

## The Bronze Snake

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Numbers 20:1-20; 21:4-9

**MAIN POINT:** God told His people to look at the bronze snake to be healed.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Joshua 1:9

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

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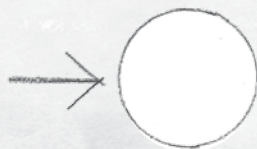
**SMALL GROUP OPENING**  
(10–15 MINUTES)

**PAGE 26**



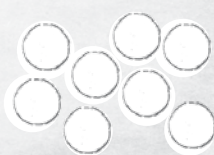
**LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY**  
(25–30 MINUTES)

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**SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES**  
(25–30 MINUTES)

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## Leader BIBLE STUDY

The Israelites had been wandering in the wilderness when they started to complain to Moses and to God. God had done some pretty amazing things for the Israelites—He rescued them from the hand of Pharaoh, He parted the Red Sea so they could safely cross, and He provided manna for them to eat. But to the Israelites, it wasn't enough.

God punished them because He knew their dissatisfaction was a sign of a bigger issue: a heart problem, a sin problem. They stopped believing that God is good. In their hearts, the Israelites believed the same lie that rattled Eve in the garden. *Maybe God isn't interested in giving us what is best. Maybe He is holding out on us.*

God sent poisonous snakes that bit the people and killed many of them. The Israelites repented. They wanted Moses to ask God to take away the snakes.

God provided a solution. He told Moses, “Make a snake image out of bronze and mount it on a pole. When anyone who is bitten looks at it, he will recover.”

In John 3:14, Jesus said, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up.” What was Jesus talking about? Second Corinthians 5:21 says, “He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” So Jesus invites us, “Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God, and there is no other” (Isa. 45:22).

As you teach kids, emphasize the problem that all of us face: we aren’t just sick; because of our sin, we deserve death. Then rejoice with them over the cure: Jesus, the sinless Savior, became sin for us and was lifted up on the cross in our place. We must do nothing but look to Him to be saved.



**MINISTRY GRID**  
training made simple

Additional resources for each session are available at [gospelproject.com](http://gospelproject.com). For free training and session-by-session help, visit [www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject](http://www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject).

# The BIBLE STORY

## The Bronze Snake

*Numbers 20:1-20; 21:4-9*

**The Israelites refused to go into the promised land, so God punished them and made them wander in the wilderness.** The Israelites grumbled and complained. **When the Israelites set up camp, they complained that they did not have water to drink. God told Moses and Aaron to stand in front of all the people and speak to a rock. God said water would come out of the rock.**

Moses called the people together, but **instead of talking to the rock, Moses hit the rock two times with his staff. The water came out, but God was angry that Moses and Aaron disobeyed Him. God said Moses and Aaron would not lead the Israelites into the promised land.**

**The Israelites continued through the wilderness.** Moses sent messengers to ask the king of Edom if the Israelites could travel through his land. But the people of Edom replied, “No! If you come to our land, we will fight you!”

So the Israelites had to travel around Edom. **The journey was long, and they grumbled and complained.** “Why have you led us from Egypt to die in the wilderness?” they asked. “We have no bread or water! The food we have is no good!”

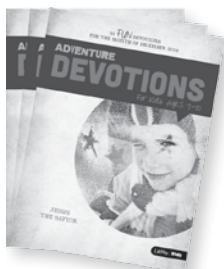
**God sent poisonous snakes that bit the Israelites, and many of the people died. They realized they had sinned by complaining to God,** so they told Moses, “We know we have sinned. Please ask God to take the snakes away.”

**Moses interceded for the people. He spoke to God for them. Then God told Moses, “Make a snake image and put it on a pole. When anyone who is bitten looks at it,**

he will recover.”

Moses made a bronze snake and mounted it on a pole. Whenever someone was bitten, that person looked at the bronze snake, and he recovered.

