



LESSON 4

THE BRONZE SNAKE

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Only God Saves

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 21

GOD'S BIG STORY: Even after God provides for His people in the wilderness, they complain and are struck by venomous snakes. To save the people, God instructs Moses to put a bronze snake on a pole; anyone who looks at the snake will live.

WORD OF WONDER: Even if we are not faithful, he remains faithful. He must be true to himself.

—2 Timothy 2:13

- PRE-SERVICE
 - OPTION 1 Interactive Game: Save Me!
 - OPTION 2 Interactive Game: Saved by a Handshake
- Welcome Question: Have you ever had to be rescued or saved from something? Tell about it.
- SMALL GROUP
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- Worship: That's Who I Praise, All of Me
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- In Awe of God's Wonder
- Responding in Worship: Name Above All Names
- Blessing Your Kids



INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Only God Saves

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 21

WORD OF WONDER: 2 Timothy 2:13

I find that reading the chapter leading up to Numbers 21 helps establish the context for the story of the venomous serpents and Moses' bronze snake. I encourage you to do the same now: Read Numbers 20 and 21:1–9.

How does it change your perspective to know the Israelites were encountering repeated setbacks in their wilderness journey? God provided for their needs, but still they seemed frustrated and unhappy living in the limbo of delay—and somehow, that comforts me. Admittedly, I don't always handle it well when I feel my destination is just out of reach and there's little that I can do about it. How do you react when it feels as though you will never reach your goal?

When you read this story, what stands out to you? Why were the people encouraged to look upon an image of the snake? Why were they saved when they contemplated the cause of their pain? Theologians and Christians of all kinds have pondered this question for ages. Now read Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3:1–21. Why do you think Jesus draws a parallel between this Old Testament event and His crucifixion? How are we changed by what we behold?

Only God could save the Israelites from the venomous serpents, and only Jesus can save humanity from sin and death. Join me in pondering this great mystery: The Son of Man was lifted up, and when we look to Him, we are healed.

—Nancy Wood Clark

Children's Pastor

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

The Israelites were wandering in the wilderness because of their unfaithfulness. In Numbers 14, the people refused to trust that God would give them victory in the new land He promised them. As a result, they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.

WHAT?

The people were bitten by venomous snakes as again they refused to trust God, complained against Moses, and complained against God. Their mistrust of God, despite experiencing His goodness firsthand, was a constant issue.

WHERE?

The king of Edom would not let the wandering Israelites pass through his land, so they had to take the long way around his kingdom. During this long journey, the people again got impatient and began to grumble against God.

WHEN?

God made the people wander in the desert for 40 years, until everyone from the generation that left Egypt had died. They would not get to enter the promised land for themselves because they had been so unfaithful to the God who had rescued them.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY:

God used a snake—the very thing that hurt the Israelites—to heal them, showing that He has power over all. Jesus later referenced this story (John 3), saying that He would be lifted up and that whoever looks to Him will be saved.

LESSON 4 ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN

Large Group

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Only God Saves

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 21

WORD OF WONDER: 2 Timothy 2:13

Series Bumper and Countdown Videos

Choose between the [Think Again Series Bumper Video](#) and [Countdown Videos](#) to introduce the kids to the series.

Welcome Question

SUPPLIES: paper, coloring utensils, whiteboard (optional), dry-erase marker (optional)

Before kids arrive, display the [Bronze Snake Welcome Question Slide](#) or write the following question on a whiteboard: “Have you ever had to be rescued or saved from something? Tell about it.” Set out paper and coloring utensils.



As kids arrive ...

Welcome kids warmly as they arrive and show them the Welcome Question. Encourage kids to share their answers with the group or with a few friends. For younger kids, read the question to them and offer your response to begin the conversation. For extra fun, invite kids to draw their answers and to share their drawings with the group.

At your start time ...

Get kids' attention by having them mimic silly superhero poses. Ask a few kids to share their answers to the Welcome Question: **Have you ever had to be rescued or saved from something? Tell about it.** Strike a new superhero pose between responses and allow kids to copy the pose.

Wow! You all have some amazing rescue stories! In God's big story today, we'll learn about a time when God provided the only way for a group of people to be saved. But first, it's time to be curious!

OPTION 1 Interactive Game: Save Me!

Ahead of time, clear out a large space for this game.

Display the **Save Me! Slide** and gather the kids. **Let's play a game called Save Me! There will be someone who will be "It."** This person's job is to run around and tag as many people as she can. If you're tagged, freeze in place, raise your hands over your head, and shout, "Save me!" The other players who have not been tagged can save you by putting your arms down, making you free to play the game again.



