



WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

EXODUS 16-17 & NUMBERS 20-21

GOAL

- ▶ **To help children understand some of what the Israelites faced while wandering in the wilderness.** This lesson will also help children to understand how God led the Israelites and occasionally punished them for their disobedience.
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CHARACTERS

- ▶ **Israelites:** God's people, who were freed from slavery in Egypt, often complained and were disobedient. God led the Israelite nation through many challenges

Moses: God gave him the difficult task of leading the people.

MEMORY VERSE

- ▶ **Psalms 119:10:** With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!
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OVERVIEW

- ▶ **Read Exodus 16-17 and Numbers 20-21:** The Israelites spent 40 years in the desert. They kept on sinning, and God kept on showing them that they should follow Him and trust Him. God's provision, protection, and punishment are part of their experience.



SUGGESTIONS

▶ **Despite all of their complaints, God provided for His people as they journeyed to the Promised Land and during their years of wandering the desert.**

1. Provision: God ensured that everyone had enough to eat by sending them manna each day and even some quail. He also provided them with water to drink and to care for their livestock. God also miraculously maintained their clothing. The Israelites' clothing didn't wear out during their entire 40 years of wandering through the wilderness.

2. Protection: The Israelites were an enormous group of people. Many of the neighboring nations were unhappy with so many people traveling through or even near their territory. God protected them and made them victorious over their enemies.

3. Punishment: Despite witnessing miracles on a daily basis, the Israelites complained about their situation and were often disobedient. God punished their behavior on a number of occasions. One such punishment was a swarm of poisonous snakes that bit the people and made them ill and die. God sent this punishment, but also the cure. God loved His people and was merciful.

PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY

▶ **Pitch Your Tent | Supplies:** construction paper, popsicle sticks, glue, markers, crayons, and other art supplies.

Provide the students with four popsicle sticks and a piece of construction paper. Instruct them to glue two popsicle sticks into a V shape. Do the same with the other two popsicle sticks. Allow the students time to decorate their pieces of paper, which will then be glued on top of the pair of V-shape popsicle stick tent supports.



MEMORY
VERSE
MEANING

▶ The Israelites witnessed miracles every single day while they were in the wilderness, and yet they often disobeyed God's commands. They often complained about their living conditions and wished to return to Egypt, meaning they would rather be slaves if it meant they were comfortable than follow the Lord and live in a tent. The things of this world often tempt us to stray from the path of the Lord. Like King David said in this psalm, we should seek God with all our hearts and obey His commandments.

POST-LESSON
ACTIVITY

▶ **Catch the Manna | Supplies:** many small air-filled balloons, large trash bags, and baskets or plastic bags.

Give each student a basket or plastic bag. Blow up several dozen balloons, and put them into the large trash bags. Throw the balloons into the air, or empty them above the children's heads. Have children collect as many as they can. Balloons that pop cannot be counted. The student with the most balloons wins. This also can be played as a team activity.

TAKE
HOME

▶ Looking back at the Israelites' experience in the wilderness, it's hard to understand their bitterness and disobedience in the face of God's miraculous mercy and grace toward them. These stories should serve as a powerful example for us today.

1. Provision: God knows everything we need, even before we do. Just as God provided for the Israelites, He will provide for us.

2. Thankfulness: God provides for our every need here on earth, and has provided our salvation through Christ. The only proper response to such mercy and grace is a fully thankful heart.

3. Obedience: We can never repay the Lord for everything He does for us, but we can work to obey His commands. He asks us to believe in His Son, Jesus; love our neighbors; and have a relationship with Him through prayer.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 1



Q1a: Where were the Israelites going?

A1: The Israelites were traveling to the Promised Land.

Q1b: If the only way to get to your favorite amusement park was to take a week-long bus ride, would you still want to go?

TN: Most of us would suffer through the long bus journey for an opportunity to have fun at an amusement park. It may not be the fastest, most comfortable mode of transportation, but a bus would get us to where we want to go. The Israelites faced a long journey across the desert to get to the land God had promised to their ancestors. It would not be a fun journey, but the destination made it worth the effort.

SLIDE 2



Q2a: What appeared on the ground each morning?

A2: Manna appeared on the ground each morning for the Israelites to gather and eat.

Q2b: You hear that there is a shortage on milk, so you go to the store and buy 15 gallons of it. Is that a good idea?

TN: Fifteen gallons is a lot of milk. We probably wouldn't get through all of it before it started to go bad. It would end up being a waste of milk and money. Manna was a bit of a different story. God told them that He would send them manna to eat each day and that they should collect only what they needed to make food for their families that day. If they collected any more than they needed, the extra would rot and smell terrible. Because God said He would send them manna every morning, there was no reason to think that there would ever be a shortage of manna. Even so, some Israelites collected more than they needed in an effort to ensure that they would have food. Whether they knew it or not, doing so showed that, in their hearts, they didn't trust God to provide for them.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 3



Q3a: What kind of meat did God provide for the Israelites?

A3: God sent the Israelites quail.

Q3b: If you could pick one treat to eat every day, what would it be?

