

The Bible Story

The Ark Was Captured

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 the 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."

Bible Storytelling Tip:

- **Doodle it:** Draw simple pictures on a dry erase board or chalkboard to help the kids visualize the different parts of the story.
- **Use props:** Use a box, gold paint, and wooden dowels to make a replica of the ark. Use a yard decoration to represent the statue of Dagon. Set the box near it before knocking it over at the appropriate point in the story.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Ark Was Captured

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Samuel 4-6

STORY POINT: God showed the Philistines that He is the one true God.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 10:6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone.

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. Prompt kids to tell you about their most prized possession or their biggest source of encouragement. Discuss how it would feel to lose that object or source of encouragement.

SAV • The people of God had a special box that God commanded them to make. It was called the ark of the covenant, and it represented God's power to protect them and His desire to be with them. It was special for the Israelites and a source of encouragement to them. But today we will hear about a time their enemies took it away.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "Ark Word Search" activity page. Kids must find the words from the word bank hidden in the grid of letters.

SAV • Each of those words was a name or key word from our story. As you learn the story, see how many of these words you hear again.

• "Ark Word Search" activity page.
1 per kid
• pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: God is greater!

Sing the following rhyme to the tune of "London Bridge." You may create motions or use traditional motions for this activity.

"Dagon's shrine is falling down,
falling down
falling down
falling down!"

Dagon's shrine is falling down;

God is greater!"

SAV • Today we will learn about a time Israel's enemy captured the ark of the covenant. When they placed the ark in a temple to their false god Dagon, their shrine toppled! God is greater because He is the one true God.

OPTION 2: Toss and tell

Play music such as "There Is No One Like You," "King of Kings," or another song of your choosing. Instruct the kids to sit in a circle and pass a ball as the music plays. When the music stops, whoever is holding the ball must say one thing God can help them do.

SAV • God is all powerful. He will help us do everything that He wants us to do. Today we will learn what happened to the ark of the covenant when the people of Israel tried to use it to control God's power for themselves.

Transition to teach the story

**LOW
PREP**

• music player
• "There Is No One Like You" song (optional)
• "King of Kings" song (optional)
• ball

TEACH the Story



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Countdown

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

• countdown video

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

Leader enters wearing khaki shorts, a white shirt, and a cargo vest. He or she is carrying a tackle box or other equipment box. You may choose to place various bits of camping or adventuring gear inside.]

(optional)

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

LEADER • Hello, junior adventurers! If you were here last

week, you may remember that I am an explorer. I am searching for the greatest animal of all. Last week I mentioned that I thought it might be the cockatoo, but this week I have a very different theory.

As I travel around going on adventures, I keep many bits of useful stuff in this box [*Hold up tackle box.*] I also collect very interesting things I find, like oddly colored rocks, ancient artifacts, or even tufts of animal fur that I may find. All this collecting got me thinking about squirrels!

Squirrels are some of the best collectors of all. They collect tons of food and hide it away in the ground

in small places called *caches* (CASH-es). Then, when they need food in the harsher winter months, they go back to their caches to dig up the nuts they've hidden. Isn't that amazing?!

But what's even more amazing is our God. He commanded His people to collect certain things that represented His power and authority. They stored those things in a special, golden box called the ark of the covenant. This week, we will hear about a time they tried to use the ark foolishly, and got it captured by their enemies!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • As we get into the story, let's make sure we

remain focused on the big picture question and answer. *Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone.* This is a very important idea to understand. We have sin in our lives, and sometimes we will be tempted to put other things above God, like money or fame. But there is nothing and no one as great as God. He alone deserves worship.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • Last week we learned that God called Hannah's son to share God's plan. The people of Israel had been disobeying God over and over. Eli's sons were evil and cheated people, and Eli did not stop them. The people's sin led to their defeat by the Philistines. Our story picks up there.

- Bibles
- The Ark Was Captured video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to 1 Samuel 4-6. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "The Ark Was Captured."

LEADER • When the people of Israel were defeated in battle, they knew it was because God did not fight for them. However, they made a crucial mistake. They did not stop to consider that their sin was the problem. Instead, they assumed that they just needed the ark of the covenant. The ark was a symbol of God's presence with His people, after all. God's people wanted God to fight for them, but they did not care about loving or obeying Him.

Instead of seeing the ark for what it was—a special way God showed His love for them—they treated it like a good luck charm. Perhaps they thought *if we carry the ark of God into battle, God will have to defeat our enemies for us*. But God cannot be controlled or manipulated. God always does what He wants because what He wants is always best.

When the Philistines won the battle and took the ark, they thought it was proof that their false god was stronger than the one true God. They had no idea how wrong they were! Their statue of Dagon fell over and even broke. The people began to get sick in the cities where the ark was kept! Clearly, their false god could not stop the punishment that the one true God was sending. **God showed the Philistines that He is the one true God.** Soon, the Philistines decided they needed to give back the ark. They were no match for God.

Christ connection

LEADER • Both the Israelites and the Philistines learned they could not control God. *Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone.* God cannot be controlled or contained. Thankfully, He is holy, good, and loving. 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. One of Jesus' names is *Immanuel*, which means "God with us."

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 10, Session 2" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about how we know God is with us. Guide them to discuss how it feels to know God has promised to be with believers.

•"Unit 10, Session 2" Questions from Kids video

Missions moment (3 minutes)

Play the "Up a River" missions video.

LEADER • Many people live in villages hidden deep in the Amazon Jungle of South America. Kathy, a missionary to the Amazon, knows that people living in these villages need to hear the name of Jesus, but it's not always easy to get to them. Kathy trusts in God's power and goodness to get the gospel to people in need of His Son, Jesus Christ. We can trust God's power too as we live on mission by showing Jesus' love and telling others about Him.

•"Up a River" missions video

Key passage (5 minutes)

• Key Passage poster
• There is No One Like You song

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Jeremiah 10:6. Then sing "There Is No One Like You."

You."

LEADER • Jeremiah wrote the words of our key passage under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He wanted God's people to know that God is all-powerful and completely holy. *Is anything or anyone greater than God? No, God is greater than everything and everyone.*

Sing (4 minutes)

• King of Kings song

LEADER • God is our King of kings. Let's praise Him together.
Sing together "King of Kings."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • 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.

Dismiss to apply the story

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 3:18.



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