*Christ Connection: The Israelites faced a huge problem because of their sin. God sent snakes to punish Israel, but anyone who was bitten could look at the snake on the pole and live. Because of our sin, we face a huge problem: we are separated from God. We deserve to die, but anyone who looks to Jesus on the cross and trusts in Him will live forever with God.*



**WANT TO  
DISCOVER  
GOD'S WORD?  
GET  
ADVENTURE!**

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that the bronze snake points to Jesus' being lifted onto a cross to take away our sin. Jesus calls us, as believers, to pick up our cross and follow Him. (See Luke 9:23.) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out [www.lifeway.com/devotionals](http://www.lifeway.com/devotionals).



# Small Group OPENING

**SESSION TITLE:** The Bronze Snake

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Numbers 20:1-20; 21:4-9

**MAIN POINT:** God told His people to look at the bronze snake to be healed.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Joshua 1:9

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

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## Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive, encourage them to think about two positive things that have already happened today and one thing they want to complain about.

**SAY** • Is it easier to think about the positive things that have happened, or is it easier to complain about things? Why do we complain? [*Invite kids to answer.*] God gave the Israelites many good things, but we will learn today that the Israelites still found reasons to complain.

## Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Snake Pattern Decoder” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the “Snake Pattern Decoder” activity page. Kids will match the snake patterns to the answer key to discover a secret message. (*Answer: We can trust God.*)

**SAY** • Raise your hand if you like snakes. Some people like snakes, but some people don’t. Some snakes can be dangerous. In today’s Bible story, God used snakes to punish His people for their sin.

## Session starter (10 minutes)

### OPTION 1: Thankful hearts

Invite the kids to sit in a circle to play a version of “Hot Potato.” Kids will pass around a heart cutout while the music plays. When the music stops, the kid with the heart must say something for which she is thankful.

Restart the music and play again. Encourage each kid to give an answer that has not been shared already.

**SAY** • We have so many things to be thankful for. Even though God had provided food and water for His people in the wilderness—even though God had brought His people out of Egypt—the Israelites grumbled. They were not thankful for the good things God had given them. We’ll find out what happened in our Bible story.



- heart cutout
- “Wherever You Go” song (optional)

### OPTION 2: Make a chain snake

Provide several 1-inch wide strips of construction paper. Demonstrate how to tape the ends of one strip together to make a link. Then show the kids how to thread another strip of paper through the loop of the first link and tape the ends together, forming a chain.

Kids may make their snakes as short or as long as they would like. When they finish, kids should attach two googly eyes to the first link and draw a snake tongue.

**SAY** • Not many people like snakes. God created the world and everything in it, including snakes. Today we are going to learn about a time God used snakes to teach the Israelites that they should trust in Him.

- 1-inch strips of construction paper
- tape
- adhesive googly eyes
- markers

## Transition to large group

# Large Group LEADER

**SESSION TITLE:** The Bronze Snake

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## Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

## Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

• toy snake

*[Large Group Leader enters carrying a toy snake.]*

**LEADER** • Hello, everyone! We have a new feature animal at the petting zoo today. Who knows what kind of animal this guy is? That's right, a snake! I have some fun facts about snakes to share with you.

1. There are around 3,000 species of snakes.
2. Snakes are found on every continent of the world except Antarctica.
3. Snakes don't have eyelids.
4. Snakes have flexible jaws which allow them to eat food bigger than their head.
5. Snakes smell with their tongue.
6. Snakes shed their skin a number of times a year in a process that lasts a few days.

Wow, snakes sure are interesting creatures. I wonder how they fit into our Bible story today. Do you have any ideas? Let's first check out our timeline and then find out.

## Giant timeline (1 minute)

**LEADER** • [*Point to last week's story on the giant timeline.*]

Last week, we learned that Moses sent 12 spies to check out the land of Canaan, the land God had promised to give them. Ten of the spies gave a bad report, but Caleb and Joshua trusted God to give them the land. Unfortunately, the rest of **the Israelites did not trust God to give them the promised land**. So God punished them by making them wander in the wilderness for 40 years.

Today's Bible story happened while the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. They began to complain against God, and God sent snakes to punish them. Today's story is called "The Bronze Snake."

