Unit 8: Samuel and King Saul
OT8.3 Philistines Capture the Ark Lesson

Scripture: I Samuel 4-7

Lesson Goal: Samuel was a prophet that God used to lead the nation of Israel. As the last judge of Israel Samuel led the people back to God. In this lesson we will learn how we must always show respect for the things of God.

Introduction:
The story of the Samuel is found in 1 Samuel which is the ninth book in the Old Testament. 1 Samuel is in the second group of books in the Old Testament called the historical books. These books begin with Joshua and go through Esther. Let's say these books--Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.

Attention Getter: “Good Luck Charms”
Do you have a good luck charm? Some people carry special rocks or medals in their pockets to bring them good luck. Or they think that a bracelet has special power. Some people think that a wishbone is a way to bring happiness. Or sometimes people carry lucky dice so they will be a winner. Sometimes people hang charms on the rear view mirror of their car as a way of asking for protection from an accident. These are bone skulls and an evil eye pendant. Do you think those would work?

Is God pleased with this? No, if we are trusting in something else besides God then it is falsehood. We are fooling ourselves if we think that these objects have special power. Today we are going to learn about how the Israelites thought that something that belonged to God was a lucky charm.

Opening Prayer:
“Dear Jesus, Thank you for giving us this story of Samuel and the Philistines to teach us that we must treat the things of God as holy. Help us to believe in you as our Savior. We ask you to give us clean hands and a pure heart so we can enter into your presence. Help us to show others our love and respect for You by obeying your Word. In Jesus name. Amen.

Memory Verse:
The memory verse is Psalm 24: 3-4 " Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart."

Lesson Video: https://youtu.be/nO9YgZX5Owo
Samuel was the son of a woman named Hannah. She was a godly woman who had prayed to God asking Him to give her a child. Hannah promised God that if He would give her a son that she would give him back to God to serve in the tabernacle. God answered Hannah's prayer and a son was born to her. She named him Samuel which means “God has heard.”

Hannah kept her promise and took Samuel to live with Eli the high priest at the tabernacle in Shiloh. As a young boy Samuel learned to serve God in the tabernacle. Each year his parents would visit him and Hannah would bring him a new robe that she had made for him.

One night when Samuel had gone to bed God called to him. Samuel thought at first that it was Eli who was calling but it wasn't. Eli told him to go back and lie down. Finally after the third time Eli realized that God was calling Samuel so he told Samuel to say, “Speak Lord for your servant is listening.”

God called Samuel once more and Samuel answered as Eli had said. God then told Samuel that because Eli and his two sons Hophi and Phinehas had acted very wickedly that He was going to judge them. He also told Samuel that he would be the next prophet of Israel.
When Samuel told Eli that next morning what God had said, Eli answered, "He is the Lord; let him do what is good in his eyes."

Samuel grew to be a faithful prophet of the Lord and all the people of Israel respected him. One day the Israelites went out to fight against their enemies the Philistines. It was a big battle and four thousand Israelites were killed. The Israelites were beaten very badly.

When the soldiers returned to the camp the leaders of Israel asked, "Why did the Lord let the Philistines defeat us? We need to make a plan to destroy them."

Finally someone said, ""Why don't we take the Ark of the Covenant into battle with us? It represents God's presence; so if we take it, we've got God with us. Then we'll surely win the battle." They thought that the ark was something like a good luck charm that would bring them victory in battle. They were not looking upon the Ark as a symbol of worship. The Ark of the Covenant was the most sacred piece of furniture in the Tabernacle. It represented the holiness, righteousness, and the presence of God. It certainly was not a good luck charm, and Israel was soon to learn that!

The high priest Eli was terribly distressed to see the Ark of the Covenant taken from the Holy of Holies. But his sons Hophni and Phinehas ignored his protests and took the Ark from the Tabernacle into battle.

As the Ark of the Covenant came into the camp of Israel, Israel gave such a loud shout that the ground shook! When the Philistines learned that the Ark of the Covenant had come into Israel's camp, they were very afraid. The Philistines thought that Israel had many gods just as they did; so they cried out in terror, "A god has come into our camp! We are in trouble. Nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who will deliver us from these mighty gods? Be strong and courageous, O Philistines, and fight as you have never fought before!"

As the Israelites marched into battle Hophni and Phinehas carried the Ark of God. The battle raged for several hours. Once again the Israelites were badly defeated. Thirty thousand of their soldiers were killed. The Ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were killed in battle.

