

The Bronze Serpent

Numbers 21:4-9

MEMORY VERSE

JOHN 3:14

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,"

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Small prizes for the children to find as "treasures" and some pre-made "wild goose chase" maps.

Paper plates, a large (3'x3') sheet of paper, some tickets that you make (possibly by using 1/8 of a page of construction paper) saying "Molasses Pass," two scarves or pieces of fabric.

A large bowl containing a few inches of water for hand washing (or wet wipes), bread dough or cookie dough (purchased ready-made), clean plastic table cloths, aluminum foil and plastic wrap or bags.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Treasure Maps

Hide several treasures (small prizes, etc.) around the room in plain looking containers; make wild goose-chase maps (maps that lead the children to several places other than where the "treasures" are) leading to them.

Divide the class into groups (as many groups as there are treasures) and let them work together to find the treasures.

While they enjoy the treasure they have found, tell them how God always makes a way for us to be forgiven, and shows it to us very clearly. It is never too hard to understand or figure out (like a "wild goose chase" treasure map!)

LESSON TIME!

The Israelites had just experienced God's faithfulness as He gave them victory over the Canaanites. Yet after God had flooded them with His goodness they turned their back on their loving Father and complained against His divine ways. Instead of basking in His love and goodness, the Israelites chose to sin and complain about His provision.

Since God is perfect and just He must punish sinful man. Even so, God has provided a way of escape from His punishment when we repent, turn from wickedness, and have faith in Him and His forgiveness. **God provides a way of forgiveness for us.**

NUMBERS 21:4-6

Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way.

And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread."

So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

The people were complaining against their Maker, the One who had freed them from their bondage and slavery. The people chose to sin rather than to trust in the Lord and this brought about judgment. There are always consequences that happen when we choose sin. The Lord sent fiery serpents to punish the people's wickedness. The Bible teaches us to give thanks to God in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18). To complain against the

love and goodness of our Lord who reigns in perfection is utter folly and must be punished by God because He is holy.

It is vital that we do not turn our hearts, eyes, ears or tongues against God because we are testing God and asking for His judgment rather than His mercy and grace that each of us desperately needs. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:9, "...nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents."

God will stand by His word and judge all wickedness unless we cry out to Him in repentance. When we cry out to Him, He is then blots out our transgressions and purifies our ways. As we will see as we continue, even when God brings judgment on His people He also provide a way of forgiveness. **God provides a way of forgiveness for us.**

Molasses Tag

You will need paper plates, a large (3'x3') sheet of paper, some tickets that you make (maybe 1/8 of a page of construction paper) saying "Molasses Pass," two scarves or pieces of fabric.

Play this unique game of tag by choosing 2 people to start out as "it." Give them each a scarf for tagging (absolutely no popping). They only have to touch someone with the scarf for them to be tagged. Tagged kids have to go sit on the pancakes (paper plates you have separated and placed on the floor in the corner of the room).

Explain that your game begins in the winter time and cold molasses moves very slowly but in the summer time it moves very quickly. They must listen closely for the changing of the seasons as you call them out. When it is winter they must move as slowly as you show them. Anyone moving faster will be a fly in the molasses and taken out of the game immediately.

Be prepared for the flies with one large square sheet of paper for them to stand on, this is the “fly paper.” You call out at intervals “summertime” and “wintertime,” after the fly paper gets a few flies, give them the “molasses passes” which lets them get back into the game. The former flies may give their passes to flies that are waiting. Play several rounds if possible.

Getting the free pass to re-enter the game was an undeserved gift since they broke the rules of the game, just like God’s forgiveness is undeserved but He always provides it.

NUMBERS 21:7

Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

The people realized they were sinning against God and confessed their sin before the Lord. They had a change of heart and longed to walk in a way which would be pleasing to God. Just as the Israelites, we are all sinners and sin against a holy God.

It is impossible for us to make our sin go away just as it is impossible for us to please a holy God when we walk in sin. It is necessary that each person who has ever lived and that ever will live cry out for forgiveness and turn from wickedness, because only God has the power to save mankind from his tragic condition (see 1 John 1:9). God has provided a way of forgiveness through Jesus and that is the only way we can be forgiven. **God provides a way of forgiveness for us.**

Something that is interesting in these verses is that Moses prayed for them. He didn’t say, “You dummies, what do you think you are doing?” No, he lifted them up to the Lord. How do you think we should react when we see someone sinning? Should we tell them

how silly they are? Maybe we should take Moses' example and pray for them; then like Jesus taught, we need to go to that person in love and talk to them about it. We need to love others.

NUMBERS 21:8,9

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."

So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

God loved the Israelites in spite of their sin so He made a way for them to escape the dreadful consequences each of them deserved. It is the same for us. God, out of His infinite love, has provided a way of escape from our sin. Sin causes us to be separated from God - "for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a).

God provided a bronze serpent for the Israelites to be a means of healing for all those who chose to look upon it and believe in God. Just as the Israelites looked to the bronze serpent in faith, we too must look in faith to the cross of Jesus for the redemption of our sin. Like the bronze serpent God instituted for the Israelites, Jesus became the very thing that was killing all of mankind - sin (see 2 Corinthians 5:21).

It is because of His death that we may be freed from the chains of sin when we repent and put our faith in His salvation. Jesus alone brings us life. "He who has the Son has life, he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12).

So, if you have never asked Jesus in your heart you can do that by simply believing in Him. Sin is kind of like a poisonous snake bite. Everyone of us has been bitten and the only way we can be saved is to look upon the cross of Jesus and believe that He died on the

cross for our sins and then ask Him to forgive us for our sin and then to come into our hearts. **God provides a way of forgiveness for us.**

Savory Serpents

Bring a large bowl containing a few inches of water for hand washing (or wet wipes). Choose bread dough or cookie dough for the serpents, both may be purchased ready made. Cover tables with clean plastic table cloths, spread a clean plastic table cloth on the floor or let each child work on a cookie sheet.

Give each a portion of dough (sprinkle work surfaces with flour) and show them how to roll a long snake. Give each a generous sheet of foil and show them how to roll it up into a stick shape for the pole. Wrap the serpent on the pole.

Give them a plastic bag or plastic wrap for transporting their creation home to the oven and also baking instructions.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for the great salvation that the Lord has provided for us. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.