

LESSON 3

GOD PROVIDES IN THE WILDERNESSLESSON **AT A GLANCE**

WONDER TRUTH: God Cares for Us

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 14–16; Numbers 11

GOD’S BIG STORY: With Pharaoh’s army pursuing, God provides an escape route for His people through the Red Sea. Later in the wilderness, God cares for their needs by providing bread, water, and meat.

WORD OF WONDER: Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. —Jeremiah 32:17 (NIV)

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS**WHO?**

While the exact number of Israelites who left Egypt isn’t known, it is somewhere between 30,000 and over two million. In other words, God showed His care for a lot of people when He freed them from slavery and provided for them in the wilderness!

WHAT?

God’s presence as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night led the Israelites as they traveled. It protected them from the pursuing Egyptians, provided the Israelites with light at night, and gave them shade during the day.

WHERE?

En route from Egypt to Canaan (mostly modern-day Israel), the Israelites ended up in the wilderness, generally defined as an empty region without roads or paths. While in the wilderness, they had to depend on God to provide and care for them daily.

WHEN?

Every morning, God provided manna for the Israelites to eat. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Give us today our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). Every day the Israelites had to trust that God would provide what they needed because nothing else was available.

CONNECTING TO GOD’S BIG STORY

God promised Abraham the land of Canaan would belong to his family (Genesis 17:8). Before entering the promised land, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. During this time, God cared for Abraham’s descendants by providing for their needs and teaching them to depend on Him.

Curiosity

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

Welcome Question

At your start time ...

Give an energetic and sincere welcome to all the kids! Welcome your kids to your time together! Invite several kids to share their answers to the Welcome Question:

If you could choose any food to rain down from the sky, what would you pick?

Wow ... your answers would make for some unusual (and delicious!) weather! Today we're going to hear from God's big story about a time when God cared for His people by making food rain from the sky!

But first, it's time to be curious.

Curiosity Questions

I'm curious ...

- **Name one thing that would be difficult to go without each day. How would your day be different without it?**
- **Do you think God always gives us what we need and what we want? Why or why not?**

Elementary Interactive Game: Showing Care Charades

Ahead of time, open the [Showing Care Slides](#) and have them ready to display. Alternatively, print the [Showing Care Sheets](#) to show kids in lieu of the slides.

Gather kids and display the first Showing Care Slide. Explain that charades are played by reading a word or a phrase and acting it out silently while others guess what you are doing!

Advance to the [second](#) Showing Care Slide and read the scenario to your group. Challenge kids to think about how they could care for the person described in that scenario. Then select one kid to stand up and act out his response while the other kids guess what he is doing.

For example, for the first scenario—a friend forgot to bring his lunch to school—a kid might pretend he is sharing his food.

Advance through all or some of the 10 slides, inviting different kids to act out their responses each time. Slide categories are:

Slide 2: A hungry friend

Slide 3: A sick neighbor

Slide 4: A lost new student

Slide 5: A hungry family after a busy day

Slide 6: A worried friend

Slide 7: A messy house

Slide 8: A lonely classmate

Slide 9: A coughing teacher

Slide 10: A celebrating classmate

Your ideas for ways to show care to others are fantastic! There are many ways to show people that we care. Today we are going to hear in God's big story about a time thousands of years ago when God's people, the Israelites, were in a very difficult situation. But God remained with them and took care of all their needs!



Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD CARES FOR US**.

Make It Inclusive: If any kids in your group have physical limitations, invite them to draw a picture of how they would show care in each scenario and see if the group can guess what they drew!

Preteen Interactive Game: Wilderness Survival

Ahead of time, print one set of Wilderness Survival Cards on cardstock. Cut the cards apart and hide them throughout the room. Ideas for items: sleeping bag, tent (in bag), flashlight, jacket, sunscreen, insect repellent, canned or dried food, backpack, rope, hiking boots, water bottle, trail mix or granola bars, cold-weather gear (hats, gloves, scarf, etc.), compass, map. (Note: Be sure not to bring in any items that could be a safety hazard, such as matches or a pocketknife.)

Allergy Caution: This activity includes possible allergens.

Have any of you ever been outside for a really long time? Maybe you went on a long hike or took a camping trip ... What did you bring with you? Invite a few kids to share.

Let's play a game all about surviving in the wilderness! I've hidden cards (and/ or objects) around this room with pictures on them of things that might be helpful for surviving in the wilderness.