As soon as the battle was over, a soldier escaped and ran to Shiloh to tell Eli the news of the battle. Blind old Eli sat near the gate waiting to hear word from the battle. The soldier arrived and spoke loudly to Eli, "I have just come from the battle—I was there today."

"How did it go?" Eli asked.

The soldier said, "Israel was defeated, and thousands of our troops are dead on the battlefield. Your sons Hophni and Phinehas are dead, and the Ark of God has been captured."

Eli was shocked and overcome with grief that Israel had lost the battle and that his two sons were dead. And hearing that the Ark of God, the most sacred thing in Israel, had been captured it was more than Eli could bear. He fell over backward, and in the fall, broke his neck. There Eli died the same day, for he was an old and very heavy man. What a sad day that was for Israel!

Twenty years before, God had said to Eli through the prophet: "I will put an end to your family; they will no longer serve as priests. Every member of your family will die before his time."

When God called Samuel he too was told about the sin of Eli and his sons and how they would all die on the same day. Now the day of judgment had come! Eli's sons were very wicked and Eli had not stopped them so God had allowed this disaster to come upon them.

The Philistines greatly rejoiced over their mighty victory. They triumphantly carried the Ark of the Covenant to Ashdod, their capital city, and gleefully said, "Now we know that our god Dagon (the fish god) is greater than the God of Israel!" So they set the Ark of God right next to their idol in the temple of Dagon.
But the next morning, when the Philistines came to worship their god Dagon, they found him lying face down before the Ark of God. They were shocked. How could this happen? They lifted their idol upright and set it back in place; they didn’t want that to happen again. But the next morning, the same thing had happened Dagon was again fallen face down before the Ark. But this time Dagon's head and hands were off and were lying on the floor. The Philistines were horrified; they were very mystified; they had never seen anything like it before.

God was teaching the Philistines that He is the one and only true God. God did not want the Philistines to keep the Ark. So He caused the people of Ashdod and the country round about to break out in boils or tumors, and many died as a result. Soon the people realized that it must be the God of Israel that was sending these terrible plagues.

In their distress, the Philistines cried, "We can't keep the Ark of the God of Israel here any longer. We'll all die along with our god, Dagon." So they called together their rulers and said, "What shall we do with the Ark? How can we get rid of this thing?"

They tried to move the Ark to the city of Gath and then to Ekron. But as soon as the Ark arrived the plague would break out killing many people. When the people of Ekron saw it coming, they were terrified and cried out, "Are you bringing the Ark of the God of Israel here to kill us, too? Send it back to its own country where it belongs so the whole city won't die." After seven months of great trouble, the Philistines were desperate. Everyone said, "We have suffered enough! The Ark must go back to Israel!"

After much thought, the priests of Dagon said, "If you send the Ark back to Israel, you must send gifts with it. Make five gold rats and five gold tumors and put them in a small chest and send them as an offering with the Ark. Also build a new cart and hitch to it two cows that have just had calves, and shut up their calves in a barn. Place the Ark on the cart beside the chest of gold jewels, and let the cows go wherever they want to."

This was the test: The Philistines wanted to see whether the cows would return to the barn where their newborn calves were or whether the cows would cross over into the land of Israel. The Philistines followed the cart and sure enough, the cows went straight along the road to Beth-shemesh a city in Israel. The Philistine now knew that the God of Israel had directed the cows and that it was He Who had sent plagues on them!

The Israelite farmers in Beth-shemesh were reaping wheat when they suddenly looked up and saw cows pulling a cart with the Ark of the Covenant. They were beside themselves with joy. They watched as the cows turned into a field and stopped beside a large rock.

Some of the Levites of Beth-shemesh came and lifted the Ark off the cart. Then they chopped the cart into pieces; using the wood for a fire, they killed the cows and sacrificed them to the Lord as a thank offering. How they all rejoiced that the Ark was finally back in the land of Israel! The Philistines saw all this and returned to Ekron.

Some of the men of Beth-shemesh were curious to see what was inside the Ark, and although they knew that God had commanded that no one except priests should touch or look into the Ark, they took the lid off! Immediately seventy of the men fell over dead. God wants us to respect him and not disobey His commands.

The people of Israel mourned that day for those that died. They cried, "Who can stand before the Lord, this holy God? Where can we send the Ark from here?" Therefore, they sent messengers to the people at Kirjath-Jearim, saying, "The Philistines have returned the Ark of the Lord—Come and get it!"

