

Grumbling in the Wilderness

Wednesday Plan

SCRIPTURE

Numbers 20–21

MEMORY VERSE

1 Thessalonians 5:18

OPTIONAL VIDEO

The Bronze Serpent

<https://southside.cc/811-799>

Gratitude helps us see God's good gifts.

For the Teacher

Wednesday night reinforces what the kids learned on Sunday. Don't re-teach the whole grumbling-in-the-wilderness story — they heard it. Tonight is about *practicing* gratitude in the kid's actual week.

KEY TRUTH

Gratitude helps us see God's good gifts.

Same bottom line as Sunday, by design. Wednesday uses the exact same sentence the kids heard on Sunday. Repeat it. Have them say it back. Don't paraphrase or soften it — the repetition is the point.

Gratitude is a muscle. Sunday taught the kids that grumbling blinds us. Tonight they practice the opposite move: deliberately naming what God has given them. The first one is hard. The tenth one gets easier. That's the muscle. The Wednesday activities exist to put their mouths around thank-yous until it starts to feel normal.

What to skip. Don't re-read all of Numbers 20–21. The kids did that Sunday. Tonight you'll read 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (the memory verse) and re-touch Numbers 21:5 to remind them what grumbling sounded like. If a kid wasn't there Sunday, give them a one-sentence catch-up: "God's people were in the wilderness for a long time and got really good at grumbling, even though God kept giving them everything they needed."

Energy management. Wednesday is built around two activities — a sorting game and a "thankful glasses" craft — and a small-group debrief. The sorting game gets loud. Let it. Bring the energy down for the prayer card and closing. A kid who laughed through the sorting game and then sat quietly to write a thank-you card will remember both.

MATERIALS

- Bibles for every student
- Whiteboard or large paper, markers
- Two large signs or pieces of paper labeled **GRUMBLE** and **GRATEFUL**
- A stack of index cards or paper slips with everyday scenarios written on them (one per slip — see the Sorting Game section)
- Strips of cardstock, paper "lens" circles, tape or glue, and stickers for the **Thankful Glasses** craft
- **Eyes Open** prayer cards (printed in advance from this week's activities)
- Pencils

1. Gather

Welcome the kids back. Tell them:

SAY

On Sunday we learned one big idea, and we're going to learn it again tonight. Say it with me: Gratitude helps us see God's good gifts.

Have them say it back. Then again, louder. Then in a whisper.

Write it on the board.

Tell them tonight is going to be different from Sunday — they're going to play a game, make something, and practice noticing God's gifts in real life. But first, a quick review.

2. The Story

Quick Review

ASK

What were God's people doing in Sunday's story that kept getting them into trouble?

You're looking for: grumbling, complaining, forgetting what God had already done. If they say "being mean," push them — what kind of mean? *Complaining.*

Re-Read One Verse

Have them open to Numbers 21:5. Pick a confident reader.

Numbers 21:5

Tell them to listen for what the people called the food God had been sending from heaven every morning. Then ask:

ASK

What word did the people use for the manna?

"Worthless." God had been sending miracle bread from the sky every single morning, and they called it worthless. That's how strong grumbling is — it can make a miracle look like a problem.

Say the bottom line again, with the kids:

SAY

Gratitude helps us see God's good gifts.

3. The Work

Grumble or Grateful?

Tape the **GRUMBLE** sign on one wall and the **GRATEFUL** sign on the opposite wall. Tell the kids: "I'm going to read a situation. Run to the sign that shows what most kids would *do* — grumble or be grateful." After they pick, ask the harder question: *"What if the grateful version is the right answer? What's something you could thank God for in this situation?"*

Read these scenarios. Read them quickly enough that the game stays fun, but stop after each one to let one or two kids answer the follow-up.

1. *Mom makes dinner. It's not your favorite.*
2. *You wake up early on a Saturday because the sun is bright.*
3. *Your sibling gets a turn first.*
4. *Your friend invites you over to play.*
5. *You have to do homework before screen time.*
6. *Someone gives you a hug you weren't expecting.*
7. *Your shoes are getting too small and need to be replaced.*
8. *It's raining and you can't go outside.*

If kids run to GRUMBLE, that's fine — that's honest. Use it. *"What gift is in this situation that we'd miss if we kept complaining?"* Food, sunshine, a sibling to share with, a friend, a brain to learn with, somebody who loves you, parents who provide, water for the ground.

Thankful Glasses

Pass out the cardstock strips, lens circles, tape, stickers, and markers. Help the kids make simple paper glasses — a strip across the eyes with two circle lenses taped behind it. On the side of the frames, have

them write: **See God's good gifts.**

While they work, tell them: on Sunday we learned that grumbling is like a blindfold. Tonight you're making the opposite of a blindfold — glasses that help you see. When you wear them, your job is to look around and name what God has given you.

When the glasses are done, have everyone put them on. Walk around the room together. Have the kids call out what they see — and try to turn each thing into a thank-you. *Bibles. Friends. A roof. Markers. Light. Each other.*

Why It Matters

Bring the kids back together and sit them down. Read together:

SCRIPTURE

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

DISCUSSION

1. The verse says “give thanks in *all* circumstances.” Does that mean we have to be thankful *for* every bad thing that happens?

No. It means thanking God in the middle of hard things — for who he is, for what he's still doing — even when the hard thing is real. Gratitude doesn't pretend. It just refuses to let the hard thing be the only thing we see.**

2. What's something you usually grumble about that God might be using as a gift?

→ Listen. Don't fix. Honest answers might be: a chore that teaches them, a hard class that stretches them, a parent's no that protects them, a sibling who sharpens them. Any honest answer that names a real grumble is the right answer.

3. How could wearing your “thankful glasses” actually change a hard day this week?

→ Push for specifics. Naming three thank-yous before they get out of bed. Saying grace before snacks, not just dinner. Thanking a parent out loud when they pack lunch. The point is making gratitude into a habit small enough to actually do.

4. The Point

Eyes Open Prayer Card

Hand out the **Eyes Open** prayer cards. Have each student fill in the prompt:

God, this week open my eyes to thank you for _____.

Tell them to pick *one* gift from God they keep forgetting to thank him for, and write it down. Not “everything.” Not “stuff.” A specific gift. *My family. The food on our table. My teacher. My bed at night. Jesus.*

NOTE

While they fill out the cards, walk around. If a kid is stuck, ask them: “What's one good thing in your life that you've stopped noticing because it's always there?” Help them turn it into a sentence they can put on the card.

Memory Verse and Closing

When they're done, have everyone come back together. Read together one more time:

SCRIPTURE

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Then say the bottom line one final time, with the kids:

SAY

Gratitude helps us see God's good gifts.

Close in prayer:

PRAY

God, you fed your people in the wilderness every morning, even when they complained. You feed us too. Help us, this week, take the blindfold off and see what you're already doing. Use these little cards to remind us. Thank you for being a God who keeps giving good gifts. Amen.