Before the game begins, emphasize that safety is important! Explain that everyone must be careful not to run into others as they play! If needed, instruct kids to walk rather than run and set boundaries and time limits to help with safety.

Choose someone to be "It." Then begin the game! The winner is the last person who has not been caught. If time allows, play multiple rounds with a different person as It each time. Then gather the kids back together.

Everyone needs to be saved from something. If someone doesn't save us, we are stuck in a bad situation or place, trying to fend for ourselves. Just like in this game, we can't save ourselves without the help of someone else. In God's big story today, we'll meet a group of people who continually needed saving from something. And God, in His faithfulness, saved His people. Display the Bronze Snake Wonder Truth Slide. Today's Wonder Truth is ONLY GOD SAVES.



Make It Inclusive: This game may be overstimulating for some kids. Invite kids who may have a hard time to help you watch who is being tagged and saved. They can tell the kids who are saved that they are free.

OPTION 2 Interactive Game: Saved by a Handshake

SUPPLIES: scissors (prep only), cardstock (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Handshake Cards \(1 set per 18–20 kids\)**By Request](#), upbeat music from the [Think Again Elementary Spotify playlist](#), Bronze Snake Wonder Truth Slide

Ahead of time, print the Handshake Cards, onto cardstock if available, and cut them apart. You'll need one "Rescuer" card and one "Trouble" card. All other cards should say "Person" on them. Every kid will need one card, so print multiple copies, if needed. (Be sure to remove extra "Rescuer" and "Trouble" cards if printing multiple copies.)

Display the [Saved by a Handshake Slide](#) and gather the kids. **Let's play a game called Saved by a Handshake! Each of you will receive a card with a word on it that you must keep to yourselves. Don't tell anyone! I will start a song, and while the music plays, you'll walk around trying to meet as many people as possible. What is something we usually do when we meet other people?** Pause for responses. **Yes, we shake hands! Your job is to shake hands with every person you meet (even if you already know them!). And it's OK to shake the same person's hand multiple times. Here's the catch: There are three different types of people walking around, and you won't know who is who. Each type of person will have a different handshake.**

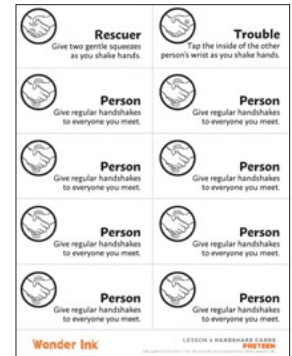
There is one person with "Trouble" on their card. This person will lightly tap the inside of the other person's wrist as they shake hands. Invite a volunteer to come up and demonstrate how "Trouble" will shake hands.

There is one person with "Rescuer" on their card. This person will give two gentle squeezes when she shakes your hand. Invite a volunteer to come up and demonstrate how the "Rescuer" will shake hands.

Everyone else will have "Person" on their cards. These people will give others regular handshakes—not too hard or too gentle. Invite a volunteer to come up and demonstrate how those with "Person" cards will shake hands.

Now if you have a "Person" card and you shake hands with "Trouble," you'll immediately freeze in place. You can't move, but you can call out, "Save me!" The kid with the "Rescuer" card can save you by shaking your hand with two gentle squeezes. When the "Rescuer" saves you, you can re-enter the mingling crowd. If a regular, unfrozen "Person" shakes hands with someone who is frozen, nothing happens. The frozen person will remain frozen, and the unfrozen person will continue playing.

The "Rescuer" cannot be frozen. This means that if "Trouble" and "Rescuer" shake hands, nothing unusual happens. They just keep playing.



Make It Inclusive: Kids who are especially energetic, such as those with ADHD, often thrive when they get to help demonstrate activities. Keep this in mind when choosing kids to help you demonstrate each handshake.

Give a Handshake Card to each kid. Encourage them to keep their cards in their pockets or to set them facedown somewhere out of the way. **Do you have any questions before we get started?** Pause to answer questions. **OK! Let's start mingling!** Play upbeat music from the [Think Again Elementary Spotify playlist](#). Play for the duration of 1–2 songs or until many of the kids are frozen.

Gather the kids back together. **In this game every “Person” needed to be saved at some point, yet only the “Rescuer” had the power and authority to save them. In life, each of us needs to be saved from sin—the wrong things we do. And like in this game, there’s only one Rescuer. In God’s big story today, we’ll meet a group of people who continually needed saving from something. And God, in His faithfulness, saved His people. Display the Bronze Snake Wonder Truth Slide. Today’s Wonder Truth is ONLY GOD SAVES.**



Small Group

Introduce small group time. While kids are in small group, consider sitting in the groups for a few minutes each. Engage and interact as is appropriate.