So the priests of Kirjath-Jearim came and took the Ark to the home of Abinadab, a Levite. He made his son Eleazer responsible for the Ark, and the Ark remained there in his house for twenty years.
For the next twenty years Samuel was the judge of Israel. He told the people that they must return to serving the Lord and put away all their idols. He told them that they must repent of their sins and seek God. If they would commit themselves to God, then He would deliver them from the hands of the Philistines. So the Israelites destroyed all their idols and began to serve God with their whole heart.

Samuel told the people to gather everyone at Mizpah. When everyone had assembled Samuel poured out water as an offering to the Lord. This was a sign of repenting from sin and turning away from idols. It meant that Israel would serve the Lord and obey God alone. Samuel cried out to the Lord in prayer on behalf of Israel and the Lord answered him.

While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines began to gather around Israel to fight them in battle. But while Samuel was praying, the Lord thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines. The Philistines were so frightened from the huge clap of thunder that they began to run away from the battlefield. The men of Israel chased after them and killed them as they ran away in defeat. The towns that the Philistines had captures were restored to Israel.

As long as Samuel was the judge of Israel all the days of his life, the Philistines did not invade Israel again. Samuel judged Israel well, saved them from the Philistines, and lead them back to God. In this lesson Israel learned not to treat the things of God as good luck charms. The Ark of the Covenant was a symbol of a holy God who must be respected. The Philistines learned the God of Israel was more powerful than their idols. We too must show obedience and respect when we are dealing with the things of God.

Remember no rock, no pair of dice, no good luck charm, no gold lucky star carried in our pocket, nor any other symbol will bring a good grade on a test, victory in a basketball game, or help in any kind of contest. We need to put our faith in God alone.

Our memory verse is Psalm 24: 3-4 "Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart." This verse says that if we are to go to heaven and enter into the presence of God, we must have clean hands and a pure heart. Let's say our verse again together. Psalm 24: 3-4 "Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart."

How do we get a clean heart? It is only by believing that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins. If we tell God that we are sorry for the things that we have done wrong, and ask Him to be our Savior, He will cleanse our hearts from all sin. Then we will have a clean heart and we can go to live with Him forever. As we respect God and depend on Him completely then He will control all the affairs of our lives and give us daily victory in living for Him. Let's ask Him to help us show our love and respect to Him by obeying His Word.

Remember treat God's things with respect!

**Review Questions: “Tennis Ball Toss”**

*Preparation:* You will need three boxes and as many tennis balls as you have teams of kids. If your class is small, then one tennis ball per child as you take turns answering the questions.

*Procedure:* You will need as many tennis balls as you have teams of kids (each team should have 4-8 kids). Give each team a number and a ball, and use the permanent marker to write a number on each team's ball. Tape a piece of paper to each of 3 boxes; write A on one box, B on another, and C on the other. You will play a multiple-choice type review game where the kids choose the right answer. Each team will choose someone from their team to toss their ball in whichever box (A, B, or C) they think is the right answer for each question.
1. Who were the high priest and the priests before Samuel was chosen by God to be a judge?  
   A) Eli and his sons Hophni and Phinehas; B) Aaron and his sons; C) Eleazer and the priests of Kirjath-Jearim
2. Who was Samuel’s mother?  A) Esther  B) Hannah  C) Peninnah
3. What was the name of God’s people?  A) Israelites; B) the Levites; C) the Judeans.
4. Who was the enemy of the Israelites?  A) Samsonites; B) the Philistines; C) the Nazarites.
5. What did the Israelites decide to take into battle?  A) the Ark of God  B) Noah’s Ark  C) the Bible
6. Who captured the Ark of God?  A) Eli; B) Noah; C) the Philistines
7. What is the Ark of God or the Ark of the Covenant?  A) a big boat; B) a movie; C) a special box
8. What is in the Ark of God?  A) animals; B) the Ten Commandments on stone tablets; C) water
9. Where was the Ark usually kept?  A) in the Holy of Holies; B) underground; C) in a manger
10. Why did the Ark of the Covenant not ensure victory for the Israelites?  A) The Israelites thought of it as a lucky charm; B) the Israelites were worshipping God and trusting in Him; C) The Ark of the Covenant was empty.
11. What did God do to make the Philistines want to return the Ark of the Covenant?  A) He made it float down the river. B) He gave the Philistines plagues of boils and sores that made them die. C) He caused the idol of Dagon to rise up and attack the people.
12. How did the Philistines return the Ark of the Covenant?  A) Let the Israelites win a battle and take it back home; B) They burned it up in a sacrificial offering; C) They sent it home on a new cart pulled by two heifer cows.
13. What did Samuel the judge tell the people to do?  A) Repent of their sins B) Worship their idols; C) Build a temple to worship God in
14. What happened while Samuel was offering a sacrifice for the nation of Israel?  A) The Philistines were afraid and hid in the mountains. B) The Philistines got ready to attack Israel. C) The Philistines all died of boils and sores from the plague.
15. How did God stop the Philistines from attacking Israel while Samuel prayed?  A) He scared them off from the battle with a huge thunder storm. B) He caused their horses to get stuck in the mud. C) He made the sun and moon stand still for 24 hours.
16. How do we get a clean hands and a pure heart?  A) By washing them with water; B) By offering a sacrifice C) By believing in Jesus as our Savior, repenting of our sin, and confessing our faith in Christ.

