



Bitter Water, Bad Attitudes

We should be grateful to God, because he doesn't forget to give us everything we need. When the Israelites lacked drinking water in the desert, they were not grateful and began to complain, but God had not forgotten them.

Opening Prayer & Worship (10 min)

Spend time in prayer and worship before you begin. Focus on songs of gratitude and thankfulness.

Bible Story (15 min)

Read Exodus 15:22-27. Emphasize that God had *just* parted the Red Sea for the Israelites, yet they still complained the first chance they got!

KEY CONCEPTS: God helped the Israelites escape from Egypt, where they had spent 430 years forced to work as slaves for the Egyptians. As the Israelites were leaving Egypt, Pharaoh sent his army to recapture them, but God preformed a miracle by dividing the Red Sea so the Israelites could cross by walking on the ocean floor. Because of God's miracle, the Israelites were safe! They sang and praised God with grateful music! Unfortunately, their good attitudes did not last long – as soon as they arrived at a bitter well of water in the desert, they began to complain. They grumbled to Moses, "What are we to drink?" Even though the Israelites did not have any gratitude for the amazing thing God had just done for them, God still helped them out by making a way for the bitter water to become drinkable.

Discussion Questions (10 min)

1. What is a desert like?
2. What were the Israelites complaining about when they were in the desert?
3. Did God know that the Israelites needed water to drink?
4. What had God just done for the Israelites that they were not grateful for?
5. Do you think God would have let the Israelites die of thirst in the desert?

Remember: These lesson plans are designed to be flexible! Feel free to add, remove, or adjust activities to best fit your schedule and the needs of your children.

6. What do you think God's emotion was when the Israelites complained?
7. What was it like at Elim – the place that the Israelites went to after the well?
8. What can you do when you are worried about not getting something you think you need?

Prayer Time

"Dear God, please help me to be joyful always and to remember to give you thanks for all things. When I have a bad attitude and complain, remind me that you haven't forgotten about my needs. Amen."

More Activities

MEMORY VERSE: Philippians 4:6-7 – "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

CRAFT: "Remedy for Complaining" – Write gratitude-related Bible verses on slips of paper, decorate them, and put them into a jar that kids can decorate. When someone complains, have them pick a verse out of the "medicine bottle" to read aloud.

HANDS-ON OPTION: "Bitter Water" – Make some "bitter water" for your children to sample during or after this lesson's Bible story. Add three tablespoons of lemon juice to one cup of water and divide it amongst the children. Connect this activity to the story by explaining that a bad attitude is like bitter water – it can't refresh or nourish anyone.



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Whining About Wheaties

Even when we are complaining and whining, God is still faithful to us. The Israelites did not have gratitude and began to complain that God had not done enough for them, but God still provided food for them in the desert.

Opening Prayer & Worship (10 min)

Spend time in prayer and worship before you begin. Focus on songs of gratitude and thankfulness.

Bible Story (15 min)

Read Exodus 16:1-16. Emphasize that God is compassionate because he chose to provide for the Israelites *even though* they were not showing gratitude for everything he did! Foster humility by pointing out that sometimes, we can be just like the Israelites in this way.

KEY CONCEPTS: When the Israelites got to the Desert of Sin, they began to complain about not having any food. So, God provided them with quail to eat every night, and in the morning, he sent a very special bread called “manna” to fall on the ground. God sent the manna for the Israelites to eat for 40 years – the entire time they were in the desert! Even though God provides food, water, and shelter for us every day – just like he did for the Israelites while they were in the desert – it can be easy to forget what he has blessed us with and complain instead. We should remember what God has given us and have gratitude for his provision instead of complaining or worrying that he will not give us what we need.

Discussion Questions (10 min)

1. What do you think it would be like to camp in a desert?
2. What were the Israelites complaining about?
3. How did God provide food for the Israelites? What did they eat?

4. When we whine and complain, who are we really complaining against?
5. What do you think God thought when the Israelites whined and complained?
6. What had God already done for the Israelites that they should have remembered?
7. How can you remember to have a grateful attitude, even when you feel like complaining?

Prayer Time

“Dear God, when I am tempted to complain about anything, please help me to praise you instead. You deserve all my gratitude, even when I am not feeling thankful. Amen.”

More Activities

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 34:8 – “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!”

CRAFT: “Manna From Heaven” – Children can draw a picture of the Israelites in the desert with outstretched arms. Write “Thank you, God!” on the picture, and glue pieces of cereal to the page so that it looks like it’s raining down on the Israelites.

HANDS-ON OPTION: “Snack Is Served” – Help your child prepare a fruit plate, a coffee, or baked treat for a sibling or parent and put the tasty surprise outside their bedroom door, just like God delivered manna right to the Israelites’ camp. Wait with your child to see the family member’s grateful reaction, and connect the activity to how God gives us what we need.

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Whining About Water . . . Again!

It's not helpful to grumble, because God will always provide what we need.

The Israelites were not grateful for all God had done for them and were even angry that they were in the desert! God is so compassionate that he provided water for them anyway.

Opening Prayer & Worship (10 min)

Spend time in prayer and worship before you begin. Focus on songs of gratitude and thankfulness.

