



### bible verse

COMMITTING TO MEMORY

### Isaiah 42:8

I am the Lord; that is my name!  
I will not give my glory to another  
or my praise to idols.



### story lesson

BIBLE STORY

The point, I think, that the author is trying make in the introductory pages of 1 Samuel is this: Look at Samuel...he's the kind of leader Israel needs...not Hophni and Phinehas and their wickedness, but the righteousness of Samuel and His God. For too long Israel had bad rulers—ones that pointed Israel away from their God and to the gods of the pagan religions that were all around them.

This story is about the Ark of the Covenant and how Israel used it as a token to try and win against their enemies. They were attempting outward obedience without a care in the world for their inner obedience to the Lord. They were battling against the Philistines and they got beat. Israel then thought they would grab the Ark "so that it may save us from the hand of our enemies" (1 Samuel 4:4). They brought the Ark into the war camp of Israel and there arose a great shout. The Philistines heard this shout, were afraid, and they fought with great might.

"So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died" (1 Samuel 4:10-11).

Word of the capture of the Ark and the death of Hophni and Phinehas was brought to Eli at Shiloh (where the temple of the Lord was). When the messenger "mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate. His neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man and was heavy" (1 Samuel 4:18). So judgment was delivered upon the house of Eli for all the wickedness they had done before God.

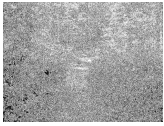
Meanwhile, the Ark was in possession of the Philistines. They put it in the temple of their god, Dagon, and set it right beside the statue of Dagon. The next morning there was Dagon, fallen on his face before the Ark of the Lord. The Philistines set Dagon

back up and again the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on his face before the Ark of the Lord. This time, the statue's hands and face had broken off, only his body remained intact. The hand of the Lord was heavy upon the people in the town of Ashdod (where the temple of Dagon was in Philistine country). There was devastation and many people were inflicted with tumors. So they moved the Ark of God to another town—Gath. The Lord's hand was heavy on that city as well, "throwing it into great panic" (1 Samuel 5:9). So they sent the Ark of God to Ekron. However, just as the Ark was entering the city, the people (who had obviously heard of what had happened to other cities that contained the Ark) cried out and refused to allow the Ark into their town. The Philistines conferred and decided to send the Ark of the Covenant back to where it came from—Israel.

So the Ark of the Lord was sent back to the land of Israel with much procession and significance. The Philistines sent along with the Ark a guilt offering to appease the god of the Ark. Some of the men who were carrying the Ark after it entered Israelite soil dared to look into the ark, so God struck them down. The people said, "Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God?" (1 Samuel 6:20). So they sent the Ark of the Lord to Abinadab's house and consecrated Eleazar his son to guard the Ark of the Lord. And so the Ark stayed in this residence until the time was appointed when King David would bring the Ark of the Lord into Jerusalem (cf. 2 Samuel 6).

### **Comparison between Samuel (good son) and Hophni & Phinehas (bad sons)**

This particular theme occurs all throughout Scripture (i.e. Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Moses and Pharaoh). It is always good versus evil...the kind that makes up a good story. And yet, beyond just a good story, there is usually a significant point and an exhortation to be made. Israel was acting like the bad sons (Hophni and Phinehas) and they were in danger of judgment (i.e. their death). Samuel was like God (his messenger/prophet) acting out restoration and redemption and the working of the grand plan of history (i.e. the divine rescue). What is about to come in the first installment of Samuel is the comparison of the people's choice for king (Saul) and God's choice for king (David). The second half of 1 Samuel depicts the running of the newly anointed David from the rejected king Saul.



## life application

MAKING IT REAL

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### Holiness

A wise man said recently: "God desires your holiness rather than your happiness, and not the other way around." God is holy and just and pure. When he says stuff, he means it. When the people looked into the Ark even when they knew that it was against the commands of the Lord, people beware...judgment is coming. They suffered death because of their disobedience. Holiness requires trust. Do we really trust God?

### God is in control

The Ark of the Covenant represents God's presence and power. By losing the Ark, the Israelites learn that they cannot manipulate God. The Philistines' belief in the superiority of their gods was short-lived. God demonstrates that the destiny of both nations (albeit all nations, the whole world) is under God's control.

### Bad Apple

I am pretty sure that we have the power to choose. God gave us this special ability because he wanted us to choose to love him and not be forced to. Well, we all have the power to choose to obey or disobey. One path leads toward God; the other leads away from God. In one path you will find joy; the other you will find disappointment and heartache. What will you choose?