Bible Memory Verse Activity: “Magnetic Words”

Our memory verse is Psalm 24: 3-4 "Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart." Have students locate these verses and read orally together several times.

Say: “This verse says that if we are to go to heaven and enter into the presence of God, we must have clean hands and a pure heart.”

Preparation: You will need index cards, black permanent marker, self-stick magnetic tape, and a metal cookie sheet.

Procedure: On index cards write one word from the verses above on each card. Print clearly in large letters using a black permanent marker. Put a small piece of the magnetic tape to the back of each card. Stick the entire set of scripture word cards to a large cookie sheet. Mix up all the pieces so that it is completely out of order. Display the metal cookie sheet with the cards. (If you have a white magnetic board in your classroom you can use that as well.)

Have volunteers from your class take turns coming to the board and have them put the words of the verse in the correct order. You can do it as a team competition and let two kids from each team come up and work together to complete it. Time the kids and see which group can put it back in order the fastest.
**Group Learning Activity: “Chocolate Chip Object Lesson”** (Grades K-5)

**Preparation:** Fill one glass with the clear carbonated beverage (Club Soda, Sprite, 7-Up) and the other glass with water. Set the glasses where the kids can see them. They should look very similar, so remember which one has water and which has the carbonated beverage. You will also need some chocolate chips.

Optional: (This experiment can also be done with two raw eggs and one glass with plain water and one glass with salt water. Science: Density. Salt makes water denser so an egg can float in it! Add 4 tsp salt to glass of water to make salt water and stir well.)

**Say:** “In the Bible story, the Israelites were defeated time after time, and they were sad, scared, and discouraged. They needed God’s strength and power. Instead of seeking after Him and depending on Him for strength and power, though, they came up with their own solution without consulting God. They thought they had a good idea. But, they were foolish, and they sank.”

(Drop the chocolate chip in the glass with the water. Or Drop the egg in the fresh water.)

**Say:** “They were defeated again, and not only were the Israelites defeated, but the very thing that represented God’s presence and power in their lives—the Ark of the Covenant—was stolen ... captured! The chocolate chip represents the Israelites sinking in defeat. When we try to do things on our own power without God, this is what happens to us too. When we take off with our own ideas without praying for God’s guidance, this is what happens. We can’t get far without God. We can’t do the things He wants us to do and be the people He wants us to be. We can’t experience His presence and His blessings if we don’t depend on Him and if we try to do everything on our own. We sink like this chocolate chip in the glass. BUT what if we depend on God’s strength and allow Him to lead us and give us power? This time, I will drop the chocolate chip in the other glass that represents us depending on God. Watch what happens.”

(Drop the chocolate chip in the glass with the carbonated beverage. It will go straight to the bottom, and then after 10-15 seconds, it will rise straight up to the top. The bubbles will cause it to rise, so make sure the soda isn’t flat! (Remove the chocolate chip from the glass. If you don’t, the bubbles that are causing it to float will pop and it will go back to the bottom only to rise again. As long as there are bubbles in the soda, it will continue the up and down cycle.) OR drop the egg in the salt water and it will rise to the top because the water is denser with salt added.

**Say:** “When we trust God, we will rise to the top. We will experience victory and blessings. We will get God’s power and strength. Why would you want to be like the chocolate chip that sinks to the bottom and stays there when you could rise to the top with God?”

**Group Learning Activity: “The Three ‘I Cans’”** (Grades 3-5)

**Preparation:** Cut the paper so it fits around an aluminum soda can and write on the papers: I CAN have courage. I CAN do anything. I CAN be free. Tape one paper around each can, so you will have 3 different cans with 3 different phrases taped on them. Then, use a permanent marker to write the corresponding verse reference on the bottom of each can. Psalm 27:1; Philippians 4:12-13; 2 Corinthians 3:17

**Say:** “So many times we think of all the things we CAN’T do, and today we’re going to talk about 3 CANS. These 3 cans represent 3 things we CAN do with God’s help. First I CAN have courage.

