

MinistryPlace.net

The Golden Calf

Scripture: Exodus 32:1-35

Theme: God is holy and cannot tolerate idolatry

1st-3rd Grade (Ages 6-8)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Sunday School Lesson: "Moses Sees the Promised Land" (Deuteronomy 34:1-12) Introduction (Engage): "Imagine you've been training for weeks to run in a race, you're ready, you've practiced, and you even see the finish line ahead! But just as you're about to cross it, you get sick and can't finish. Sound familiar? Moses had a big mission: lead God's people into the Promised Land, and he got the chance to see it firsthand before he died. Even though he didn't live to enter it himself, he trusted God's promises!" Key Lesson (Explain): Moses was faithful all his life, he obeyed God, led God's people, and even saw part of the future before he passed. In Deuteronomy 34, God gave Moses a special gift: he let him see the land of Canaan (where Israel would live) from Mount Nebo. Moses was excited, but he knew he couldn't stay. God told him, "You won't go in, but your people will" (v. 4). This is a reminder that faithfulness doesn't always mean finishing the race on your own terms, sometimes, we trust God to carry things out in ways we don't see yet! For example, when you finish a school project, you might not see the whole picture (like how it'll be displayed in the classroom), but you believe God is working behind the scenes. Application (Reflect): "What's something you've been working on for a long time? Maybe a Bible verse you memorize, a prayer request, or even helping others? Moses knew God was faithful, so he rested in His promises. You can do the same! When you finish something, even if you don't see the full reward yet, ask God to help you trust Him. For instance, when you pray for a friend or give your best effort in class, you're showing faith like Moses. Celebrate your obedience, even if the full results are still coming!" Encouragement (Close): "Moses' story is a beautiful example of finishing well. Sometimes, God uses us in ways we never expected, through our kids, our churches, or even when we pass the baton to others. Today, ask God to help you finish strong, just like He finished His work through Moses. And remember: His promises are true, so rest in His faithfulness!" Volunteer Tip: Pair this with a simple activity, like drawing the "promised land" or a "faith journey map", to help kids visualize God's faithfulness in their own lives!

Bible Story

Moses Looks Back at the Promised Land

A long time ago, Moses had led God's people, the Israelites, for forty years through the desert. After all that time, God told Moses, "It's time to prepare them for the next step." Before Moses could lead them into the Promised Land, the place God had promised to give them, full of good land and a home, He needed one last thing: a good look at what waited ahead. So God told Moses, "I will show you the land that you will enter. But you won't go in with them, you'll stay here on Mount Nebo." (Deuteronomy 34:4).

Moses climbed Mount Nebo, where God had told him to go. From up high, he looked out over the land God had given to the Israelites. It was green, beautiful, and full of life, just as God had promised. Moses saw rivers, trees, and even a place where they could rest and be safe. But he also knew he couldn't go into it himself. God had told him, "You won't live to see the land, but Joshua will lead them in." (Deuteronomy 34:10). Moses was sad, but he trusted God.

God did something special for Moses on that mountain. He made him see the land, but He also gave him a big blessing: "No one has ever lived or died as long as Moses has lived!" (Deuteronomy 34:10). He hadn't sinned or done anything wrong, God just wanted to show Moses how special he was. Then God said, "I'll take care of you now, and you'll rest with your family." (Deuteronomy 34:6). Moses didn't have to worry about anything. God was with him!

Why This Story Matters

This story teaches us that God is faithful to His promises! Even when Moses couldn't go into the Promised Land himself, he trusted God to take care of everything. We can learn from Moses to trust God when we don't see what He has planned. Sometimes, He calls us to rest, to wait, or to do something important that we can't do alone, but He is always there to guide and protect us. Just like Moses, we can trust that God will keep His word and give us what we need!