• Giant Timeline

## Big picture question (1 minute)

**LEADER** • The Israelites often forgot about all the good things God had done for them. When they forgot about God's wonderful blessings, they stopped trusting God to take care of them. Do you remember the answer to our big picture question? ***Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.***

## Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

**LEADER** • The Israelites forgot that they could trust God. They complained while they wandered in the desert. Let's check out what happened.

Open your Bible to Numbers 20:1-20; 21:4-9. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "The Bronze Snake."

**LEADER** • What did the people complain about in the wilderness? [*Invite kids to answer.*] The people

- Bibles
- "The Bronze Snake" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Main Point Poster

complained about food and water. They even said it would be better if they had never left Egypt—even after all the good things God had done for them! God was good and faithful to them, but they refused to trust Him.

Not trusting God is basically like saying that God isn't powerful enough or good enough to do what He says. In a way, not trusting God is also like calling Him a liar.

So God sent snakes to punish the people. God is just, but He is also gracious so He gave the people a way to be healed. God told Moses to make a snake out of bronze and put it on a pole. When people were bitten, **God told His people to look at the bronze snake to be healed.**

Ask the following review questions:

1. What was the first thing the people complained about in today's story? (*They did not have any water, Num. 20:5*)
2. What did God tell Moses to do to get water from the rock? (*speak to the rock, Num. 20:8*)
3. How did Moses disobey God? (*He hit the rock instead of speaking to it, Num. 20:11*)
4. When the people complained again, what did God send? (*poisonous snakes, Num. 21:6*)
5. How could the people be healed? (**God told His people to look at the bronze snake to be healed, Num. 21:9**)
6. ***Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.***

**LEADER** • The Israelites faced a huge problem because of their sin. God sent snakes to punish Israel, but

anyone who was bitten could look at the snake on the pole and live. Because of our sin, we face a huge problem: we are separated from God. We deserve to die, but anyone who looks to Jesus on the cross and trusts in Him will live forever with God.

## The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

## Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Joshua 1:9.

**LEADER** • When we trust God, we don't need to be afraid or discouraged. God promises He will always be with us. I want everyone to flex your muscles to show me your strongest pose. Flex your muscles and say the verse with me again with courageous voices.

Say the key passage twice. Then sing the key passage song.

- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- "Wherever You Go" song

## Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

**LEADER** • As you watch this video, think about a time when you needed help.

Show the "Unit 7, Session 2" discussion starter video.

**LEADER** • Would it make sense for Emiliano to go to his coach, teacher, or friend about his rash? Why? [*Invite responses.*] Do you think it made sense for the Israelites to look at a bronze snake on a pole when

- "Unit 7, Session 2" discussion starter video

they were bitten by snakes? Why do you think God had them do that? What did it take for them to do that? (*They needed to trust God.*)

**God told His people to look at the bronze snake to be healed.** The people could not save themselves. God told them to just look and live.

Sin infects us like the poison from the snakebites. Sin separates us from God. We can't save ourselves from sin; we need to look to Jesus, who died on the cross for our sin. Some people try to save themselves by doing good things or by avoiding bad things. Does that work? No! But we can trust in Jesus. We can look to Him and live.

### **Sing (4 minutes)**

• "Mighty Fortress (Our God Is Faithful)" song

**LEADER** • God is so awesome. When I stop focusing on myself and focus on God instead, I am amazed at all He does for me. Let's stand and sing a song to thank God for His goodness.

Sing together "Mighty Fortress (Our God Is Faithful)."

### **Pray (2 minutes)**

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

**LEADER** • Let's say our big picture question again. ***Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.***

Dear God, thank You for providing a way for Your people to be healed. Thank You for providing a way for us to be forgiven of our sin by trusting in Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

### **Dismiss to small groups**

## The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



**God rules.** Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



**We sinned.** Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



**God provided.** Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



**Jesus gives.** Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:19.



**We respond.** Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.



# Small Group LEADER

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**KEY PASSAGE:** Joshua 1:9

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## Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- sticky notes
- walking stick
- marker

Before the kids arrive, write the words of the key passage on the backs of separate sticky notes, sticky side up.