(Call on a student to hold the first can. The student will read the verse on the bottom of the can and everyone will look it up. Read the verse together.)
Psalm 27:1 “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?”

Say: “The Bible talks about the Israelites who were so afraid when they should have been trusting God! They had forgotten how powerful God was, but He never left them! They became afraid, but they didn’t have to be afraid. God ALWAYS gives courage. We need to remember our “cans.”

(Hold up the can.) “Say this with me: I don’t have to be afraid; I CAN have courage. We know we can face anything, even if we’re afraid. What is something that makes you afraid? Tell a person next to you one thing you’re afraid of. You don’t have to be embarrassed to share what you’re afraid of; we’re all afraid of something. Your challenge for the week is to let go of that fear and face it with God’s courage. Think of Psalm 27:1 whenever you feel afraid. Fear holds you captive, but God CAN set you free by giving you courage.

Say: “The next can is I CAN do anything with Christ.”

(Call on a student to hold the second can. He will read the verse on the bottom of the can and everyone will look it up. Read the verse together. Philippians 4:13, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”)

Say: “We are all in different circumstances in life right now. For some of us, everything’s going great. Some are going through family problems. Some just won a big game. Some are having trouble in school. Some are being bullied. Some just celebrated a birthday. Some are having doubts about God. There are so many different things happening, but one thing is sure about all of our lives: we CAN do anything with God’s strength. Paul wrote this verse when he was in jail! None of us are in jail today, but some of us are held captive by other things—some of them beyond our control. We can conquer anything and do anything, not on our own strength, but only with the strength of God.

(Hold up the can.) “Let us remember our “cans.” I can’t do anything on my own, but with Christ, (say it with me) I CAN do anything.” What did the Israelites try to do on their own? (win the battle with the Philistines) What did they do to try to win the battle? (took the Ark of the Covenant into battle with them) How did that work out for them? (They didn’t win the battle and the Ark was captured.) What are you trying to do on your own strength? How is that working out for you? God wants us to turn to Him. He will give us His power and strength to conquer anything that He wants us to.

Say: “(show can 3) The next can is I CAN be free.

(Call on a student to hold the third can. The student will read the verse on the bottom of the can and everyone will look it up. Read the verse together. 2 Corinthians 3:17, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”)

Say: “When we try to do things on our own without depending on God, we are held captive to that attitude. We can become slaves to our circumstances and ourselves if we try to do them without God. How is that possible? Let me share an example to help you understand.”

Say: “Jenna is a girl who just found out she has a bad disease. She is always sick and in and out of the hospital. She is mad at God and doesn’t trust Him or turn to Him. Instead, she doubts that God cares or has the power to help her. She turns away from Him. She looks for her own way of dealing with the disease and her circumstances. Her family tries to be there for her, but all she feels is anger and fear. She pushes her family away. She is always scared. She won’t go out of the house, because she’s afraid of getting germs. She won’t talk to anyone, because she’s always upset. She spends each day worrying and sulking. She doesn’t trust the doctors, and she doesn’t try to have a good
attitude. That's a bad idea! How would it look differently if Jenna trusted God in this situation? How is Jenna held captive and what is holding her captive?"

Say: “Now, let’s imagine this story as if Jenna trusted God. Jenna just found out she has a bad disease and she’s afraid. But she won’t let that stop her from trusting God and believing that He is with her. She’s sure that God has a plan for her. She pours over the Scriptures and draws close to Him. She memorizes Scripture verses that give her strength. She allows God to help her have a positive attitude, and lets His light shine through her. She praises God every day, even during the really bad times, and celebrates even in her sickness. She tells the doctors and nurses how good God is, and their lives are changed because of her faith. Her family draws close to her and her friends, as well. She doesn’t spend her days worrying and hiding, but rather, seeking God and sharing His love with others. She has peace about her disease. She knows that whatever happens, God is with her, and He is good. She knows that she can do anything through Christ who gives her strength. Now, that’s a good idea!”

Say: “How is that story different from the first one? There are many differences, but the biggest one is that Jenna trusted God. She depended on Him; He gave her strength and courage. We must remember our “cans.” I don’t have to be a slave, God CAN set me free. Say that: God CAN set me free! Will you allow God to set you free? He will give you power and strength, if you only trust Him.”