Bible Story (15 min)

Read Exodus 17:1-7. Emphasize that the place was named Massah ("testing") and Meribah ("quarreling") because in this place, the Israelites tested the Lord by asking, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

KEY CONCEPTS: You would think that after seeing all the previous miracles (the parting of the Red Sea, bitter water being made sweet, and manna from heaven), the Israelites would have learned to remember God's miracles and give him gratitude. Unfortunately, they continued to complain and did not believe that God would provide for them! In this story, the Israelites were grumbling because it looked like there was no water for them to drink in the spot they were camping. They whined to Moses, so Moses asked God what to do. God told Moses to strike a rock with his staff, and when he did it, fresh water came out! The Israelites had complained for nothing – God had a plan all along. It's easy for us to make the same mistake the Israelites did, but we can be certain that God still loves us when we complain, and he will always give us what we need.

Discussion Questions (10 min)

1. Why do you think there are so many stories about the Israelites grumbling?
2. Do you think God ever gets tired of hearing you complain?
3. What were the Israelites whining about in this story?
4. How did God provide water?
5. What had God already done for the Israelites that they did not give him gratitude for?

6. Do you believe God can give you the things you need?
7. What is something God has done for you that you can remember to give him gratitude for?

Prayer Time

"Dear God, I don't want to be like the Israelites, but sometimes, I am just like them! It's hard to stop complaining and give you the gratitude that you deserve. Help me to be thankful. I am grateful that you give me what I need, even when I fall short. Amen."

More Activities

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 107:8-9 – "Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things."

GAME: "M&M Challenge" – Assign each family member a bowl filled with 30 chocolate candies each. Throughout one week, when anyone complains, family members can race to call out "M&M," standing for "Massah and Meribah." If someone calls out another family member's grumbling, five candies are transferred from the complainer's bowl to theirs. This fun challenge will motivate kids to pause before complaining and to be grateful instead of testing and quarrelling.

HANDS-ON OPTION: "Grumblings Into Gratitude" – With your child, brainstorm a list of the most common things you complain about. For each complaint, think of three ways to turn it into gratitude statements! For example, if a grown-up admits that they often grumble about traffic, they can turn their complaint into praise by acknowledging that they are blessed to have a car that works, to have a city with roads, and to have somewhere amazing to drive to!

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Don't Forget God's Goodness

We can honour God by always remembering to say “thank you” for what he has given us. Moses reminded the Israelites to remember how God cared for them in the wilderness, providing food, water, and protection.

Opening Prayer & Worship (10 min)

Spend time in prayer and worship before you begin. Focus on songs of gratitude and thankfulness.

Bible Story (15 min)

Read Deuteronomy 8:1-18. Emphasize that God warned the Israelites not to forget to be grateful for all the good things he had done for them once they got to the Promised Land.

KEY CONCEPTS: God cared for the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt and safely across the Red Sea. He cared for them in the desert by providing manna to eat and water to drink. While they travelled across the desert in hot conditions, their feet did not swell and their clothing did not wear out. He even kept them safe from snake and scorpion bites! God told the Israelites that when they got to the Promised Land, they would have an abundance of food, large flocks, lots of gold and silver, fine houses, and many good things. But God also gave them a serious warning: “Remember the Lord your God!” (8:18). God did not want the Israelites to get to the Promised Land and suddenly begin to think that their own actions had brought them everything they had, so he gave them a warning: don't forget to be grateful for God's goodness, even when you have everything you need, because it was God who gave you those amazing things!

Discussion Questions (10 min)

1. What are some ways that God cared for the Israelites in the desert?
2. If you wore the same clothes every day for 40 years, what do you think they would look like?
3. What did God say the Israelites would have in the Promised Land?

4. What was God's serious warning to the Israelites?
5. What good things could cause someone to forget about God?
6. Who deserves gratitude for giving us our home, food, toys, and clothing?
7. Did the Israelites find it easy or hard to remember God's goodness?
8. How can we thank God for giving us good things?

Prayer Time

“Dear God, thank you for a warm house, good food to eat, and for my family. You have given me so many amazing blessings, and I don't want to forget to say thank you. Thanks for providing for me. Amen.”

More Activities

MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 12:5 – “Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth.”

GAME: “Thank You, God!” – Kids can write an acrostic poem to express gratitude to God. Write out the letters of the words “Thank you, God” vertically on the left side of a posterboard, and have kids brainstorm one thing they are thankful for that begins with each letter. Write these things on the poster beside their corresponding letter, and invite kids to decorate and display their poster.

HANDS-ON OPTION: “Sandpaper Scratch” – Give each child a piece of scrap fabric and some sandpaper. As you read the Bible story, have your children rub the cloth with the sandpaper. Be sure to cover your work surface so they don't sand your tabletop. Afterwards, observe how the friction has begun to wear out the cloth in just a few minutes and marvel together at God's provision of durable clothing to the Israelites for 40 years!

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Being Grateful at All Times

Even when everything is going wrong, the best thing to do is be grateful to God. When a huge army threatened God's people, King Jehoshaphat and all of Judah sang praises of gratitude to God, and God helped them to win the battle.