Key Verse

Exodus 32:8

Here's a simple and heartfelt way to explain Deuteronomy 34:10 to young kids (ages 6, 8): Moses was the greatest friend God ever had with any person! God didn't just talk to Moses from a distance, He looked into his eyes, just like you might look into a friend's when they share a secret or a smile. No other person, even all the other prophets God sent after Moses, could ever be as special as he was because God chose him uniquely. This means Moses was like God's favorite teacher, showing people how to love, trust, and obey Him better than anyone else ever did. Because Moses was so close to God, he could teach others how to walk in a right and happy way. God gave him the Ten Commandments, the Law, and many other teachings that helped people follow Him. Even though there are still prophets and teachers today, no one is as special as Moses because he was the only one God called face to face, just like a real, heart-to-heart conversation with a best friend. Think about it this way: If you had a superhero who could solve all your problems and teach you how to do things perfectly, you'd want to listen to them every time. Moses was like that, God picked him to be His greatest teacher, and that's why he's still remembered today. When you pray or read the Bible, you can thank God for choosing Moses like He chose you! God still loves you, just like He loved Moses, and He wants you to be His best friend too. You don't have to be perfect to be special to Him, just like Moses wasn't perfect, but God trusted him because He knew him well! Maybe you can be kind and listen to God's voice in your heart, just like Moses did. When you feel scared or unsure, remember: God doesn't just talk to you from far away, He cares enough to want you to be His friend too. Just like Moses, you can ask Him anything, and He'll listen!

Activities

Activity 1:

A fast-paced, interactive game that ties the story of Moses' faith to God's faithfulness, teaching kids that trusting God leads to amazing things (like seeing His promises!).

1. Review the Story (2 min): Read Exodus 14 and Deuteronomy 34 aloud, pointing out key moments (e.g., crossing the Red Sea, traveling in the wilderness, seeing the Promised Land from a mountain).
2. Brainstorm Landmarks (3 min): Ask, "Where did Moses and the Israelites go?" Write down places like Egypt, the Red Sea, the wilderness, and Canaan (Promised Land) on the class map. Draw a simple path with arrows.
3. Create Their Map (5 min):
4. Give each child a large paper to trace the class map (or let them draw it together).
5. Color the desert in brown, water in blue, and the Promised Land in yellow/green.
6. Add stickers or drawings of animals/people to mark stops (e.g., sheep in the wilderness).
7. Discuss & Apply (3 min):
8. Ask: "Where do you think Moses was looking when he saw the Promised Land from Mount Nebo?" (Hint: He trusted God, even when he couldn't go inside.)
9. Share: "God still guides us today, like a guide map! How can we trust Him?" (Write a simple prayer or verse, e.g., Joshua 1:9.)
2. "Rock, Paper, Scissors: Trust God!"
11. Preview the Story (2 min): Read Deuteronomy 34:1, 6 aloud, focusing on Moses' trust in God to see the Promised Land. Say, "Moses knew God would never let him down!"
12. Play the Game (5 min):
13. Split the class into 2, 3 teams. Call out a Bible verse or question (e.g., "Why did Moses see the Promised Land?" Answer: "He trusted God!").
14. Teams race to guess the answer using rock/paper/scissors. For each correct guess, add a point or let them high-five.
15. Variation: Use a "Moses' Faith" card (e.g., "Joshua 1:9"), teams shout it out if they know it!
16. Reflect & Apply (4 min):
17. Pause after 3, 4 rounds. Ask: "What did Moses do when he couldn't go into the Promised Land? He trusted God!"
18. Show a Bible verse like Joshua 1:9: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous!"
19. Challenge: "This week, how can you trust God like Moses did?" (Example: Trusting Him to guide you, even when things are hard.)
20. Why These Work:
21. Both activities use hands-on materials (paper, crayons, Bibles) and keep it short (10, 15 minutes).
22. Supplies are cheap, mostly paper, markers, and imagination!
23. Focus on trust: Moses' story teaches that God keeps His promises, even in hard times. The activities make this tangible for kids.

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for early elementary children (ages 6, 8) based on the story of Moses seeing the Promised Land in Deuteronomy 34:1, 12. These questions encourage reflection, wonder, and connection to their own lives while keeping the language simple and engaging:
- 1. What do you think it was like for Moses when he finally saw the Promised Land?
- Think about how you'd feel if you'd waited for a really long time for something special, like a birthday, a new toy, or even just a fun adventure, and then got to see it for the first time! How do you think Moses felt? Did he feel happy? Excited? Maybe even a little nervous? Why do you think God gave Moses this chance to see the land again?
- (Application: How can we wait patiently for what God has promised us? What are some things we've waited for that made us happy when we got them?)

