



SESSION 4 of 4

The Ark of the Covenant

MEETING AIM

To remember how great God is, and that we should always praise and respect him.

BIBLE

2 Samuel 6

BACKGROUND

The Ark of the Covenant, also known as the Sacred Chest, had been stolen from the people of Israel by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4–7). It was an elaborately decorated box in which the Ten Commandments tablets and other sacred objects were kept. It represented God's presence with his people. After the Philistines returned the Ark, it remained in the village of Kiriath-Jearim for 20 years. David defeated the Philistines and decided the time had come to bring the Ark of the Covenant to back to Jerusalem.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Talk about any celebrations the children have taken part in, such as a wedding, a special birthday or something significant that happened at school. What made it so special? How did everyone join in? Did anything go wrong, such as bad weather or someone falling ill? Eat some celebration refreshments as you chat.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: a large cardboard box; coloured paper; sticky tape; ribbons; stickers; felt-tips pens; two long garden canes. Decorate your box as elaborately as possible, involving everyone in the task. As you do so, tell them about the Ark of the Covenant / Sacred Chest / Ark of God (decide in advance which term you will use throughout the session). Practise carrying your decorated box balanced on the two canes. Have some fun with this.

15 BIBLE STORY

You will need: the decorated box from 'Intro activity'; large paper smile

Gather the children together and tell the following story.

King David was feeling pleased with himself. *Show the paper smile.* He had captured the city of Jerusalem and made it his capital. He had won another battle against the Philistines.

Now was the time to do the one thing he had wanted to do for ages. He wanted to bring the Ark of the Covenant to the city of Jerusalem. The city was at the heart of the kingdom, so it was only right that the Ark should live there.

He took his soldiers to the village where the Ark had been stored for the last 20 years, ever since the Philistines had stolen it! The Philistines didn't want it any more because it had made them all ill. God was punishing them for stealing what belonged to his people. *Turn the smile upside-down.*

David got two oxen to pull a cart and plonked the Ark on it. Then he led the way towards Jerusalem, singing and dancing with everyone else. *Turn the smile the right way up.*

Before long, one of the oxen stumbled and the Ark was badly shaken. *If appropriate, tell them how Uzzah touched the Ark to stop it wobbling. He died for being disrespectful to God.* They were not being very careful or respectful. After all, this ark was there to remind them how great and good God was! *Place the box onto the backs of two children who are on all fours. How long will it be before the Ark falls off?*

God was very cross with David. He should have known better. But then David became afraid of God. *Turn the smile upside-down.* Was it wrong for him to want to bring the Ark back to Jerusalem?

Then something strange happened. The Ark was staying at the home of a man called Obed-Edom. For three months everything he did, and everything his family did, went well. All the vegetables they planted grew really, really huge. No one in his family fell ill; in fact, they all became very strong and happy. *Turn the smile the right way up.*

David heard about this. "God must be pleased with this family," he thought. "I think it must be OK to go and bring the Ark to Jerusalem." He built a special tent in Jerusalem to house the Ark.

This time he brought two poles with him and his soldiers. They carefully balanced the Ark on top of the poles and very, very carefully carried the Ark all the way to Jerusalem. *Carefully lay the box on the poles and ask four children to carry the box very carefully across the room.*

David was so happy. He was overjoyed. He sang and danced all the way to

Jerusalem... and it was a long way. *Show the smile again.* People who saw the Ark coming waved their flags and cheered. "Hooray! Hooray! Praise God!" *Show the smile again.*

The Ark was carefully placed in the special tent in Jerusalem and everyone had a party. You see, David and the people were respecting God and doing what pleased him. They sang worship songs to God and praised his name!

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use these questions to think about the story:

- Imagine you are David. How upset would you have been when everything went wrong the first time you tried to bring the Ark to Jerusalem?
- Imagine you are Obed-Edom, the Ark is at your home and everything is going well. How would you have felt when David came to take it away? Might you have been happy or angry?
- What did David learn from this experience?
- In what ways might we not be respecting God? How can we praise him?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: garden dowelling sticks; hole punch, A4 paper; felt-tip pens, sticky tape, the decorative resources from 'Intro activity'

Encourage the children to decorate both sides of an A4 sheet to make a flag. Punch two holes at the side and slide a stick through the holes. Use tape to keep the flag secure. As you work, continue chatting about the last question in 'Chatting together'.

5 PRAYER

You will need: flags from 'Creative response'; worship music and the means to play it

Stand in a circle waving the flags and sing some of your favourite songs to worship God. You could also encourage the children to dance as they sing as loudly and exuberantly as possible. If possible and appropriate, ask that the final song / hymn in the main service this week is joyful and focused on God's character, as well as one the children can join in.

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For the rest of this month's sessions go to youthandchildrens.work/together.