



The Ark was Captured

Bible Passage: 1 Samuel 4-6

Key Passage: 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."*

10 Minutes SOCIAL: SETTING THE TONE OF THE EXPERIENCE

Group the Loops Minute to Win it

What You Need: 2 bowls, Fruit Loops cereal, chopsticks, 2 printable color sorting mat, Minute to Win It scorecard, pencils

What You Do:

- Pour fruit loops into the 2 bowls.
- Separate kids into 2 teams.
- Each kid gets one minute to move as many fruit loops as they can to the sorting mat using their chopsticks.
- Younger kids should be able to move 3 of each color loop to the mat. Older kids should be able to get 5-6 loops on the mat in each color.
- After each player tally the number of fruit loops on the mat and put in on the scorecard.
- The next player gets a turn and the game continues till everyone has had a turn.

What You Say "This summer we are playing a different game each time you come to small group. As we play we should get to know each other's names and see if there is a way we can learn from our Bible story as well. It's time for large group, let's clean up and get ready to see what story we have today."

10 Minutes Worship: CELEBRATING WHAT GOD IS DOING

SONGS, OFFERING AND PRAYER

15 Minutes LARGE GROUP: COMMUNICATING GOD'S TRUTH IN ENGAGING WAYS

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.

25 Minutes SMALL GROUPS: CREATING A SAFE PLACE TO CONNECT

Discussion Questions:

- What did the people of Israel do to try and win the battle against the Philistines? *(took the ark into battle, 1 Sam. 4:3-4)*
- Who won the battle? *(the Philistines, 1 Sam. 4:10-11)*
- What happened to the Philistines while they had the ark? *(Their idol fell and broke. Their people got sick; 1 Sam. 5:3-10)*
- Why did Israel lose the battles they fought? *Guide the kids to discuss that most of the Israelites weren't interested in loving or obeying God. God chose not to fight for them because He wanted them to turn back to Him from their sin. They wanted to use the ark to force God to fight for them. They expected the ark to protect them, instead of trusting in God and obeying Him.*
- What action did God take many years after the story to even more clearly show His



presence with His people? *Guide kids to discuss that Jesus is the visible image of God. He is God's Son and perfectly shows us what God is like. When we know Jesus and have faith in Him, God forgives us and gives us new life. The Holy Spirit fills us with God's power and stays with us to help us love and obey God*

Activity: Treasure Box Builders

What You Need: "Treasure Box" (1 copy per kid), scissors, craft sticks, glue/tape, crayons/markers

What You Do:

- Give one copy of the Treasure Box to each kid.
- Kids can color their boxes.
- Kids will cut around the outside lines.
- Then they will fold along every line to assemble a box.
- Give each kid 2 sticks to glue or tape to the side to create handles for their box.

What You Say God showed the Philistines that He is the one true God. They stole the special box that represented God's power and presence with the Israelites. That didn't stop God though. He cannot be contained in a box. He is the ruler of the whole universe. **Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater and everything and everyone.**

Our boxes cannot contain God's power, or course. But before we folded them, our boxes made a shape that reminds us what our greatest treasure is! [Display an unfolded template] See how it looks like a cross? Jesus is our greatest treasure. He loves us and died so that we could have life with God forever. **BL: I trust Jesus and follow Him because He always does what is best.**

Activity: Memory Verse Activity

What You Need: Memory Verse Poster, Memory Verse Word Search Week 2 (1 per kid), pencils

What You Do:

- Display the memory verse poster.
- Lead kids in reading aloud together.
- Then distribute copies of the word search for kids to find words of the memory verse.
- As they finish, guide them to turn over their word search and write the memory verse on the back from memory.

What You Say " [Allow volunteers to recite the memory verse when they are ready from memory] The kingdom of God is not like other kingdoms of earthly kings. God's kingdom lasts forever, and He always keeps His promises. Say our big picture question and answer with me: Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone.

Pray and Dismiss:

What You Need: no supplies needed

What You Say:

"God, You are the one true God! Thank You for Your Word. In reading it, we see our own limits and confess that we sometimes treat You as small. Forgive us, Lord. Give us understanding of how great You truly are. You are always with us, and we love You. Amen.

5 Minutes HOME: PROMPTING ACTION BEYOND THE EXPERIENCE

As adults arrive to pick up, encourage your kids to tell their parents about our Big Picture Question. Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone. **BL- I trust Jesus and follow Him, because He always does what is best.**