Mix up the notes and scatter them on the floor. Give the walking stick to a child and ask her to pick up the first word of the key passage. Then she will pass the stick to another player, who will use it to pick up the next word.

If you have more than one walking stick, form teams and prepare additional sets of key passage notes. Race to pick up the key passage.

**SAY** • God told Moses to use his staff to perform many miracles so the people would know that God was with Moses.

In today's Bible story, Moses used his staff to disobey God. We used our walking stick to help us remember God's promise to always be with Joshua wherever he went. When we trust in Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit and He is always with us.

## Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Numbers 20:1-20; 21:4-9. Write each of the following phrases on different cards: *complaining, water from a rock, traveling around Edom, snakes biting*, and

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- index cards, 5
- markers

*the bronze snake on a pole.* Choose two volunteers to stand and face the group. One at a time, a volunteer will choose a card and act out the part of the Bible story by using gestures only. Volunteers may not speak. The rest of the kids will try to guess what part of the Bible story volunteers are acting out. Be prepared to give volunteers hints if they are unable to think of actions for the cards.

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

**SAY** • What was the first thing the people complained about? Water! So God told Moses and Aaron to speak to the rock to get water. But Moses did not obey God. Instead of speaking to the rock, he hit it with his staff. Because Moses disobeyed, he and Aaron were not allowed to enter the promised land.

What was the next thing the people complained about? They were tired of eating manna. Do you remember what manna is? [*Invite kids to answer.*] God gave them bread from heaven every morning, but they were not satisfied!

God sent snakes to punish the people, but God also made a way for them to be healed. **God told His people to look at the bronze snake to be healed.** That took faith! How are we healed from sin and death? [*Invite kids to answer.*] God sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross and rise again so we can receive forgiveness from sin when we trust in Him.

## Activity choice (10 minutes)

### OPTION 1: Wilderness obstacle course

Using masking tape and furniture in your classroom, make an obstacle course for kids to complete. Set up three stations along the path of the obstacle course.

- Station 1: Kids will knock on the seat of a chair or a

LOW PREP

- masking tape
- classroom furniture
- jump rope
- timer (optional)

table to represent Moses striking the rock.

- Station 2: Kids will walk around a table or chair three times to represent the Israelites walking around Edom.
- Station 3: Kids will jump over the “snake” (jump rope) on the ground.

Line up the kids and give the start signal for them to complete the obstacle course one at a time. You may also choose to time the kids to see who can complete the obstacle course the fastest.

**SAY** • The Israelites faced many obstacles because they disobeyed God. They did not trust God.

***Whom can we trust? We can always trust God to take care of us!***

#### **OPTION 2: Blessing frame**

- large craft sticks
- heavyweight paper
- glue
- markers
- stickers
- colorful masking tape
- adhesive-backed magnets

Provide large craft sticks, heavyweight paper, glue, markers, stickers, colorful masking tape, and adhesive-backed magnets. Guide the kids to draw a picture of something God has given them that they are thankful for.

Demonstrate how to glue four craft sticks around the picture to make a frame. Kids may decorate the frames with the other craft items.

Help kids write *We can trust God!* on the front of the frame. You may also attach adhesive-backed magnets to the back of the frame for kids to hang the artwork on the refrigerator at home or in their locker at school.

**SAY** • God has blessed each of us in many ways. We have so much to be thankful for. But sometimes we get upset, have a bad day, or just aren't happy with what God has given us and we need a reminder to be thankful.

The Bible says that every good and perfect gift is from God. [See *James 1:17*.] The greatest gift God gave us is His Son, Jesus. Jesus died on the cross and rose again so we could be forgiven of our sin when we trust in Him.

## Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal and instruct the kids to write *THANKFUL* in large letters along the side of their journal page as an acrostic. Invite kids to think of something they can be thankful for that begins with each letter in the word *thankful*. Kids may draw pictures if they prefer.

**SAY** • Let's review our big picture question again: *Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.* When we think about all the good things God has done for us and given us, we know we can trust that He will continue to take care of us.

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the coloring page provided with this session.

