

The Ark was Captured

Bible Passage: 1 Samuel 4-6

Memory Verse: ⁶No one is like you, LORD; you are great, and your name is mighty in power. **Jeremiah 10:6**

Bottom Line: I trust Jesus and follow Him because He always does what is best.

Big Picture Question: Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything.

Christ Connection: *The ark of God reminded the Israelites that God was with them. Years later, God gave His people something greater than a sign that He was with them; God gave them His Son, Jesus—God in the flesh. One of Jesus' names is Immanuel, which means "God with us."*

Leader Notes:

CONTEXT

The ark of God (also called "the ark of the covenant") was an important symbol in the lives of God's people. Not only was the ark the original container for the Ten Commandments, it symbolized God's presence with His people.

In Exodus 25, God gave Moses instructions for creating the ark. It was made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. God forbade anyone from touching the ark, so it was carried by two poles. God would speak to Moses from between two golden cherubim on top of the ark, which was called the mercy seat. (See Num. 7:89.)

During the time of the judges, the Philistines were a near-constant threat to Israel. Under Samuel's leadership, the Israelites went out to fight the Philistines. But Israel was defeated because of their sin.

The elders of Israel realized that God had allowed their defeat. He hadn't fought for them against the Philistines. So they did what seemed logical to them; they took the ark—the symbol of God's presence—and carried it to the battlefield. But the ark was not a good luck charm. Not only was Israel defeated, the Philistines captured the ark and killed Eli's sons. When Eli heard the news, he fell over and died.

Having won the victory, the Philistines concluded that their god Dagon was better than the God of Israel. They moved the ark to Dagon's temple, where God showed His power over Dagon. (See 1 Sam. 5:1-5.) As the ark moved between Philistine cities, God afflicted the people and made them sick. The message was clear: No one is like the LORD. God is greater than everything and everyone.

The Philistines returned the ark, Israel's reminder that God was with them. Years later, God gave His people something greater than a sign that He was with them; God gave them His Son, Jesus—God in the flesh. One of Jesus' names is *Immanuel*, which means "God with us."

TEACHING FOCUS (1 Samuel 4-6)

The Israelites fought many battles against the Philistines. **One day the Philistines defeated Israel. The leaders of Israel said, "Why did God let us lose to the Philistines?" The Israelites decided to take the ark of the covenant—a wooden box covered in gold that reminded them God was with them—and carry it to the battlefield. Maybe the ark would help them win.**

Eli's sons, the priests, took the ark of the covenant to the Israelites' camp. **When the army of Israelites saw the ark, they shouted with joy. Surely they would win the battle now!**

The Philistines came out to fight against the Israelites, and the Philistines won again! They killed thousands of Israelites, including Eli's sons, and **they even captured the ark of God!** One of the men in the battle ran to tell Eli what had happened. When Eli heard the news, he fell backward in his chair, broke his neck, and died.

The Philistines took the ark of God to a temple where they worshiped a false god named Dagon (DAY gahn). They put the ark next to a statue of Dagon. The next morning, the Philistines entered the temple and saw that Dagon's statue was facedown in front of the ark. They set the statue back up where it belonged. The next day, the statue was facedown again. This time, its head and hands were broken off.

God punished the people living in the city where the Philistines kept the ark. The people got sick, and they wanted to get rid of the ark.

When they moved the ark to another city, everyone in that city got sick. So they moved the ark to a third city. Then everyone in that city got sick too. The Philistines were afraid. They didn't want God to punish them anymore, so **they decided to return the ark along with gifts of gold to show they were sorry for taking it. They hitched two cows to a cart and put the ark on the cart. The cows moved the ark down the road until the ark of God was back with the Israelites, where it belonged.**

***Christ Connection:** The ark of God reminded the Israelites that God was with them. Years later, God gave His people something greater than a sign that He was with them; God gave them His Son, Jesus—God in the flesh. One of Jesus' names is Immanuel, which means "God with us."*

TODAY'S TAKEAWAYS

- Both the Israelites and the Philistines learned they could not control God.
- We can trust God to use His power to do what is best.
- The ark of God reminded the Israelites that God was with them. Years later, God gave His people something greater than a sign that He was with them; God gave them His Son, Jesus—God in the flesh.
- **BL: I trust Jesus and follow Him because He always does what is best.**

Worship and Story Time

Gather children on a rug or in a specific area of the classroom to tell the story. Some kids (especially the younger ones) may wander. That's okay. They're still listening and learning!

Play the DVD of All Star Kids worship (choose 1 song for today)

What You Say: "Way to go! You are such amazing singers. Now let's sit down to learn from the Bible Story today."

What You Do: Introduce the Story

"The Israelites went to battle against the Philistines, and the Israelites lost! They were confused. Maybe if they brought the ark of the God to the battlefield, they would win. Eli's sons took the ark to the battlefield, and the Israelites cheered. But the Israelites did not win the battle, and the Philistines took the ark! The Philistines put it next to a statue they worshipped. In the morning, the statue was bowing to the ark of God! They picked up the statue. The next morning the statue was broken. The Philistines put the ark of God on a cart pulled by two cows. They put gold gifts on the ark, and the cows took the ark of God back to Israel.

PLAY BIBLE STORY VIDEO

Check diapers and serve snack.

Activities

Depending on the size of your group, you may lead each activity two or three times. Not every child may want to participate in the activities. That's okay.

1. Capture the Ark

What You Need: yellow block or box

What You Do:

- Place the yellow block on the table behind you.
- Invite toddlers to take turns trying to capture the ark without your tagging them.
- Retell the story.

What You Say "The ark of God showed that God was with His people. The Israelites took the ark of God to battle. They thought they could use it to win. **God is greater than anything.** He does what He thinks is best."

2. Practice signing the Memory Verse

What You Need: Memory Verse Poster

What You Do:

- Show the poster to the kids.
- As you say the words point to them on the poster.
- Create simple hand motions to teach toddlers the memory verse. Sample hand motions include, "No one is like you (shake your head, like saying no), Lord (point to the sky); you are great (sign for "great", both hands up like giving a double high five), and your name is mighty in power (flex your muscles)

What You Say " God showed the Philistines and His people, the Israelites, that He is like no one else."

Pray and Dismiss:

What You Need: coloring page

What You Do:

- Pass out coloring pages for kids to color before parents come to pick them up, or send home to color at home.

What You Say: "Lord, You are good, and Your mercy never ends. You are above all things and all people. Nothing can stop Your plans, and they are always perfect. Help us to love and trust You more each day. Give us hearts that long for You. Amen."