

# "That You May Believe"

## Gospel of John

### Week 6

**Main Idea – Israel lived by believing in God. Sinners believe in Jesus to live.**

The goal of this week's lesson is to help the children understand the serious threat that disobedience against God can lead to in their life — death. In the wilderness, when Israel was disobedient and grumbled against God, the Lord sent poisonous snakes that caused many of them to perish. However, despite their sin, God mercifully provided a way for them to be delivered from death — believe God's word by looking to the bronze serpent and live! This week's lesson culminates in the Lord Jesus Christ, who would be lifted up like the bronze serpent in His death, so that everyone who turns from their rebellion and believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

*Sunday school* teachers should emphasize the first half of the main idea in an interactive way for **20 minutes**, and explain the second half clearly without much interaction as a conclusion for **5 minutes**. *Children's church* teachers should explain the first half without much interaction for **5 minutes** as an introduction and emphasize the second half in an interactive way for **20 minutes**.

 **Pedagogical Tool** — If you struggle with time management, have your helper set a timer and give you updates on how much time you are using.

## Sunday School — Numbers 21

### Preparation

Materials:

- Lesson Materials
- Balloons
- Pen to pop balloons
- Two levels of word searches to emphasize main point.
- Bronze serpent coloring page.

Set-up:

- Print out materials

## Bible Verse (5-10 minutes)

John 3:16 (ESV) – “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Memorization — Have the students repeat the Bible verse with hand motions 2-3 times.

Song — Have the students sing “For God So Loved The World” (SFW, ESV) at least once.

NOTE — Start the Bible Verse section at the beginning without waiting for students who may arrive late. This will preserve the allotted times for other sections.

## Lesson (20-25 minutes)

Main Idea – **Israel** lived by **believing** in God

Pray

### Introduction (5 minutes)

Opening Game — **Hear Ye, Hear Ye!** — The point of this game is to test how well the students can listen to instructions. and follow them Every student will start in the seated position. They are not allowed to move. The teacher will read a posture described below. After you read it, you say “go!”. If they move while you are talking, they are out. The last two students to correctly assume the posture described are out. The last student standing, wins! (If there are more students standing, you can make up a round, or declare the remaining students winners!)

- Round 1 — Stand on your right leg, left hand on your head, and right pointer finger on your nose.
- Round 2 — Stand on your left leg, right hand on your hip, and left hand in a fist raised up in the air.
- Round 3 — Stand with your feet together, right hand on left shoulder, and left hand on top of your head.
- Round 4 — Stand with your feet apart, left hand over your left ear, and right hand out with all five fingers extended.
- Round 5 — Stand on your left leg, left hand on your right hip, while your right hand makes the letter “O” and places it over your right eye like a telescope.
- Round 6 — Stand up, turn around, place your right foot on the chair, interlock your hands, and place them above your head.
- Round 7 — Stand on your right leg, place your right hand on your right knee, and place your left hand on your right shoulder.
- Round 8 — Stand on your left leg, put up the number three on your right hand and place it over your heart, and use your left hand to gently pat your head.

Today, we are going to learn about a time when Israel had to believe what God said in order to live.

## Body (15 minutes)

Main Point — Israel lived by believing in God.

Listen as I read Numbers 21:4-9 — This passage can be broken down into three sections.

1. Disobedience (4-5) — **What is disobedience?** It is when you don't obey a God given authority. **Can you think of examples of how God has established authority on earth?** God has authority over His creatures. Governments had limited, real authority over their people. Parents have authority over their children. Without authority, the world can not function as God designed it.

Here is an example of Israel being disobedient — they were disobedient during their journey through the wilderness. **What are some of the things that Israel said that shows us they were disobedient?** They complained that there was no food or drink in the wilderness. **Was that true?** No! God had provided food and drink for them so that they would live. This is why they also said, "We hate this horrible manna!"

Remember, manna was bread from heaven — it was good, it sustained them, and it was a gift from God. But they were discontent. **How do you think God felt about Israel's disobedience, their grumbling, their complaining?** He was not pleased, and He took action, which brings us to our second point.

2. Death (6) — **How did God respond to Israel's disobedience?** He sent poisonous snakes and many of them died as a result!

This is so interesting. Israel complained that God brought them into the wilderness to die. But Israel's presence in the wilderness actually meant they were free from slavery! Also, they were alive, they hadn't died! But after grumbling, the Lord punished them and many of them did die.

This teaches us that disobeying God leads to death. We saw this last week when we talked about death having power over sinners. Death entered the world because humans sinned against God. God takes disobedience very seriously. But thankfully, God is not just righteous and holy — punishing sin and sinners for their disobedience — but He is gracious! That brings us to our third point.

3. Deliverance (7-9) — **What does it mean to be delivered?** It means to be saved, rescued from something horrible like death. After the people cry out to help, God provides a way for them to be delivered.

**How did God provide a way for Israel to be delivered?** He had Moses make a bronze serpent, and if anyone was bitten, they could simply look to the serpent and be delivered from death! **Now, was it the serpent that had the power to save people from death?** No, only God has the power to save people from death. The serpent was an exercise in trust — you had to believe what God said in order to live. And many did that and lived.

## Conclusion (5 minutes)

Main Point — Israel lived by believing in God. The people's only hope for deliverance from death after their disobedience was to trust God's word. They had to rely upon His grace, and believe what He said in order to be saved.