Opening Prayer & Worship (10 min)

Spend time in prayer and worship before you begin. Focus on songs of gratitude and thankfulness.

Bible Story (15 min)

Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-23. Emphasize that King Jehoshaphat's very first instinct was to give gratitude to God, even when everything looked like it was going downhill.

KEY CONCEPTS: When King Jehoshaphat heard that many different enemy armies were coming to capture Judah, the first thing he did was to call together all the people to pray. A man named Jahaziel got a message from God: "Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's." (20:15). The next day, when all of Judah went out to meet the armies, they went singing a song that said, "Give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures forever" (20:21). While the people of Judah were singing grateful songs to God, the different armies that had come to destroy Judah began to fight against each other. Jehoshaphat and his people didn't even need to fight – just what God had said would happen! Afterwards, Jehoshaphat gathered the people

together to praise God again. Even when everything looks like it's going downhill, we can remember what Jehoshaphat did when he had a big problem. He praised God before the problem was even solved, and after, too!

Discussion Questions (10 min)

1. What was the first thing King Jehoshaphat did when he heard there were huge armies coming to attack Judah?
2. How did God answer the people's prayers?
3. Is it easier to praise God when things are going your way or when you are disappointed?
4. Why do you think we should praise God even when things are going downhill?
5. Do you think it was hard for the people of Judah to praise God before the battle?
6. Did God have a plan to help the people of Judah?
7. How can you praise God, even when life is difficult?

Prayer Time

"Dear God, I give you thanks because you are good. When everything is going wrong, I will praise you anyway."

You deserve my gratitude because you are God. Thank you, Lord! Amen."

More Activities

MEMORY VERSE: James 1:2-4 – "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness."

CRAFT: "Praise Placemats" – Write "Thank you, God!" on pieces of cardstock and have kids decorate their placemats with drawings and stickers of things they are grateful for. When they use their placemats at mealtimes, ask them to use the drawings and stickers to help them remember what to thank God for in a prayer of gratitude.

HANDS-ON OPTION: "Grateful for Gifts" – Gift wrap a banana, a toy car, a mini chocolate bar, a dirty sock, a roll of toilet paper, a toothbrush, and a package of batteries. With stuffed animals, act out the "wrong" way to respond to unwrapping a gift. Then, invite your children to suggest a more grateful response, and act out the scenario again with the stuffed animal displaying gratitude – even when the gift is not-so-appealing.

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Thanking God With Celebration

We can express our gratitude to God with a huge celebration! Just like the Israelites, we can shout, sing, and play musical instruments, giving gratitude to God for what he has done in our lives.

Opening Prayer & Worship (10 min)

Spend time in prayer and worship before you begin. Focus on songs of gratitude and thankfulness.

Bible Story (15 min)

Read Nehemiah 12:27-29. Emphasize the joyful, celebratory dedication of Jerusalem's rebuilt wall.

KEY CONCEPTS: Nehemiah was living in Babylon when he heard that some of the Israelites had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple that had been destroyed. When Nehemiah heard this, he was overjoyed, but also very worried – there was no longer a strong wall around Jerusalem, so the new temple would not be safe from attacks! Nehemiah told God that he wanted to move to Jerusalem to be in charge of building a wall around the city, and God helped him to do it. God even gave Nehemiah the supplies to rebuild the wall and made it possible for the whole wall to be built in only 52 days. It was amazing! When the wall was finally finished, Nehemiah and everyone in Jerusalem had a gratitude-filled celebration with singing and musical instruments like cymbals, harps, and lyres. The Israelites expressed their gratefulness to God for helping them rebuild Jerusalem's temple and dedicated the new walls to the Lord. It was a big party to say “thank you” to God!

Discussion Questions (10 min)

1. Why was Nehemiah worried when he heard about the rebuilding of the temple?
2. What did Nehemiah tell God he wanted to do?
3. How did God help Nehemiah to rebuild the walls?
4. What did the people in Jerusalem do when the walls were finished?

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5. How loud do you think their praises were?
6. What is your favourite way to make a joyful noise to praise God?
7. Next time you attend a party, how can you remember to give gratitude to God?

Prayer Time

“Dear God, thank you for everything! Thank you that my sins are forgiven and that I can be your child. I praise you and I love you. You deserve worship and gratitude! Amen.”

More Activities

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 100:1-3 – “Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!”

CRAFT: “Decorate With Gratitude” – Create a beautiful party banner that you can put up again and again for birthdays, thanksgiving, and other celebrations. Cut colourful triangles out of construction paper, hole punch them, and thread them onto a string. Have kids draw one thing they're grateful for on each triangle to create a fun and conversation-starting party decoration to brighten up your next celebration.

HANDS-ON OPTION: “Thankful Photo Challenge” – Lend your child your phone camera or a digital camera and challenge them with a photo scavenger hunt. Kids must take at least one photo of something they are thankful for in each of these 10 categories: family, animals, weather, plants, comfort, food, fun, learning, health, and hygiene. If you choose, you can print their photos to create a collage or album.

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