

Aim of lesson

To understand how God provided for his people in the wilderness, and provides for us now.

Bible background

Exodus 16–19, Psalm 78, John 6, 1 Corinthians 10

Outline of lesson

The Israelites' grumbling

Ask the class to tell you how much they remember about the children of Israel's miraculous escape from Egypt – the plagues, the Passover, the parting of the Red Sea. Remind them too about how terrible the conditions would have been for them as slaves to the Egyptians. How did the Israelites feel about this? Were they thankful? Did they remember how much God had done for them? The events of Exodus 16 are only one month after the exodus from Egypt and the first Passover. Read verses 2-3 – 'the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron.' They should have trusted that He would look after them now in the wilderness.

God's reaction

Here we can see how compassionate and loving the Lord is. He immediately responds to the people's request through Moses and provides for all their needs in the wilderness. Look at the pictures in the workbook and the references and get the students to fill in the ways in which God provided for his people.

Next ask the class to answer the questions in the workbook about the manna.

Jesus – the bread from heaven

Ask the class if they know which is the only miracle mentioned in all four gospels (apart from the Resurrection). It is, of course, the feeding of the 5000. Just as God provided manna for his people in the wilderness for forty years, so his son gave the people bread too. Read John 6:30–41. Ask the class to fill in the crossword and answer the questions about Jesus being the living bread.

God's love for the people

One month after the Israelites first receive the manna the children of Israel camped in the desert in front of Mount Sinai. Ask the students to read out Exodus 19 verse 4 to 6. God looked after their physical needs in the wilderness, but even more importantly he wanted to look after their spiritual well-being too. Notice the 'if' – If the Israelites obey God, they will be His treasured possession and a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The people in verse 8 all say that they will obey God. Read verses 16 – 19. The Lord descended on Mount Sinai in fire. The people all trembled. Here we can see that the children of Israel are trying to do what God wants. They want to obey him. Do we always remember how good God is? Do we ever moan and grumble? Are we so different from the children of Israel after all?

Digging deeper

Quails

The children will be interested in the story of how God twice brought quails for the people to eat.

Relevance to our lives:

Challenge the class to go for a whole week without grumbling or groaning to their parents or friends or teachers. See if they can counter every potential moan with a prayer of thanks to God for His goodness. The class can discuss next week how they got on.

Prayer

'Give us today our daily bread.' Matthew 6:11. The members of the class could think about the things they really need each day, and reflect on how God provides them.

The class could imagine what prayer one of the children of Israel would have given to God after he or she had received the manna and quail and water from the rock.

Other suggestions for activities:

The class could draw up a chart – on one side they could write down all the ways God works in their lives, and on the other they could note down all the troubles they have in their lives. Hopefully they will see from this that God is working in their lives and their problems are small compared to a lot of God's prophets and people in the Bible.

The class could make a poster instructing the Israelites what to do with the manna.