

Moses Disobeys God

Numbers 20:1-13

MEMORY VERSE

1 SAMUEL 15:22

“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A two-quart pitcher, unsweetened Kool-aid, sugar, and two quarts of water.

As many small prizes as the number of children in your class and a list of tasks that requires instruction.

Playdoh, a small medicine bottle, baking soda, blue food coloring and vinegar.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Drink Demo

Bring a pitcher, a package or two of unsweetened Kool-aid, and some sugar.

Tell the children to watch closely and have one of the children (if they read) read the instructions step by step as you make the Kool-aid. When it comes to the sugar, just say you don't think it needs sugar, so you will just leave it out. If the kids don't break into an uproar of laughter right then, ask them if they think that's alright. Measuring carefully, try talking them into just settling for less than the recipe calls for.

Ask them why it is important to follow directions. Set the Kool-aid aside for a later activity.

LESSON TIME!

As a result of their failure to believe and obey God, the children of Israel did not enter into the land God promised them. God said they would wander in the wilderness for 40 years. In today's lesson, after nearly 40 years of wandering has passed, Moses will once again experience the challenge of leading an unbelieving and complaining people.

NUMBERS 20:1-6

Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there.

Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron.

And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: "If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!

"Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here?

"And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink."

So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them.

The children of Israel entered into the wilderness of Zin. Miriam (Moses' sister) died. Not long after, the congregation ran out of water. They and their animals were thirsty and began to complain against Moses, Aaron, and the Lord.

God most certainly did not bring His chosen people out into a wilderness to make them die of thirst. God loved these people! He wanted them to trust Him completely.

NUMBERS 20:7,8

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

"Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals."

Again, when faced with the difficult task of leading God's people, Moses and Aaron come before the Lord. Perhaps the temptation to answer rashly was there. How hard it must have been to deal with this complaining and disbelieving people. But Moses and Aaron did the wise thing! Proverbs 17:28 says, "Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips he is considered perceptive."

God answers Moses and gives Moses specific instructions. He says, "Take your rod and speak to the rock and it will yield its water." God told Moses to *speak* to the rock. Note, this was different from the previous time when a different rock yielded water to the congregation of Israel. At that time, Moses was told to strike the rock one time and water would flow out; now he is commanded only to speak to the rock.

Listen Carefully

Have small prizes ready and set aside.

Quiet the class and give them some specific instructions for different tasks. You may want to explain to them how to play a game or a relay or just give them a list of things to do. The important part will be in your instructions. You can explain to them to do things such as: Touch the dry erase board, shake hands with a friend, pat your head three times, say, "Jesus loves me," then sit down in your place in the circle. For those who did exactly as you said, give them a small prize.

Explain how Moses did not obey exactly and missed out on an enormously important blessing—something he had been looking forward to his entire life.

NUMBERS 20:9-13

So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him.

And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?"

Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the LORD, and He was hallowed among them.

God told Moses he was to *speak* to the rock, not to strike it. From the rocks that flowed with water in the wilderness, God was creating a beautiful picture. In 1 Corinthians 10:4 we read, “They drank from that spiritual rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ.” Jesus promised the woman at the well “living water”: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” In Exodus 7:20, Moses struck the rock and it brought forth its water. Jesus was struck to provide the forgiveness of our sins and bring us back into rich fellowship with God. The rock needed to be struck only once, just as Jesus died for our sins “once *for all*” (Hebrews 10:10). Read, also, Romans 6:9-10; Hebrews 9:26, 28; and 1 Peter 3:18.

In not following God’s instructions, Moses ruined a beautiful example of Jesus Christ and His complete work for us. As a result of Jesus, our rock, being struck, we may come boldly before the throne of God’s grace. Jesus took the judgment that was due to us. We need only speak to the rock to experience God’s forgiveness and rich fellowship.

Yet Moses’ sin went beyond misrepresenting a picture or type of Jesus who would come later. He misrepresented God and God’s heart towards the people. God gave Moses instructions to speak to the rock; God was not angry with the people. Though, once again, they were unbelieving and complaining, God knew the people were thirsty; and He was compassionate. Moses made the people think God was angry as he cried out, “Rebels, must we bring water for you out of this rock?” **Misrepresenting God is a serious thing!**

God desires that people know His great love for them. He wants them to understand His nature and character—His long suffering, abundant mercy, and readiness to forgive. God deals seriously with those servants who would misrepresent Him and cause people to feel condemned and be afraid or hesitant to approach Him.

As we communicate God’s Word to others, it is vital that we seek to do so with His voice, His grace, His love, and His temperament. Let us never be guilty of misrepresenting God. **Misrepresenting God is a serious thing!**

Because of Moses’ failure to represent God correctly, He would not be able to enter the Promised Land with His people. His serious mistake would mean he would spend the remainder of his days in the wilderness. Although God’s discipline to Moses meant he would never enter the Promised Land, God’s grace would later take him to a high hill to behold it.

Water from the Rock

Let the kids make Playdoh rocks while you make one rock surrounding the neck of a small medicine bottle into which you have put a few drops of blue food coloring and some baking soda before class time. A couple of teaspoons or so of baking soda depending on how big your bottle is.

Your “rock” should be sitting in a tray of some kind to catch the “water” as it comes out. After your rock is made, let the kids watch as you pour in enough vinegar to finish filling your bottle. Blue “water” should come out.

This is a visual reminder of the miracle that God did in the wilderness.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to obey the Lord in all of the details of their lives, being careful not to take the things of the Lord for granted. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.