. The bronze serpent was a reminder that God's ways are higher than ours. Today, when we feel sick, sad, or lost, we can take comfort in knowing that God's love is always there, just like He was for the Israelites. Will you look up today and believe in His healing?

Key Verse

Exodus 16:4

Memory Verse: Numbers 21:8b, "Anyone who is bitten by the snake can look at it and live!" This verse is a special, mysterious promise from God, one that seems almost like a miracle! In the time of the Israelites, they were traveling through the desert and grew tired and angry. One day, God sent a scorpion-like creature called a serpent to bite them, making them very sick. But God gave them a way to heal: If they just looked at the snake itself, even when it was still biting them, it wouldn't hurt them anymore! It was like God was saying, "Trust Me, and I'll protect you!" This story shows us that even when life feels dangerous or scary, God can take care of us if we follow His instructions. The story also teaches us something big about how God works. Sometimes, He doesn't just fix things instantly, He gives us simple, clear steps to follow so we can trust Him more. Looking at the snake was an easy command, but it worked! It reminds us that God's ways are different from ours, and sometimes He uses surprising ways to heal and protect us. Have you ever looked at something scary and thought, "I don't know what to do, but maybe God has a way?" This verse is like a promise that no matter how bad things seem, there's a way to turn to God for help. Another lesson we can learn is how to be brave in hard times. The Israelites were probably terrified when the snakes bit them, but instead of running away or panicking, they chose to trust God by following His rule. That takes courage! Even though the snake was still hurting them, they believed God's promise. Maybe you've faced a "snake" in your life, a tough challenge, a mistake, or even just feeling scared about something. What would happen if you looked at it with faith and trusted God to help? Would you feel less afraid? Here's a deeper question to think about: Have you ever done something small that felt like a miracle?

Maybe you looked at a scary situation and just said, "I trust God, so I'll try this." That's how the Israelites felt too, they didn't understand how the snake could hurt them one minute and heal them the next, but they obeyed anyway. Sometimes, God's "miracles" aren't big and flashy; they're small steps of trust. What's one thing you've done recently that felt like God was guiding you? To apply this to your own life, here's a practical way to remember this verse: When you're feeling scared or stuck, imagine you're looking at the "snake" (your problem) and saying, "I see it, but I don't have to fear it. God loves me, and He has a way to help." You don't need to understand how He'll fix things, just trust that He does! Maybe you'll feel better just by repeating this prayer: "Lord, help me trust You even when I don't know what to do." Over time, that trust will grow stronger. What do you think this verse means to you? Do you have a time when you felt like you needed to trust God in a small way, like the Israelites did? Share your thoughts, maybe you'll learn something new about how to trust God in your own life!

Activities

Activity 1:

Students work in small groups to guess whether a "healing" object (a drawn snake vs. a drawn cross) was truly life-giving or just a distraction, just like the Israelites' struggle with the bronze serpent.

1. Divide students into groups of 3, 5. Give each group one of the two images (snake or cross) and a set of questions:
2. "What do you think this object was meant to do?"
3. "How would you feel if this was the only way to heal?"
4. "What does this remind you of in the Bible?" (Hint: John 3:14 connects Jesus to the serpent!)
5. Whisper Challenge: Each student must whisper one word describing their feelings or a question about the object to the group. The group then guesses which image they're holding. Encourage them to use Bible verses to explain their answers.
6. Reflection: As a class, discuss: "Why do you think God used a snake to show His love? How does Jesus 'lift up' us, like the bronze serpent lifted the Israelites?" (John 3:14)
7. Personal Application: Ask students to write one thing they learned about trusting God in hard times. (Example: "Even when I feel stuck, God can 'lift me up' like He did with the bronze serpent!")

Activity 2:

Kids create a paper serpent/cross craft while matching Bible verses to the story's key lessons, highlighting how God's love replaces fear.