Countdown

After about 15 minutes of small group, give a 5 minute warning and begin the countdown.

VIDEO: COUNTDOWN

"Hey everyone! Welcome to our Large Group Worship time! My name is _____ and I'm excited to take this time to worship God, review what we just read, and talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning about God! We are going to pray as we prepare our hearts to worship God!"

Declaring God's Wonder

Display the Bronze Snake Declaration Slide. Read each line boldly and invite kids to repeat after you.

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.)

You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.)

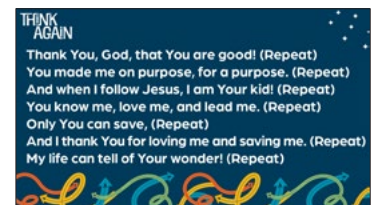
And when I follow Jesus, I am Your kid! (Kids repeat.)

You know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.)

Only You can save, (Kids repeat.)

And I thank You for loving me and saving me. (Kids repeat.)

My life can tell of Your wonder! (Kids repeat.)



Make It Inclusive: Many kids, including those who are neurodivergent, thrive with routine and enjoy having a role. Consider inviting 1–2 kids who attend regularly to help lead the declaration.

Prayer of Invitation

Lead kids in a prayer of invitation before entering into worship and God's big story: **God, we love You and invite Your Holy Spirit to be with us today. Thank You for loving us so much that You were willing to save us. Please speak to us through Your Word today. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

God loves us and made the way for us to be saved! Let's thank Him through our singing.

Play Thats Who I Praise, All of Me and encourage the kids to sing and dance as they praise God.

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid)

Display the Bronze Snake Title Slide. Tell kids today's story comes from the Bible, God's Word, and is 100% true. Help kids navigate Scripture by finding Numbers, the fourth book in the Old Testament. Help kids find the chapter by locating the number 21. Invite volunteers to assist kids as they find the passage.



Leader Tip: Help kids understand the difference between the chapter and the verse numbers by saying “big number” for the chapter and “little number” for the verse.

Let's start by reading part of God's big story directly from the Bible. Afterward, we'll watch and experience more of the story!

LESSON 4 THE BRONZE SNAKE

EXPERIENCE IT! SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: Bible, easel or flip chart with large sheet of paper, marker, coloring utensils, pencils, clipboards (optional, 1 per kid)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Experience It! Comic Strip (1 per kid)

Leader Tip: Some kids aim for perfection when drawing and like to take their time on every detail. That's OK! Rather than rush kids to finish now, encourage them to take their comic strips home to finish later.

Make It Inclusive: Provide a variety of utensils and simple adaptive tools for kids with varying dexterity levels, such as thick markers, jumbo crayons, and pencil grips. Also consider drawing in pencil on several comic strips ahead of time and making those copies available to kids who might struggle to draw their own pictures. Invite them to trace or color the pencil drawings.

Before kids arrive, print one Experience It! Comic Strip for each kid. If using, preload the clipboards with one Experience It! Comic Strip each. Set out coloring utensils and pencils. Set up the easel or flip chart on your stage area and prep it by drawing seven boxes with a marker that reflect the layout of the boxes on the Experience It! Comic Strip. Label each box 1–7. Place a set of coloring utensils and pencils on stage within easy reach. Also, set the Bible within reach.

As you tell the story, pause to allow time for kids to draw.

Today you'll need to be paying very careful attention to God's big story because you'll be creating a comic strip based on the story! Let's practice paying attention: First get your paper, grab a pencil, and write your name in the top corner. When you're done, set down your paper and pencil and look up at me.

Hand out the Experience It! Comic Strips and allow time for kids to complete the task, then continue.

The Bible tells us about how God rescued His people, the Israelites, from slavery in Egypt. Open the Bible to Numbers and hold it up for kids to see. He brought them out into the desert and gave them His instructions so they could live for Him and show everyone around them what God is like. In Box 1, let's draw a picture of God's people in the desert. In Box 1 on the large paper, draw a handful of stick figures (God's people) in wide-open space. Encourage kids to do the same on their papers and assure them stick figures are OK!

God was going to bring them to the new land that He had promised them so they could live, work, have kids, and be His people in their new land. But the Israelites were sinful and kept



disobeying God. Because they kept ignoring what God had asked, they had to wander around in the wilderness for 40 years. They were very close to the land God had promised them, but they couldn't enter it until God let them. Add a big number "40" to the picture in Box 1 and invite kids to do the same.

