

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.

Social: Providing Time for Fun Interaction (15 minutes)

Activities that encourage preschoolers to enter the classroom and begin engaging with peers and small group leaders by providing age appropriate and hands on fun while introducing new concepts they will hear in the day's Bible story.

Find Your Match:

What You Need: no supplies needed

What You Do:

- Instruct kids to group together based on different characteristics or clothing.
- Groups may be based on hair color, shirt color, boys verses girls, food preferences such as favorite flavor of ice cream, or play preferences such as favorite games. Preschoolers may also line up by height- shortest to tallest.

What You Say: "You did a great job following directions and finding people who were similar or different than you. In our stories the next few weeks we will be looking at ways that God chose people to lead in many different ways. Let's listen today and see how God communicated to the Philistines."

Worship

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."

Story Time: Communicating God's Truth in Engaging Ways

Engage kid's hearts through a dynamic and interactive Bible story and prayer experience in a Large

Group setting.

Bible Story

What You Need: Bible

What You Do: Place a book mark in 1 Samuel 4-6 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it.

What You Say: The Bible is God's Word. Everything we read in the Bible is true. Today's Bible story is from the Book of 1 Samuel. 1 Samuel is in the Old Testament.

PLAY BIBLE STORY VIDEO

Talk about the Bible 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.

Learn the Big Picture Question

What You Say: When the ark was captured, the Philistines quickly became sorry they had taken it. God showed the Philistines that He is the one true God when He punished the people living in the city wherever the ark of God was. The Philistines were afraid of the Israelites' great God, so they returned the ark. **Is anything greater than God? No God, God is greater than anything.**

Practice the Memory Verse:

Open your Bible to Jeremiah 10:6. Read the memory verse aloud several times.

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

Groups: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (25 minutes)

Create a safe place to connect through activities that are written to reach every learning style while reinforcing the Main Point that was introduced during the Bible Story and applying it to real life experiences. In addition, these activities provide preschoolers with an opportunity to build relationships with their Small Group Leaders.

1. Knock Down

What You Need: "Ark Matching Cards" (1 per group- cut apart), rectangular blocks (8 per group), tape, ball

What You Do:

- Tape each card to a block.
- Set up the blocks side by side about six inches apart.
- Guide a child to roll the ball and knock over one block.
- Show the picture that was knocked over, and retell portions of the Bible story that apply.
- Look at the remaining blocks and locate the matching picture.
- Challenge a child to roll the ball and knock down the matching block.
- Continue talking about the Bible story as boys and girls continue to set up and knock down blocks.
- Talk about this session's Christ Connection when the blocks that match the picture are knocked down.

What You Say " The Philistines' statue of their false god fell over when the Israelites' ark of God was nearby. God showed the Philistines that He is the one true God. They sent the ark back to the Israelites along with gifts of gold because the Philistines were afraid of God's power. Many years later, Jesus lived on earth as a man. God sent Jesus so we would no longer need the beautiful box to remind us God is with us.

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 wanted His people to remember that He is completely different from anyone or anything else. God is all powerful and perfectly holy. **Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone.**"

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.
- **Pray-** "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."

What You Say: Tell parents something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during your small group session. Send home the coloring page and tell families, we are talking about how great our God is.