

The Ark of God Captured

1 Samuel 4:1-11; 5; 6:1-16

Teacher Preparation

Read background materials from the Dole *Bible Study Notes*: <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/dbsn-3-03-the-capture-and-return-of-the-ark.pdf>

Introduction

Welcome the kids and ask them how they're doing.

Read and Discuss

1. Today's story is about when the Children of Israel tried to use the Ark of the Covenant to help them win a battle. Does anybody remember another time when the Lord told the Children of Israel to take the Ark into a battle, and it helped them win a spectacular victory? (battle at Jericho) So as they were getting ready to do battle in today's story, they thought that they could "just" bring the Ark into battle with them again that day, and it would help them win.
2. As you hear the story today, see if you can think about what was wrong with this idea. Also, see if you think that this story actually is a little bit funny!
3. Read the selected readings, or choose parts to read and summarize the rest of the story, depending on how much time you have and the attention span of the kids. (I think that the parts where Dagon keeps falling down towards the Ark, almost as if he, an idol, was worshipping the Lord, is the funny part.)
4. Have the illustrations of this story on display while you are reading it.
5. So, there were several problems with what they did. What was the first problem? (Have the kids offer ideas.) The first and biggest thing was that when the Ark helped them win at Jericho, they took the Ark with them *because the Lord told them to*. Did the Lord tell them to for this battle? No! They came up with the idea. As we know from many stories in the Word, we are supposed to do what the Lord asks us to do, not the ideas that we come up with. Because really, if we choose to do something that the Lord isn't telling us to do, then we are basically saying that we think that our ideas are better than the Lord's, and we must be smarter than Him. But the Children of Israel did, and it was a disaster.
6. So the first lesson is, if you have a problem, look to the Lord in His Word to find an answer, don't try to solve the problem without the Lord. Can you think of any times when we might think that we're smarter than the Lord? (See if the kids have any ideas. Some examples might be: telling a lie to get out of trouble, taking something that doesn't belong to us, not bothering to worship on a Sunday, any time we think we have a good excuse, etc.)
7. Another problem with the story is that the children of Israel were using something that was very holy to achieve their selfish goals. Now, defeating their enemies isn't necessarily bad, but they weren't using the Ark properly. They forgot that it was a special container holding the the Ten Commandments—the rules for their lives.

Read and Discuss (continued)

8. The Philistines thought they were pretty clever since they had captured the Ark. But what started happening to them when they had it? (Dagon fell down towards it and the people of the city started getting sick and/or getting tumors on their bodies.) They moved it to other cities, and the same things happened there. So they knew that they had to give it back—it had a power that they knew was stronger than them, and they needed to get rid of it.
9. What this story really represents though, is the times in our lives when we think that all we really need to do is *know* things from the Lord's Word, and we don't have to do them. The Children of Israel had the Ten Commandments (literally written in stone) but they weren't obeying them. They thought that the Ark and the commandments had a real power—and they do!—but not by just owning them, but by doing what they teach. Sometimes the children of Israel listened to the Lord and at other times they didn't listen. When this story took place, they were not obeying the Lord. So the Ark was taken from them!
10. What does it mean to just know the Lord's truths and not live them? Sometimes people think they're so great because they know more about the Lord than other people, or because they go to church, even though they don't really behave in a Godly way. This is called "faith alone" and it's not a good way to live. Of course we should learn about the Lord and have faith in Him, but it is equally important to *do* what He tells us to do. We need to pay attention to what we do, and say, and think. We're trying to become angels, and it's going to take to eternity to become truly good, so we really need to make an effort every single day.

Activities and Project

- Give each student one temple page, and one Ark (you can just cut the Ark pages into fourths and the kids can cut each one out more carefully).
- Have the kids color in their Arks gold, and then cut them out.
- They will also need to draw Dagon on their pages—either fallen on the floor or standing, or even in the process of falling. They can copy the pictures of Dagon, or design their own, how they think he might have looked.
- When they have decided where Dagon will go, they can glue the Ark onto their pages.

Supplies

- Copy of the Word
- Print out (or be able to show the pictures on a device) a selection of these pictures illustrating the story from:
https://www.jesuslovesyoutoday.org/bible_study_pictures_and_notes/1_samuel_4-7
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dagon>
- One temple page for each student
- One Ark of the Covenant for each student
- Glue, scissors, markers and/or crayons (including gold markers or crayons)

Prayers for Teens on Hearing the Voice of the Lord

O Lord, Help us to be attentive and to listen well to the teaching of Your Word, so that we may learn to love only what is right in Your sight, now and forever. Amen.

Grant us, O Lord, to be inspired by Your Word to do what is right, through Your mercy, O Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Heavenly Father, Teach us to hear Your voice in Your Word, So that we may answer You, as Samuel did, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears!" Amen.

Lord, Help us to see that Your Word is a great treasure in our lives, for it is in Your Word that You come and teach us. It sustains our spiritual life as natural food sustains our body.

Let us hear Your voice and invite You in to dine with us. Amen.