During this time of wandering, God's people sometimes obeyed Him, but often they failed to follow God. Now, the Israelites had just defeated some of their enemies who surrounded the land of Canaan. They probably felt strong and proud of themselves.

As they were traveling, they got tired and impatient. They began to complain against God and against their leader, Moses. Even though God had rescued them from being slaves in Egypt, they asked why He had taken them out of Egypt. God had set them free from their harsh work, and now they wished they were back in Egypt!

They complained about food. God had been providing food from heaven for them every day—it was called manna, and they could make bread from it. But that wasn't enough for the Israelites. They wanted different food. They said, "We hate this awful food!" (Numbers 21:5b). Let's draw a picture of the Israelites complaining about the food. In Box 2 on the large paper, draw several stick figures with sad/grumpy faces. Then draw small bread-like flakes (manna) on the ground. Encourage kids to draw in Box 2 on their Comic Strips.

God had rescued His people in many ways, providing food and water for them in the wilderness, but they were quick to forget that God saves.

Because the Israelites had turned against God, "the LORD sent venomous snakes among them" (Numbers 21:6a NIV). OK—let's draw some venomous snakes. In Box 3 on the large paper, draw several snakes and encourage kids to do the same on their Comic Strips.

Many of the people were bit and died. Finally, the people realized that they had done wrong and that God could save them. They went to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us" (Numbers 21:7). So Moses prayed for the people. Let's draw a picture of Moses praying! In Box 4 on the large paper, draw Moses (a stick figure works) praying. He might be holding a long staff and have a long beard. Invite kids to do the same on their Comic Strips.

God told Moses to make a snake and put it up on a pole. If anyone bitten by snakes looked at the bronze snake, they would live. So Moses made a snake out of bronze and put it on a pole. Let's draw it! In Box 5 on the large paper, draw a snake suspended on a tall pole. (It can be very simple!) Invite kids to draw on their Comic Strips.

The people who had sinned against God had to realize that He is powerful. He had the power to send the snakes as a consequence for their sin. And He alone had the power to save them from that consequence. Those who had been bit lived when they looked up at the snake Moses had made. Let's draw a picture of the Israelites after they're saved from the snake bites. In Box 6 on the large paper, draw several happy stick figures and invite kids to do the same on their Comic Strips.

God, who in mercy spared His people from the venom of these snakes, would one day save us—His people—from our sins. Many years later, Jesus explained to a man named Nicodemus that just as the Israelites looked up at the snake and were saved, anyone who believes in Him will have eternal life!

God's people complained against Him and failed to trust Him. They had forgotten all of the ways God had saved them and provided for them. God has provided for us through Jesus, and He is the only one with the power to heal and make us new again because only God saves! Wow—let's draw one final picture to remind us that only God saves! What do you think we should draw? Allow kids to respond freely. Then in Box 7 on the large paper, draw a cross to represent that God saves us through Jesus. Invite kids to draw whatever will help them remember that only God saves!

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Display the Bronze Snake Wonder Truth Slide. Our Wonder Truth today is **ONLY GOD SAVES**. Where did you see our Wonder Truth in the story? Allow kids to answer freely.

In today's story, God saved people from the venom of snakes, but God also saves people from sins—the wrong things we say and do. Many years later, Jesus compared Himself to the bronze snake that saved. Jesus was lifted up on a cross, and anyone who believes in Him receives eternal life!



In Awe of God's Wonder

Spend a few moments allowing kids to think about the wonder of God's story.

What part of God's big story today surprised you? Why? Invite kids to answer freely.

What does it mean to you that only God saves? Allow kids to think quietly for a time before inviting them to share their ideas.

Responding in Worship

SLIDE: RESPONDING IN WORSHIP

Talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning with next steps such as tithing, prayer, asking questions, and worship. Encourage kids to ask their SG leaders any questions they were wondering during the lesson. ***Introduce this next song and invite kids to respond and participate in worship. See the "Worship Posture Tutorial" on the RBKids Resource Page.



WORSHIP VIDEO: Name Above All Names

say the second part. Do this several times slowly, breathing deeply and deliberately each time:

Breathe in: **Loving God, ...**

Breathe out: **You save me.**

The God who loves you and sent Jesus to save you is with you through the Holy Spirit! This week, keep your beads in your pocket, on your backpack, or somewhere else you can see and touch them often. Each time you notice your beads, you can turn your attention back to God, right in the midst of whatever else you're doing. Talk with God right then by praying a simple breath prayer. Let's pray it one more time together:

Breathe in: **Loving God, ...**

Breathe out: **You save me.**

Blessing Your Kids

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands are open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: May you remember that God loves you and saves you. And may you be aware of His saving power in your life now and always!