Group Learning Activity: “Depending on Others Game” (Grades 2-5)
Preparation: You will need two people with shoes that have shoelaces; two unused toothbrushes; two miniature tubes of toothpaste; 4 cups (2 with water and 2 empty); two new hairbrushes; 2 new ponytail holders; and paper towels.

Say: When we are USED to doing things on our own and depending on ourselves, it can be hard to let go and trust someone else. Have you ever had a hard time trusting God and depending on Him?

Say: “Why do we try to do things on our own without God? Because we’re used to it! We’re not used to depending on God … and that’s a bad idea. We become slaves to doing things on our own, unless we learn to depend on God alone … that’s a good idea. How can we do that? We need to have more faith. Pray that God would help you have more faith. We also need to practice daily dying to ourselves. That means making ourselves less important and God more important. That way He’s in control … good idea. Let’s admit it. It’s hard to give up control and let God take control.”

Say: “What are some things in life that are hard to give up control of? What are some things that you’re used to doing on your own? Here are 3 things that you are probably used to doing on your own, without someone else’s help. Today, we’re going to play a game to practice trying to do those things with the help of someone else.”

Say: “The three things are: tying your shoes, brushing your teeth, and combing your hair into a ponytail. Choose whatever number of kids you want to participate, but keep in mind that you’ll need shoes with laces for one challenge, new toothbrushes, and kids with hair long enough to go in a ponytail for another challenge.”

Say: “The first task will be tying your shoes. To start the game, each person playing will remove his/her shoes and lay them on the floor. That partner will stand up with arms crossed, while the other partner picks up the shoes, puts them on the partner’s feet, and ties them. The first one done is the winner of that round.”

Say: “The next task will be brushing teeth. This one could be funny and messy! Get some paper towels ready to wipe up toothpaste. One partner will stand with mouth open, while the other partner puts toothpaste on a toothbrush and brushes their partner’s teeth. Then the one doing the brushing will give the other person a drink of water to swish around; hold up the empty cup to spit. The first pair done with this wins that round.”
Say: “The last task will be combing hair into a ponytail. One partner (with longer hair) will stand backwards while the other partner combs all the hair. The hair must be put up in a ponytail on top of the person’s head. The first pair done with this task wins this round.”

Ask the teams: Was it hard letting someone else do something for you that you were used to doing yourself? Which task was the easiest to do for someone else? Why is it hard to let God have control in our lives?

**Group Learning Activity: “Half-Hearted Relay” (Grades K-3)**

Preparation: You will need several items that will illustrate “half.” half of a plastic cup, one shoe, half a pair of sunglasses, half of a dollar, half of a theater ticket, half a phone, a walkman portable tape player with one battery. You will also need 4 containers, water, a Styrofoam cup and half of a Styrofoam cup (top half missing).

Procedure: Gather and bring to class several items to hold up and show to the kids what a “half” looks like.

Say: “Will any of these things will work the right way as they are? (No). What needs to happen in order for them to work right? (You need the rest of the item). That is the same way when we serve God. We can’t serve the Lord half way.)"

Next, have a half-hearted relay. Divide the class into two teams. Set up four containers. On one side of the room, have two containers with equal amounts of water. Not far away, have the two empty containers. Each team member gets 10 seconds to move water from a full container to an empty one. Give one team a Styrofoam cup to transfer the water between containers. Give the other team a Styrofoam cup that has the top half cut off, not allowing it to carry as much water. Then tell the teams that whichever team gets the most water into the empty container, wins. To make things fair, you can switch cups and play a second time. Ask the children about the game. (This is a demonstration of what it is like when we serve the Lord in a half-hearted way.)

Say: “Why couldn’t the team with the half-cup fill up the water as fast? How does this illustrate how we are when our commitment to the Lord is “half-hearted?” God wants us to love Him with all of our heart, soul, and strength. In our lesson today the Israelites were serving God in a half hearted way. They wondered why they lost the battle to the Philistines and their enemy was allowed to steal the Ark of the Covenant. God allowed that to happen to show to them the importance of serving Him completely and whole-heartedly.”

Say: “God had a plan for Israel. They were to be a light, a representative of God to other nations, so that they might learn and know His ways. Yet, Israel had fallen into sin and had become like the nations around them. Instead of pointing the way to the true God, they began to worship the false gods of the other nations and commit the same sins. They had lost their witness of God and ability to make an impact in the lives of others. For this, God brought judgment on them through a war with the Philistines. By Samuel’s time, these warlike people were well established in the southwest part of Canaan and were constantly moving inland against the Israelites.”

