



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

- Welcome Question: Have you ever had to be rescued or saved from something? Tell about it.
- Curiosity Questions
- Elementary Interactive Game: Save Me!
- Preteen Interactive Game: Saved by a Handshake
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation and Worship
- God's Big Story: Hear It, Watch It, Experience It!
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- In Awe of God's Wonder
- Word of Wonder Activity
- Discussion Questions for Elementary Kids and Preteens
- Small Group Prayer Time
- Elementary Responding in Worship: Notes of Thanks
- Preteen Responding in Worship: Pocket Prayers
- Blessing Your Kids



SCAN FOR THIS
WEEK'S VIDEO!

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

Small 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

Pre-Service Connection (15–20 min)

RESOURCES: whiteboard, poster paper, or butcher paper, writing utensils, board games or games

Games & Activities Guide

Small group leaders should be seated in place in their small groups 20 minutes prior to service time. Have activities ready to keep children occupied and engaged WITH you. This time is important to build relationships, welcome new kids, and keep structure in the room - you should be an active participant with them! Learn the kids names, and make sure they all know yours too!

As kids arrive ...

Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group.

Use the Welcome Question and the following "I'm Curious" questions to engage kids. Say "I'm **curious..**" before each question and give kids an chance to think before answering each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

Consider having a whiteboard or poster for kids to write or draw answers to any of the questions:

- **Why is it easy to give your time and attention to things you love?**
- **Do you think God deserves our time and attention? Why or why not?**



Small Group Begins

After the Opening Activity or game, Large Group Leader will begin small group time by reading the Welcome Question aloud and inviting everyone to open their Bibles and begin.

Word of Wonder Activity

WORD OF WONDER

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

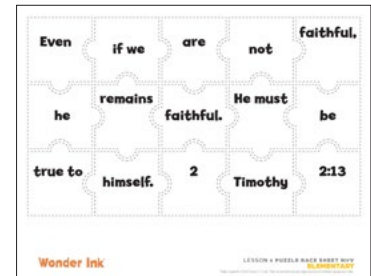
—2 Timothy 2:13 (NIV)

SUPPLIES: Bible, cardstock, scissors (prep only), resealable baggies (1 per puzzle)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Puzzle Race Sheet NIV](#) (2 per group)

Ahead of time, print two copies of the Puzzle Race Sheet onto cardstock for each small group. Cut out the puzzle pieces and put each set in a resealable baggie.

Our Word of Wonder for the Think Again series reminds us that God, who loves us and saves us, is always faithful, no matter what! Let's say the verse together now. Open your Bible to 2 Timothy 2:13. Read 2 Timothy 2:13 several times together.



Help kids form two teams. Then give each team a set of puzzle pieces and invite the two teams to race to see who can put the puzzle together the fastest. The finished puzzle will reveal the Word of Wonder. When teams finish, invite them to say the verse together. If time permits, play multiple times, mixing up the teams each round.

Leader Tip: For Younger Kids. Eliminate the race component of this activity and invite all the kids in the small group to work together to put the puzzle together! Be ready to help them as needed.

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Bronze Snake Title Slide, [The Bronze Snake God's Big Story Video](#)

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.

Read Numbers 21:4–9 from the Bible as kids follow along. If time allows, invite kids to reread the passage with a buddy one more time. (Pair younger kids with older and match hesitant readers with enthusiastic ones.) Then do one or both of the following:

Elementary Questions

- **Can you name one thing God had done for His people, the Israelites, before today's story began?** (Possible answers: rescued them from slavery in Egypt, split the Red Sea so they could cross on dry ground, provided food called manna and water in the wilderness.)
- **The Israelites complained against God and Moses even though God had done a lot for them. What are some things they complained about?** (Possible answers: their food, wanting to go back to Egypt.) **What are some things you complain about?**
- **What happened as a result of the people complaining?** (God sent venomous snakes.)
- **What did God tell Moses to do to save His people?** (Make a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. When the people got bitten, they were to look at the snake and be saved.)
- **God saved the people even after they complained a lot. What does that show you about what God is like?**
- **Imagine you were one of the Israelites who looked up at the snake on a pole and were saved.** (Encourage kids to close their eyes and imagine.) **What would you want to say to God?**

Even when the Israelites complained and sinned against God, He didn't leave them! God was with them every step of the way. He is with us every step of the way too, even when we sin, or disobey Him. God is faithful to us! And only God saves! It's who He is! Let's talk with God and thank Him for saving us.