Pray, thanking God for making a way for the Israelites to be healed by looking at the bronze snake. Thank God for sending His Son, Jesus, to make a way for us to be forgiven of our sin when we trust in Him. Pray that each child trusts in Jesus. Also pray for any friends and family members who need to trust in Jesus.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid
- crayons or markers

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.



# Journal Page

## God the Savior

**Key Passage:** Joshua 1:9

**Big Picture Questions:** Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

**Session 1:** Joshua and Caleb

*Numbers 13:1–14:38*

The Israelites did not trust God to give them the promised land.

**Session 2:** The Bronze Snake

*Numbers 20:1-20; 21:4-9*

God told His people to look at the bronze snake to be healed.

**Session 3:** The Promised Land and Jericho

*Joshua 2–4; 6*

God fought for His people and led them into the promised land.

**Session 4:** Achan's Sin and the Defeat of Ai

*Joshua 7–8*

God punished Achan for his sin. Then God fought for His people at Ai.

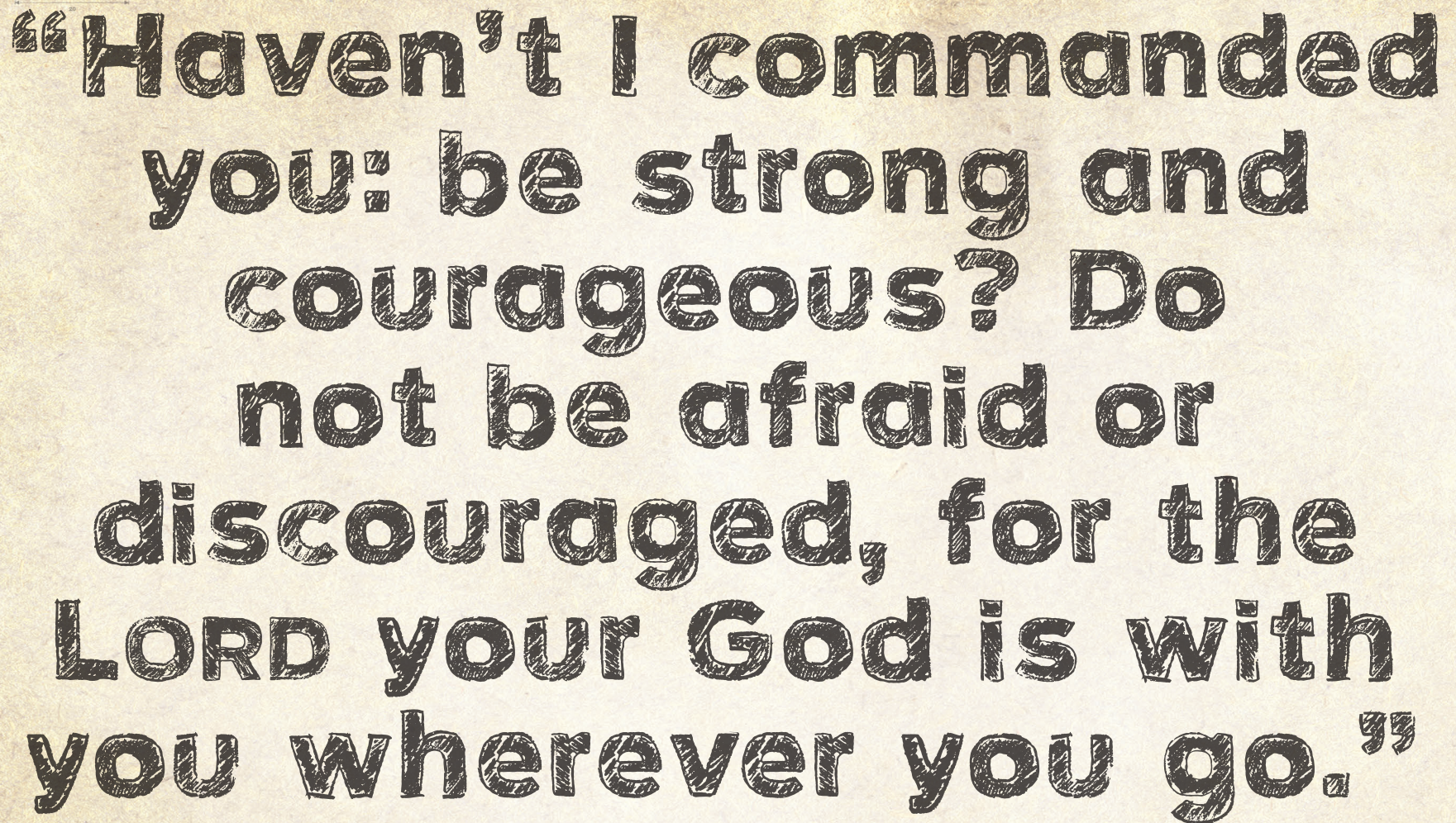
**Session 5:** Joshua's Final Encouragement