1. Craft Time: Give each student a serpent outline (from Numbers 21:9) or a simple cross template. Have them decorate it with crayons/markers. Label one side "Snake" and the other "Savior" (Jesus).
2. Verse Hunt: Place Bible verses on slips of paper (e.g., "God's love is stronger than fear" from John 3:16 paraphrase). Students pick a verse and glue it under their "Snake" side if it matches the story's struggles, or under "Savior" if it shows God's solution.
3. Discussion: "Why does God sometimes use hard things (like snakes) to show His love? What did the Israelites learn?" (Hint: They realized God would heal them!)
4. Personal Application: Ask students to hold their craft up. "Which side do you feel represents your heart today? How can you 'lift up' your fears like the bronze serpent lifted the Israelites?" (Practice a prayer: "God, help me trust You even when I feel stuck!")
5. Key Themes for Both Activities:
6. Fear vs. Faith: The Israelites feared the snake; God used it to remind them He'd save them.
7. Jesus as the "New Serpent": John 3:14 says Jesus was lifted up on the cross, just like the bronze serpent was held high.
8. Action Step: End with a group prayer or song (e.g., "We Will Trust You" by Jesus Culture).

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for upper elementary students (ages 9, 11) about The Bronze Serpent (Numbers 21:4, 9), designed to explore the story deeply and connect it to their lives:
- 1. Faith in the Face of Trouble
 - The Israelites were tired, angry, and afraid as they wandered in the wilderness. When they saw snakes and scorpions, they cried out to God, hoping for help, but instead, Moses prayed for them. How do you think Moses felt when God answered by creating a serpent? What might have made the Israelites feel relieved to see the bronze serpent lifted up? What troubles in your life might make you feel like giving up, even when God is near? How can you trust Him, like the Israelites trusted God in this story?
- 2. Why Does God Give Hard Lessons?
 - God allowed snakes to bite the Israelites as punishment, but then He gave them a miraculous way to heal by looking up to the serpent. Why do you think God used this strange method? What could the Israelites have learned about trusting Him even when things were difficult? Have you ever had a time when something bad happened, but later you saw God working in it for good? How did you feel then, and what did you learn?
- 3. Looking Up vs. Looking Down
 - The Israelites had already turned away from God by complaining, but now they were supposed to look up to the serpent to be healed. What might have made it hard for them to do that? Maybe they were too scared or too frustrated. How do you think looking up to God, trusting Him instead of focusing on the problem, feels different than looking down at your own struggles? Can you think of a time when you had to choose to look up (even when it was hard)? What happened?
- 4. Sharing What We've Learned
 - The bronze serpent was a sign of God's power, but it also showed that faith isn't just about being healed, it's about obeying God's commands. What do you think Moses and the Israelites would say to someone today who doesn't believe in God's healing power? How can we share our faith in a way that helps others trust God, even when things are hard? Do you think God still works in mysterious ways today? What do you hope to learn from Him in your life?
 - These questions invite students to reflect on faith, trust, obedience, and personal growth while tying the Bible story to their own experiences.

Prayer Focus

Prayer Focus: "Looking to Jesus for Help" Dear God, when we feel tired or scared, like the Israelites did when they wandered in the desert, we sometimes forget to look up. You gave us a promise, like the bronze serpent Moses lifted up, that if we trust in You, You will heal our hearts and minds. Help us remember that You care about our struggles, just like You cared about theirs. Show us how to trust You even when things are hard. Amen. Why This Prayer Works for Upper Elementary: This prayer ties directly to Numbers 21:4-9, where the Israelites complained and God sent snakes to bite them. Moses lifted a bronze serpent on a pole, and anyone who looked at it was healed. The lesson "Look and Live" teaches us that Jesus is our healing hope, just like the serpent was their temporary sign! Deeper Questions for Reflection: - What's something hard you're facing right now? How can you "look up" like Moses did? - Do you trust that God will help you, even when you're scared? Why or why not? - What's one way you can share kindness today, like Moses lifted the serpent for others? Personal Application: This prayer encourages kids to pray not just "God, help me" but "God, I see You in my struggles!" It connects their struggles to Jesus' sacrifice, just as the serpent was a symbol of healing, Jesus is the true hope. For deeper discussion, ask: "How does this story remind us Jesus died to save us from sin?" Teacher Tip: End the prayer with a group response: "God, we thank You for our healing and for being our hope. Help us trust You more today!" Follow with a short discussion about how to look up in tough times, maybe drawing or sharing examples from the story.

>> Missions Spotlight

Among the Navajo (Din) people of the American Southwest, serpent imagery appears in traditional stories. Missionaries have used the bronze serpent story to show that God has always provided a way of salvation, and that way is always through faith in what God provides.

-> To the Cross

Jesus said, 'Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him' (John 3:14-15). The bronze serpent on the pole pointed directly to Jesus on the cross.