Say: “Instead of turning to God out of a heart of humility and repentance, the leaders of Israel came up with a plan. They knew how powerful God was, but they did not understand much about having a relationship with Him. They decided that they would “use” God for their purposes. They thought that if they just brought out the Ark of the Covenant, a special box in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle in which the presence of God dwelt; they would defeat the Philistines on the battle field, for God’s power would be with them.”

OT8.3 Philistines Capture the Ark ©Beverly Wilson 2018
Group Learning Activity: “Capture the Ark” Game (Grades 2-5)
Preparation: You will need tape and 1 piece of paper per team.

Procedure: Form two or more teams. Invite the teams to line up single file. Encourage each kid to put his hands on the shoulders of the kid directly in front of him. Tape a piece of paper on the last kid’s back in each line. Set up safe boundaries free of obstacles, and explain what those boundaries are. Kids may not let go of the shoulders of the kid in front of them, and the first kid can’t leave the rest of the team behind. The first kid in each line must try to capture the piece of paper, or the “ark,” from the other teams. If teammates disconnect, they must stop and rejoin before continuing. The winning team is the last one that still has its ark.

Say: “The Philistines captured the ark from the Israelites because the Israelites misused it. Why was the ark of God important? The ark reminded the Israelites of God’s promise to be with His people.”

Craft Learning Activity: “Replica of the Ark of the Covenant” (Grades 3-5)
Purpose: To help students understand the contents of the Ark of the Covenant and the items inside it.

Preparation: You will need a cardboard shoe box for each child, newspaper, gold spray paint, gold fabric trim, hole puncher, hot glue gun, wooden skewer, Styrofoam craft ball, white handkerchief, feathers or plumes; foam board, scissors, markers, branch, glass jar, and bread crumbs.

Procedure: Remove the lid from your cardboard shoe box. Lay the shoe box face-up on the newspaper with the upside-down lid beside it. Spray paint both pieces, inside and out, with gold spray paint and allow to dry. Flip over both pieces and spray paint the bottoms of the box and lid and allow to dry.

Attach the shoe box lid to the shoe box base. Use your hole punch to punch two holes on one long side of the shoe box lid. Each hole should be 2 inches from the box corners. Punch two more holes in the shoe box base, each 1 1/2 inches down and 2 inches in from the corners of a single long side. Cut two 8-inch lengths of gold yarn. Loop each piece of yarn vertically through the hole in the shoe box lid and then through the corresponding hole in the shoe box base several times and tie a knot. Cut off any excess yarn. This will create a hinge effect on the box for opening. Glue gold trim around the top of the box.

Create the two angels on the Ark’s lid. Insert a wooden skewer halfway into each Styrofoam craft ball. Push the skewer gently through the cardboard box lid 2 1/2 inches from the edge of the box. Repeat this process for the second angel. Use hot glue gun to put glue on the underside of the box lid to seal the pointed end of the skewer and affix it to the box’s underside. Reinforce the skewer base with hot glue on the top of the box lid. Gently drape a handkerchief around each Styrofoam ball and skewer, tying each handkerchief at the base of the Styrofoam ball with a loose piece of yarn. Glue two feathers or plumes to the back of each angel shape. Bend the wings towards the opposing angel. Spray paint each angel and its wings.

Create the Ten Commandments out of foam board. Draw two U-shapes with the permanent marker on the gray foam board. Draw a horizontal line on each to connect the open end of each U-shape. Use scissors to cut out each shape. Use the fine point permanent marker to scribble five wavy lines horizontally on each. Number each wavy line 1 through 10.

Clip a branch from a backyard plant to represent Aaron’s budded rod. Select a 1/4- to 1/2-inch thick branch with small buds on it. Use clipping shears to cut an 8-inch length of the branch.

To create the golden jar with heavenly manna in it, spray-paint the apothecary jar gold. Tear off small pieces of white bread and place them in the jar.
Place the foam Ten Commandments, the budded branch and the golden jar of white bread in the shoe box. Secure each in place with a dab of hot glue.

**Craft Learning Activity:** “Marshmallow Altars” (Grades K-3)

**Preparation:** You will need marshmallows, chocolate frosting, plastic knives or popsicle sticks, 5 oz. disposable cups, gummy bears or animal crackers, Chinese fried noodles, and small paper plates.