When I say, “Go,” your team will work together to do two things: 1. Find as many cards as you can. 2. Put your cards in order from most important to least important in wilderness survival.

When both teams are finished, we’ll see what you found!

Ready, go! Give teams several minutes to find cards or objects and put them in order. Consider playing upbeat music from the [God Rescues Elementary Spotify playlist](#) as they play the game.

Once teams have put their cards or objects in order, ask:

- What did you find that your team thinks are particularly important for wilderness survival?
- What did you find that your team thinks are not important for wilderness survival?

In God’s big story today, we’ll hear about a time when God’s people had to survive in the wilderness for a very long time. When they needed food and water, God cared for them and provided for their needs.



Today’s Wonder Truth is **GOD CARES FOR US**.

Declaring God’s Wonder

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.)

You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.)

And when I follow Jesus, I am Your kid! (Kids repeat.)

You know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.)

You see me when I lie down and when I wake up. (Kids repeat.)

You care for me every day! (Kids repeat.)

My life can tell of Your wonder!(Kids repeat.)

Help kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own story.

Word of Wonder Activity

WORD OF WONDER

Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

—Jeremiah 32:17 (NIV)

For this activity, kids will be creating greeting cards with the Word of Wonder on them. Ahead of time, determine if your kids will create their cards from scratch using blank sheets of cardstock or if they will decorate the Word of Wonder Greeting Card (NIV) provided. If using the printable, use two-sided printing to print one card on cardstock for each kid. Younger kids are likely to benefit from using the printable greeting cards while preteens may want to create theirs from scratch.

Today we heard about the amazing ways God cared for His people in the wilderness. Let's worship Him together by saying our Word of Wonder. Open your Bible to [Jeremiah 32:17](#). If possible, display the Word of Wonder Slide [NIV](#)

Read [Jeremiah 32:17](#) several times together.

God shows He cares by talking with us. Inside God's big story are many messages, instructions, and words of encouragement written down for us. Have you ever received a card in the mail, maybe on your birthday or at Christmas? Pause for kids to respond.

The Bible is little like God's giant letter or card to us. And our Word of Wonder are some of His special words! So, let's create greeting cards with our Word of Wonder on them!

Set out coloring utensils and any other decorating supplies. Give each kid a sheet of cardstock or a Word of Wonder Greeting Card. If using the printed cards, encourage kids to decorate the front and to fill in the blanks on the inside with the missing words.

If using blank cardstock, invite kids to write out [Jeremiah 32:17](#) at least once on their cards and to decorate them however they'd like! They can open their Bibles to [Jeremiah 32:17](#) or refer to the Word of Wonder Slide if it's on the screen.

When kids finish their cards, they can put them in their envelopes and write their name on the outside. Encourage them to take their Word of Wonder greeting cards home and to look at them throughout the week.

Leader Tip: As time and supplies permit, allow kids to make a second card to deliver or mail to a friend, neighbor, or relative.

Elementary Questions

Why did God's people—the Israelites—want to leave Egypt? (*They were slaves in Egypt.*)

When the Israelites stood at the Red Sea with Pharaoh's army chasing them, God told Moses to raise his staff. What happened when he did? (*God parted the sea so the Israelites could walk through on dry ground!*)

After the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, they were thirsty and hungry in the wilderness. How did God care for them? (*God provided sweet water to drink and made bread, called manna, fall from the*

- *sky.*)
- **Even when the Israelites complained, God still cared for them. Can you remember a time when you found yourself complaining? What was it about?**

What is one way God has cared for you? For your family?

- **What is one way you can show others God's love by caring for someone in your life?**

God cared for the Israelites by protecting and providing for them. And even though they weren't always grateful and sometimes whined and complained, God still loved and cared for them. What an amazing God! Let's talk to Him in prayer now.

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Preteen Questions

- **Pharaoh and God were both powerful. How did Pharaoh treat the Israelites? How did Pharaoh's actions differ from how God treated the Israelites?** (*Pharaoh made the Israelites work for him as slaves and refused to let them go and be free. God loved and cared for the Israelites, rescuing, protecting, and providing for them.*)
- **How did God protect the Israelites from the approaching Egyptian army?** (*God parted the Red Sea so the Israelites could walk through on dry ground! Then He sent the water back into place, so it covered the Egyptian army.*)
- **How did God provide for the specific needs of the Israelites during their time in the desert?** (*God provided sweet water to drink and made bread, called manna, fall from the sky.*)
- **Even when the Israelites complained, God still cared for them. Can you remember a time when you found yourself complaining? What was it about?**
- **Think through your day so far. How has God cared for you?**
- **What is one way you can show others God's love by caring for someone in your life?**

Before God parted the sea, Moses told the Israelites, "The Lord will fight for you. Just be still" ([Exodus 14:14](#)). No matter what you are facing in life, God will be with you and care for you too. Let's talk with Him in prayer now.