## questions

REMEMBERING

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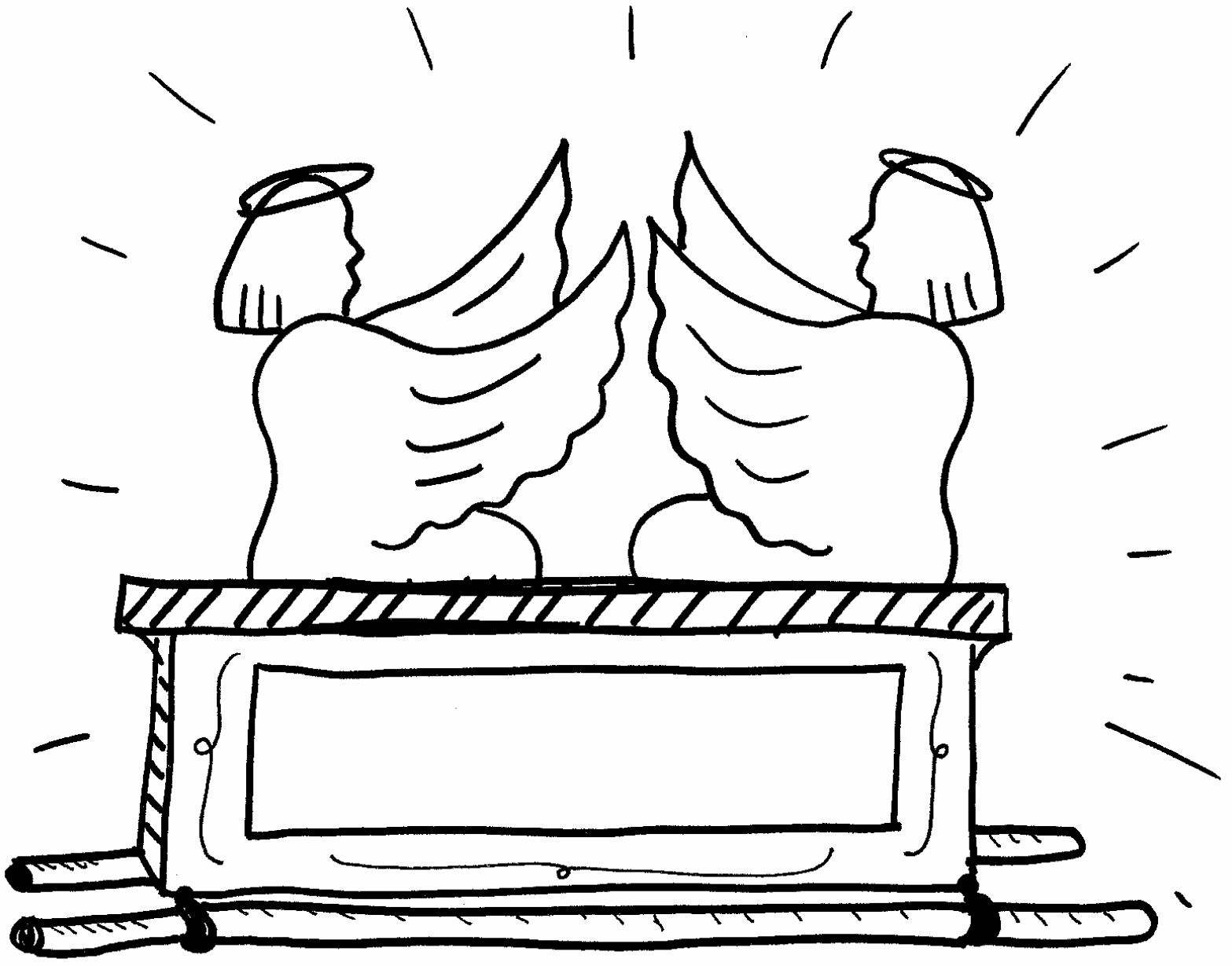
- 1. What thing did Israel try to use to help them in battle?** Ark of the Covenant
- 2. What happened to Eli the priest and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas?**  
They died
- 3. When the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant where was the first place they put it?** In the Temple of Dagon
- 4. What happened to the statue of Dagon each time in the morning?** The statue lay face down in front of the Ark of God, like it was "bowing" down to it!
- 5. Is God or His Ark something we should be scared of? Why or why not?**



## coloring sheet

ON THE NEXT PAGE

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" This is the Ark of the  
Covenant...  
DO NOT TOUCH! "

**Story of the Ark and Hophni & Phinehas**