**Procedure:** Pass out a handful of mini marshmallows to each student. Pass out a small paper plate to build the “altars” on. Place small amounts of chocolate frosting in 5 oz disposable cups. Students may share a cup of frosting with a partner or small group. Distribute a plastic knife or popsicle stick to each student to use when spreading the frosting on the bricks (marshmallows). Pass out a few Chinese noodles to each student to use to represent the wood on the altar. Demonstrate how to smear a small amount of frosting on the marshmallows and stick them together.

As students are building their “altars” discuss how the Philistines no longer wanted the Ark of the Lord. The Israelites had carried it into battle as if to say, “God is with us.” The Israelites used the symbol of God (the ark) much like the pagans used symbols to represent their gods. Ultimately the Israelites suffered great loss to the tune of 30,000 foot soldiers and the loss of the ark. The Philistines put the ark next to their god Dagon. The next morning Dagon was on his face in front of the ark. This happened again the next day. After that, God afflicted the Philistines with tumors which caused the Philistines to want to send the ark back to the Israelites.

**Craft Learning Activity:** “Remembrance Stones”

**Purpose:** Students will make remembrance stones to help them remember that Samuel set up a stone to show that God had helped the Israelites. (1 Samuel 7:12)

**Preparation:** You will need river rock, acrylic paint, paint brushes, thin permanent markers, and a hair dryer.

**Procedure:** Pass out a river rock to each student. Have students write a message on the stone like: Love God, Serve God, Pray, Worship God, etc. Allow the students to paint designs, flowers, etc. around the message on their stones. Use a hair dryer to dry the acrylic paint on the stones.

Say: “Samuel set up a stone to show that the Lord had helped the Israelites gain their freedom from the Philistines. Samuel wanted to mark the spot so that all who passed by would remember that the Lord had helped them in that place. This is not the only time that God had commanded Israel to set up a remembrance rock. The Lord told Joshua to set up a pile of 12 rocks on the other side of the Jordan River. This was to help future generations remember what God had done for the Israelites.” Encourage students to place their stone in a spot at home that they will see often. The message on the stone will help them remember their God.

**Life Application Challenge:** Worshipping God

Say: The Ark of the Covenant was the most important Tabernacle furnishing to the Israelites. What part of our worship today is the most important to you? (For example, answers might include singing, praying, reading the Word, sharing our faith with others, doing good deeds for others, etc.) Review with them one word or concept that they learned during today's session. Suggestions include: worship, faithfulness, mercy, holiness, etc. Discuss how they can practice a life style of worship for God by being thankful, singing praises to God, reading God’s Word, praying, and sharing our faith with others. Emphasize that God wants us to be faithful in our worship, to give mercy to others as He as He has given mercy to us, and to acknowledge our need for Christ’s righteousness to be demonstrated in our daily lives.
Closing Prayer: Gather all the children together in a circle. Ask for prayer requests. “Dear Lord, Thank you for the time we’ve spent together today. Help us to remember how important it is to trust in your power and to have faith that you are always with us. Help us to understand that you desire us to worship You in an acceptable way. Help us to trust in You alone for our salvation. Just as you guided the Israelites, may we always look for your guidance in our lives. Amen.”
Philistines Capture the Ark

Psalm 24: 3-4

Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart."
The Philistines moved the ark from city to city. Where did it end up?

Connect the numbers. 1 2 3 4 5
Color the picture.

Shiloh

The Great Sea

Ebenezer

Ekron

Ashdod

Gath
The Philistines sent the cart toward Beth Shemesh...

Help the cart follow the path to Beth Shemesh. Will it get there?

The people of Beth Shemesh rejoiced! Draw smiles on their faces.
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OT8.3 Philistines Capture the Ark

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The ark of the covenant was in Philistine territory for 7 months. They had lost many lives and crops. How could they send it away? The priest told them what to do.

Find the missing words.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Z Y X W V U T S R Q P O N M L K J I H G F E D C B A

Make a new __________. Get __________ that have _____________.

X Z I G G D L X L D H

X Z O E V H S Z I M V H H

Put the __________ of the LORD on the __________. Put a ___________ beside it with a guilt __________ of 5 gold _____________.

X Z I G X S V H G

and 5 gold rats. __________ the __________ toward Beth Shemesh, __________ a town of Israel.

If the cows went toward Beth Shemesh on their own, they would know the Lord had brought the problems on the Philistines. If the cows went to their calves, they would know it was just bad luck. What happened?

Check the right answer.

☐ The cows went to their calves. ☐ The cows went toward the town on their own.