*Joshua 23:1–24:28*


Joshua encouraged the people to worship God alone.









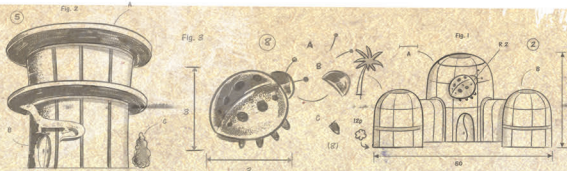
A technical drawing of a fortification, likely a city wall or a tower, with various parts labeled with letters and numbers. It includes a cross-section and a plan view.

**“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”**

Joshua 1:9





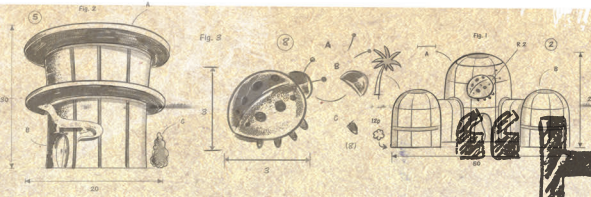


**“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”**

**Joshua 1:9**







**“Have I not  
commanded you? Be  
strong and courageous.  
Do not be afraid; do  
not be discouraged, for  
the LORD your God will  
be with you wherever  
you go.”**

**Joshua 1:9**





**God told His  
people to look  
at the bronze  
snake to be  
healed.**









# Snake Pattern Decoder

DOWNLOAD THE  
TGP FAMILY APP

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Use the snake code at the bottom of the page to reveal what the Israelites needed to remember.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Joshua 1:9

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:**

- Whom can we trust? We can trust God to take care of us.

**BIBLE STORY:**

**THE BRONZE SNAKE**

- God provided water for Israel from a rock.
- Moses and Aaron disobeyed God and would not be able to go into the promised land.
- The Israelites complained.
- God sent poisonous snakes that bit the Israelites.
- God told Moses to put a bronze snake on a pole. When anyone looked at the bronze snake he was healed.

**FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:**

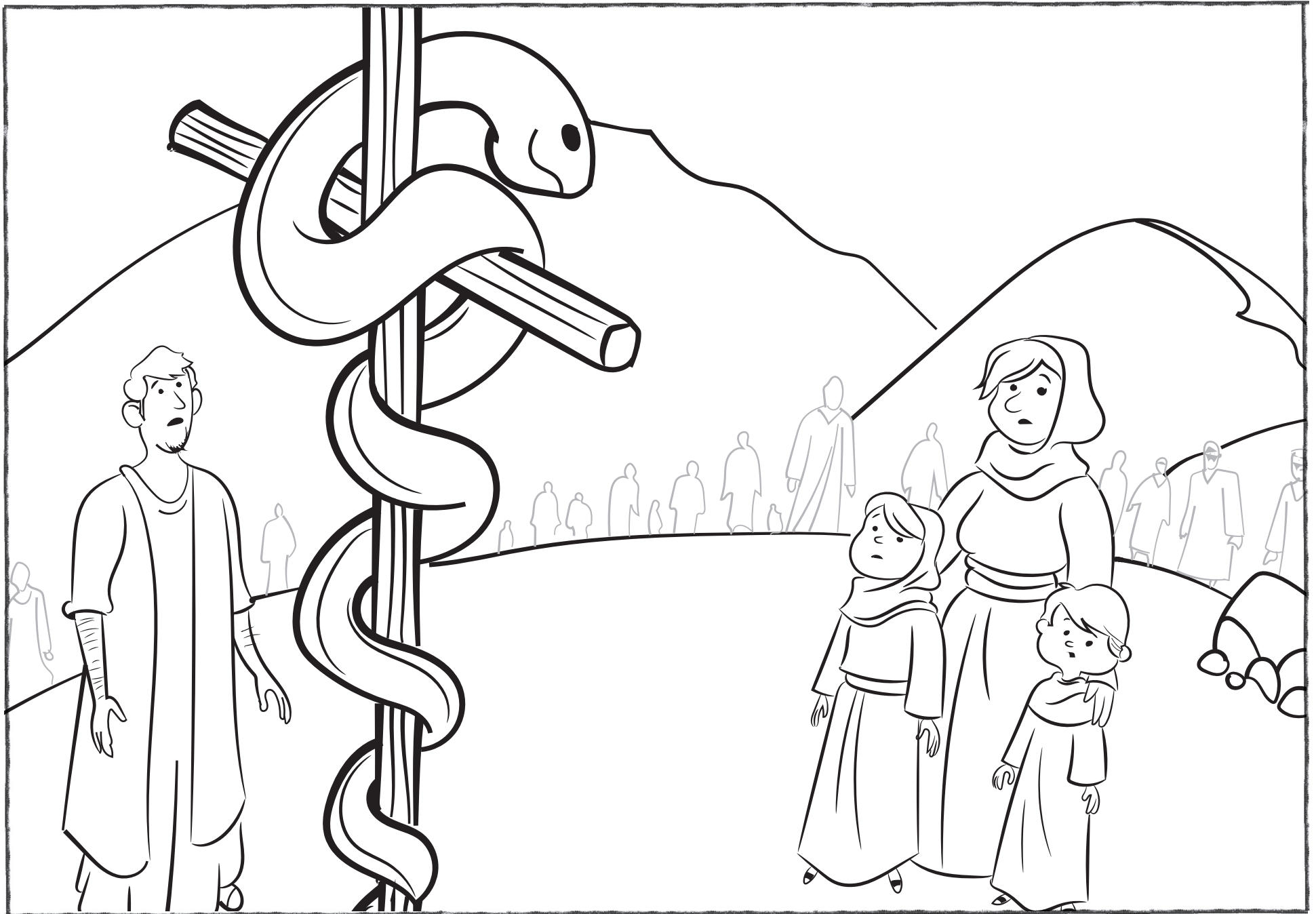
- The Israelites had to have faith in God to be healed. How can we demonstrate faith in God?
- How can we point someone to Jesus this week?

**FAMILY ACTIVITY:**

- Learn about snakes online.
- Go further: Research an unreached people group, pray for them, and consider how you can help take the gospel to them.

*Younger Kids Activity Pages*  
Unit 7, Session 2







# Whom can we trust?

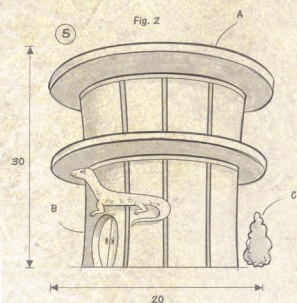
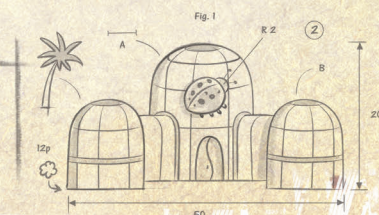
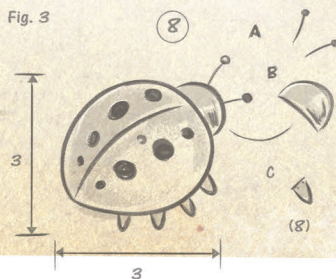


Fig. 3





# Whom can we trust?

We can trust God to take care of us.