TN: Let students answer. What if that treat was the only thing we could find to eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner every single day? We would probably start to crave something different, and we may even begin to get sick of eating that same thing. In the beginning, the Israelites were thankful that God provided the manna every day, but as time went on, they began to complain about the lack of variety in their diet. They stopped being thankful for God's miraculous provision for them and began to take for granted that God would provide for them. They began to complain about the very thing that was keeping them alive. God doesn't owe us anything, so when He blesses us, it is something truly special; we should be forever grateful for it.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 4



Q4a: What did Moses have to do to get water for the Israelites?

A4: Moses touched his staff to a rock and water began flowing out of it.

Q4b: You're hiking in the desert where it hasn't rained for weeks when you run out of water. Where can you find drinking water?

TN: The desert can be an unforgiving environment. Running out of water there can be a pretty scary situation. The Israelites were an enormous group of people, so while finding a little puddle of water might help us out, it wasn't going to solve the Israelites' problem. They would need a stream, river, or lake to help them, so that's what God gave them. God created the entire universe and all the water on this planet. So while we can't go out and tap a rock to get some water when we're thirsty, God can tell Moses to touch a rock with his staff and it becomes a water fountain. This planet is God's creation, and if He wants to make water come out of a rock, He has the power to make that happen.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 5



Q5a: What did Moses have to do to help the Israelites win a battle?

A5: He had to keep his arms raised until the Israelites won.

Q5b: Have you ever heard of professional athletes not washing part of their uniforms after winning a game?

TN: They wear these pieces of clothing game after game because they think it is lucky. By the end of the season, it's probably more stinky than lucky. There is no link between stinky socks and winning games. This is an act of silly superstition. So why did Moses keep his arms raised throughout the entire battle? There was no superstition attached to this action at all. Each time Moses acted on behalf of the Lord, he used his staff. Moses kept his arms raised, holding his staff, to remind the Israelites of all the miraculous works they had seen God do for them. Keeping his staff raised in the air provided the Israelite soldiers with an object of encouragement to focus on and give them courage to continue their fight against their enemy. Seeing that staff helped them remember that God has been with them before, and surely He was with them during the battle.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 6



Q6a: What was the snake statue supposed to do?

A6: Looking at snake statue would heal anyone who had been bitten by a snake.

Q6b: Have you ever daydreamed in class and your teacher calls on you for an answer?

TN: When this happens, we are snapped back to reality. We have to think about what was being discussed before we drifted off into dream land. Often our teachers can tell when we aren't paying attention to the important information they are trying to teach us. Calling on us in such situations is a way for teachers to call us out for being off task. When God sent the poisonous snakes in response to the Israelites' complaining, He did it as punishment for their behavior and as a way to snap them back into reality. They served an all-powerful, loving God who has provided for their every need as they wandered through the wilderness. How could they possibly question God's motives? Had He not shown them His love for them through His miraculous provision? Sometimes people are reminded of how much they need God when they are in a desperate situation. Being bitten by a poisonous snake put the people's lives in danger, which brought them back to God. It gave them perspective on their situation and brought them back to reality.



**MEMORY
VERSE**

▷ **Psalm 119:10:** With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!

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BIG IDEA

▷ God is our gracious and merciful provider and protector.

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**CLOSING
PRAYER**

▷ Dear Lord, thank You for leading Israel, and thank You for leading us today. Help us to follow You. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 1



After the Israelites were miraculously delivered from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites were led through the desert by Moses toward the Promised Land. Ahead of them, they faced a long and difficult journey across a desert and through dangerous territory. Even so, they were bound for the Promised Land.

SLIDE 2



As the Israelites' food supplies started to run out, they began to fear where they would find more provisions. How quickly they forgot that the mighty God who delivered them from Egypt would surely provide. One of the miracles God performed for the Israelites was providing them with plenty of food. This food appeared like dew on the ground each morning. The Israelites gathered enough for their families each day and used it to make food. It tasted like sweet crackers and was called manna.

SLIDE 3



Manna was tasty, but the people complained that they really hungered for meat. So God sent them quail, which is kind of like a small chicken. A huge flock of these birds swooped into the Israelite camp and the people started grabbing them.

SLIDE 4



Water was another problem. With so many people, not to mention all their animals, they needed water to survive. More than once during their wilderness wanderings, God gave them water in a special way. One time, God simply told Moses to touch a rock with his staff, and water began to pour out of it.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 5



God's guidance and protection resided with the Israelites, and He gave them victory. As the Israelites traveled through the land, the neighboring nations became angry. They did not want the Israelites traveling near their territory, so they came out to fight them. On one occasion, Moses saw that when he had his arms raised, the Israelites started winning, but when he lowered his arms, the enemy gained. Therefore, with the help of two other men, Moses kept his arms raised until Israel won the battle.

SLIDE 6



After the Israelites' disobeyed God and refused to enter and conquer the Promised Land, God made them continue wandering through the wilderness. The Israelites wandered through the desert wilderness for a total of 40 years. Traveling this long through the wilderness brought a lot of problems. Often, the people grumbled against God and Moses. God punished the people by sending a swarm of poisonous snakes, which bit the people and caused some of them to die. However, even when He had to punish them, God was merciful. He told Moses to make a snake statue that would heal anyone who looked at it. There were many lessons that God's people had to learn, but through it all, God still loved them. He always gave them enough food, enough water, and even kept their shoes and clothes from wearing out during the long and difficult journey.