In this story, Israel was saved from *physical* death. Life is valuable, and it is gracious that God, at times, delivers sinners from physical death. However, there is a greater death that sinners need to fear — spiritual death.

If a person lives their life in disobedience to God, when they die, they die forever — an eternal death of infinite suffering in hell. That is really bad news. Sinners need a greater deliverance if they want to have eternal life.

The good news is that thousands of years later, God Himself would send His only Son — who would be lifted up like the bronze serpent in His death, so that everyone who turns from their rebellion and believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

So the point of this story is to point you forward to Jesus Christ — the One who was lifted up for sinners — so that they would not perish, but have eternal life. Look to the Savior, believe in Christ, and you will be delivered from death.

Pray

## **Lesson Activities (20-25 minutes)**

# **Children's Church — John 3:1-21**

## **Preparation**

Materials:

- Two levels of word searches to emphasize main point.
- John 3:16 Coloring Page

Set-up:

- None

## **Bible Verse (5-10 minutes)**

John 3:16 (ESV) – “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Memorization — Have the students repeat the Bible verse with hand motions 2-3 times.

Song — Have the students sing “For God So Loved The World” (SFW, ESV) at least once.

NOTE — Starting with the Bible verse in Children's Church will help the children get some movement in before the lesson starts.

## **Lesson (20-25 minutes)**

Main Idea – Sinners **believe** in Jesus to **live**.

Pray

## Introduction (5 minutes)

This morning in Sunday school, we studied the Bronze Serpent — a time when Israel lived by believing in God. We learned that disobedience against God has a serious consequence — death. In the wilderness, when Israel was disobedient and grumbled against God, the Lord sent poisonous snakes that caused many of them to perish. However, despite their sin, God mercifully provided a way for them to be delivered from death — believe God’s word by looking to the bronze serpent and live!

Today, we are going to learn more about how we can be delivered from death, but first we are going to open with a game.

Opening Game — “**Simon says**” Today, we are going to begin with a game that illustrates the importance of following instructions. But, I’m confused about the rules. **Can you help me?**

- How do you lose Simon says? If you don’t follow the instructions, you’re out!
- How do you win Simon says? If you follow the instructions carefully until everyone else is out!
- Who has the authority to give instructions? Only “Simon” is allowed to give instructions.
- What happens if you follow someone other than Simon’s instructions? You will be out!

Play at least two rounds of Simon says, and then have the children sit down.

Today, we’ll focus on instruction that God gives in His word that we must obey.

## Body (15 minutes)

Main Point — Sinners believe in Jesus to live. This is the overwhelming testimony of Scripture, and of our passage in John. Here are a few points that will help us understand this reality.

**1. We need the new birth from Jesus to live** — Read John 3:1-3

**What is the new birth?** The new birth is how we receive spiritual life from God.

**Why do we need the new birth if we are already alive?** All of us are born with physical life. We can think, we can talk, we can move — we enjoy physical life every day. But none of us are born with spiritual life. The Bible says that because of sin, we are spiritually dead! What we need is new life from God, and the new birth is how He provides it for us.

But this can be hard to understand. Listen to what Nicodemus says — Read John 3:4-8

Nicodemus thought that Jesus was talking about a second *physical* birth. But instead, Jesus was talking about our need for a *spiritual* birth. What is special about this spiritual birth is that there is nothing we can do to make it happen. Illustration — Jesus uses the wind to explain this. We can see, and feel, and hear the wind, but we can’t control the wind.

That also is hard to understand — we humans want to be in control, and we don’t like it when things are out of our control. Nicodemus agrees, listen to how he responds — Read John 3:9

If we aren't in control of the Holy Spirit that gives us new birth, what can we do? This brings us to our second point:

**2. We need to believe in Jesus to live** — Jesus' instruction to us is to believe!

Listen to how Jesus starts to talk about faith — as I read the following passage, stand up and sit back down every time you hear the word “believe” (5 times in NLT).

Read John 3:10-17

Here, Jesus talks about what happened in the Old Testament with Israel and the serpents. If you didn't want to die when you were bitten by a snake, you had to believe God's word — “Look to the serpent and you will live!”

Jesus uses this story to tell us His purpose for coming. Just like the bronze serpent that was lifted up onto the pole, Jesus came to be lifted up on a cross, so that everyone who looks to His sacrificial death for sinners, turns from their sin, and believes in Him will have eternal life!

As sinners, we deserve judgment. And God will judge His enemies. But the good news is that God loved the world and graciously sent His Son into the world so that people could escape judgment and have life instead!

This brings up an important question — **why will people who don't believe in Jesus be judged?** Jesus has an answer for that.

Read John 3:18-21

The reason that people will be judged by God is because they love the darkness, they love being in rebellion against God, they love hiding in the dark, because their deeds are evil. And when God shines His light on dark places, it causes people to be convicted of their sin and it brings judgment upon them.

Those who don't believe in Jesus don't want to be exposed. They don't want to face the consequences of their evil. But those who believe in Jesus want to come to the light so that it will be clear that their works are not evil.

### **Conclusion (5 minutes)**

Main Point — Sinners believe in Jesus to live.

If you want to be delivered from death, if you want to be born again to new life, you need to believe in Jesus. God has given us this instruction — believe in my Son, and you will not perish. If you listen to God's instruction, you will live! If you reject God's instruction, you will die and suffer forever.

Believe in Jesus, look to the cross, and you will receive the free gift of eternal life that He offers to all who believe.

Pray

## **Lesson Activities (20-25 minutes)**