Make It Inclusive: Answering questions verbally can be difficult for some kids. Have paper and coloring utensils available and allow kids to draw their answers.

Small Group Prayer Time

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises. Ask kids to raise their hands if there is a specific area in their life where they feel worn out and would like to receive God's care. Begin praying out loud and recognize each kid who raised their hand for prayer. Encourage kids to pray along silently with you or invite any kids who would like to pray aloud to do so.

Leader Tip: Consider writing your group's prayer requests in a journal. Show the journal to the group and explain that you want to remember their prayers and will be praying for them throughout the week.

Identity

Create space for God to remind kids they are known, loved, led, and their lives can tell of God's wonder.

Preteen Responding in Worship: God's Care Calendars

God is in every detail of our days! However, if we don't pay attention, it can be easy not to notice how much God cares for us.

God always hears us and never ignores us. God provides exactly what we need when we need it. In God's big story today, we saw God provide and care for the Israelites throughout their journey out of Egypt into the wilderness. God had every detail prepared and planned.

Give a God's Care Calendar Sheet to each kid and have them write their names on it. **Let's create calendars to record and remember the ways we notice God caring for us every day!**

Invite kids to think about specific ways God provides for them each day of the week and write or draw them on their calendar. Some kids may want to fill out the whole calendar right now, and others may want to just fill in the column for today and take it home to add to every day.

If some kids aren't sure where to start, prompt them with reminders of some ways God shows that He cares: providing food to eat, families to love and care for us, teachers to help us learn, friends to laugh with, etc.

Play songs from the [God Rescues Elementary Spotify playlist](#) as kids work. After a few minutes, invite kids to pray silently over their calendars, asking that Holy Spirit to help them notice God's care throughout their days and thanking God for His care!

Blessing Your Kids

Blessing: May you notice the amazing ways God cares for you every day, today and always!

GAME 3: COIN FLIPPING RACE

In this game, kids will flip a coin to determine whether they move or stand still as they attempt to cross the room.

Ahead of time, use tape to mark start and finish lines at opposite ends of the room. Gather one coin for each kid or enough coins for kids to share as they take turns. Any kind of coin works, even fake coins!

Leader Tip: Consider stationing leaders around the room to help kids keep track of their coins and to read them if they have impaired vision or have trouble distinguishing heads from tails.

Gather kids and give each a coin. Invite the kids to line up along the start line. If you don't have enough coins or space for all the kids to play at once, have the kids play in groups, with one group playing while the others cheer them on.

Sometimes in sports games, teams flip a coin to see who goes first. We're going to play a game that involves flipping a coin. Who knows how to flip a coin? Pause for answers. **You all have a coin. Do you know which side is "heads" and which side is "tails"?**

Show the kids which side is which, or if the coins don't have distinguishable "heads" and "tails," designate one side as "heads" and the other as "tails." Demonstrate how to flip a coin and let the kids practice a few times.

When I say, "Go," you're going to race to the other side of the room! But you can't just run like a normal race! You're all going to flip your coin onto the ground in front of you at the same time. You need to keep track of your coin, so let's all spread out as much as we can. Pause for kids to spread out.

If your coin lands on "heads," you can take one step forward. If it lands on "tails," you will keep flipping it until it lands on "heads."

Leader Tip: *For Younger Kids.* Flipping a coin can be challenging for younger kids. Consider giving each kid a small cup to put his coin in. He can cover the top of the cup with his hand and then shake the cup to flip the coin.

The first person to cross the finish line wins! Show kids the finish line. **Ready, go!**

If time allows once everyone has made it across the finish line, challenge kids to go back to the start, but this time have them hop or skip instead of just taking one step each time.

In this game, you couldn't move until your coin landed on heads. Your coin led you across the room and provided what you needed to move forward. When the Israelites were in the wilderness, they relied on God to provide what they needed and to lead them forward. God cared for their needs, and God cares for us too!