Preteen Questions

- **God had done a lot for the Israelites, yet they complained. What are some things they complained about?** (Possible answers: their food, wanting to go back to Egypt.) **Why do you think they complained? What are some things you complain about?**
- **Where did the Israelites want to return?** (to Egypt where they were slaves) **Why do you think they wanted to return there?** (Possible answers: It was familiar; there was more varied food there than in the wilderness.)
- **How did God save the Israelites in today's story?** (God told Moses to put a bronze snake on a pole. When the people looked at it, they were saved from the deadly snake bites.)
- **Do you think the Israelites deserved to be saved? Why or why not?**
- **God saved the people even after they complained a lot. What does that show you about what God is like?**
- **We've all complained about our circumstances. If you could turn your complaints to thanks, what would you thank God for today?**

How many times have we complained about things and sounded like the Israelites? Yet no matter what we do or how much we complain, God's faithfulness goes on and on, and He chooses to save us. Let's talk with God now and thank Him for being so faithful and for saving us!

Small Group Prayer Time

Invite kids to sit in a circle and take turns sharing thanks and requests to God. Remind kids that God is the only One who saves. Help kids form groups of 2–3 and invite them to pray together. Assure them it's OK if not everyone chooses to pray aloud. When they finish praying, bring kids back to the group and invite one volunteer to close this time in prayer.

LARGE GROUP

Elementary Responding in Worship: Notes of Thanks

SUPPLIES: note cards (1 per kid), hole punch (prep only), scissors (prep only), colored ribbon (various colors, 8" per kid), writing utensils, wooden pole

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Think Again Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, gather your note cards and punch a hole in the top corner of each card. Cut ribbon into 8" lengths. Set out cards, ribbons, and writing utensils. Before the activity begins, lean the wooden pole against a wall near the front of the room.

Leader Tip: Don't have a wooden pole? Consider one of these alternatives: a tall stick, PVC pipe, metal flagpole, or a cane

In God's big story today, we learned how God saved His people from snake bites. Only God could save them! Only God could reverse the result of their sin and make a way for the people to be saved. Only God had the power to do a miracle and keep people from death. There's no one else who could have done that.

What do you think is the most amazing thing about this story? Allow kids to answer. God didn't save only the Israelites from death. He offers to save us too, through His Son, Jesus! God sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world, to rescue us from the sin that separates us from God. Without God, we would be lost in our sins—our disobedience to God and wrong things we do. But, God is faithful, and He had a plan all along to rescue and save the people He loves. He had a plan to save us! Isn't that amazing?

Show kids the pole. This pole represents the pole God used to save the people in today's story. Wouldn't it be cool to use this pole as a way of praising God for His faithfulness and love?

Give each kid a card, a ribbon, and a writing utensil. Explain that they'll write and draw notes of thanks or love notes to God on their cards and when they're done, they can put a ribbon through the hole in the card and then tie the ribbon to the pole. Play music from the [Think Again Elementary Spotify playlist](#) as kids write and draw quietly. Be available to help kids tie their ribbons to the pole. Also be sure to keep the pole steady to prevent it from falling as kids tie their ribbons to it.

When all the kids have tied their notes to the pole, offer a prayer of thanks to God for His love, faithfulness, and for saving us—His people!

Make It Inclusive: If some kids struggle to focus or understand and follow instructions, pair them with a peer helper or offer them a seat near a leader who can encourage and help them as needed during this activity.

Preteen Responding in Worship: Pocket Prayers

SUPPLIES: thin ribbon or paracord (12" per kid), scissors (prep only), containers, pony beads (multiple colors, 8–10 per kid), keychain rings or mini carabiners (optional, 1 per kid)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: music from the [Think Again Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, cut 12" lengths of thin ribbon or paracord for each kid. Before the activity begins, set out containers of pony beads (8–10 beads per kid). If you have keychain rings or mini carabiners, set them out near the beads.

In God's big story today, the bronze snake on the pole reminded the people that God is the only one who saves—it brought their attention back to Him. Just as God is the only one who could save the Israelites, He is the only one who can save us too! God sent His Son, Jesus, to be the Savior of the world, to rescue us from the sin that separates us from God. And when we follow Jesus, God gives us His Spirit—the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, God is with us! He offers us peace throughout the day. No matter where we are or what we're doing, we can bring our attention back to Him.

Let's create a simple hands-on reminder that the God who saves us is with us. Invite kids to create simple beaded loops that they can keep in their pockets or attach to their backpacks. Demonstrate the following steps for the kids:

1. Select 8–10 beads and one ribbon/cord.
2. String the beads on the ribbon/cord and tie the two ends together to form a loop.
3. (Optional) If you have keychain rings or mini carabiners, attach one to the beaded loop.

Invite kids to make their own beaded loops. Play music from the [Think Again Elementary Spotify playlist](#) as they create.

Once all the kids have completed their beaded loops, continue: **Another simple way to shift our attention toward God during the day is by praying a breath prayer. A breath prayer is a word or phrase we repeat in a single breath with one part on the inhale and the other part on the exhale. Breath prayers help us turn our attention back to God and remember that He's with us. Let's learn a breath prayer. As we pray, we can gently move our fingers along the beads.**

Lead kids in breathing in slowly as everyone says the first part of the prayer and breathing out slowly as they 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.**