- 2. The Bible says Moses didn't live to see the Promised Land, but he got to see a different kind of land instead. What do you think that was like?
- Moses had been leading the Israelites for a long time, and now he got to see the land where he'd once struggled to go. Do you think it was easier or harder to see something you'd dreamed about for so long? Why do you think God wanted Moses to know this place? What's something in your life that you've worked hard for or dreamed about, something that feels like a promise from God? How does it make you feel when you get it?
- (Application: How can we trust God even when we don't get to see the exact things we pray for? What can we do with our hopes while we wait?)
- 3. The Bible says God gave Moses another gift after he died, something about his body not decaying. What do you think that means?
- Moses was an old man when he died, and the Israelites might have been worried about what would happen to his body after he was gone. Do you think people in Bible times had different ideas about how a person's body stays the same after they die? What do you think it means that God kept Moses' body from rotting away? Why do you think God wanted to do that? How is God like that today, somehow keeping us safe and special, even when we're not here anymore?
- (Application: How do we think about God when we're sad or worried about people we love? What comfort can we find in knowing He cares for them too?)
- 4. Moses saw the Promised Land, but he didn't live to stay there. Do you think God still gives us chances to see amazing things, like new beginnings or exciting adventures, even when we don't get to enjoy them forever?
- Sometimes in life, we work hard for something and then get to see a small part of it before it's gone. Maybe it's a graduation, a new job, or even just a big change in our family. Do you think that's how God works? Why do you think He sometimes gives us these moments? What's something good that happened in your life that felt like a promise from God? How did it make you feel when you saw it?
- (Application: How can we trust God when we don't get to keep what we've worked for? What can we learn from Moses that helps us feel hopeful in hard times?)
- These questions encourage children to:
 - Connect emotionally to Moses' story (happiness, excitement, patience).
 - Practice biblical thinking (waiting, trusting God, God's promises).
 - Reflect on their own lives with simple, relatable examples.
 - Would you like any of these adjusted for more or less detail?

Prayer Focus

Prayer for Little Explorers (Moses and the Promised Land) Dear God, Today we are like Moses, standing at the edge of something big, just like he was! He saw a beautiful place called the Promised Land, where the people would live happily in a home of their own. Help us to look forward to God's special plans for us too. Just like Moses knew God would help him even when he was scared, teach us to trust You, even when we don't see where You're leading. Help us to be brave and patient, like Moses waited for His next step. Show us how to take small steps toward the future You have for us, just like the Israelites walked toward their new home. Amen. God, You gave Moses a vision of a land flowing with milk and honey, a place of rest and joy! Just like Moses saw this far away, help us to dream big about Your love and the future You have for us. Teach us to wait patiently, like Moses did, trusting that You'll lead us safely to what You've promised. May our hearts be full of hope, just like the people of Israel when they finally arrived. Amen. Let's close with a simple reminder: God, we thank You for Moses, who saw the future and knew You were with him. Help us to keep our eyes on You and trust that You'll guide us, just like You did for Moses. Amen! Simple Application for the Class: Hold up a picture of a journey map or a "promised land" (like a treasure box or a tree with a new house drawn on it). Ask: "What does this mean for us?" Let children shout

out things like: - *"It's our future home with God!"* - *"We wait with patience!"* - *"God is always with us!"* End with a hug and whisper: *"Let's take one step today toward God's big promise for you!"*

>> Missions Spotlight

The elderly church leaders in rural China have endured decades of persecution. Many have never seen the fruit of their labor in their lifetime. The story of Moses encourages them that faithfulness matters even when we don't see the full harvest.

-> To the Cross

Moses led the people for 40 years but wasn't allowed to enter the Promised Land himself. He pointed the people forward to something greater. Jesus, our greater Moses, not only points the way, He IS the way, and He entered the true Promised Land (heaven) on our behalf.