Preschool–Grade 6

Dagon and the Ark

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: The LORD is greater than any idol. There is one true God, and nothing can stand against Him.
Bible passage: 1 Samuel 5:1–12. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again." *1 Samuel 5:3 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible, 6 paper cups or blocks, 5 paper strips, a marker, tape, a shoebox covered with yellow paper (optional), crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the 5 paper strips (see part 4). Put bookmarks in your Bible at 1 Samuel 5:3 and 1 Samuel 5:4.

1. Opening game: Can It Stand? (5 minutes)

Let the kids take turns building a tower with the 6 cups or blocks. Then gently tap the table and see if the tower stands. Build it again and again. Ask: *Can a tower stand up by itself after it falls? Who has to pick it up?* Say: "A tower can't get up by itself. Somebody has to set it up again. Today we will hear about a statue that people called a god, and it couldn't even stand up by itself!"

2. Bible story: Dagon Falls Down (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to 1 Samuel 5, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

God's people, Israel, had a special chest called the **ark** of God. God told Moses how to make it: wood covered with pure gold, with poles to carry it (Exodus 25:10–14). God's law was kept inside it (Exodus 25:16). Say: "The ark was not God, but it showed that God was with His people."

One day Israel fought a battle with the **Philistines**, and the Philistines took the ark of God (1 Samuel 4:10–11). They carried it to their city, **Ashdod** (5:1). They put it into the house of **Dagon**, right beside Dagon (5:2). Say: "Dagon was an **idol**: a statue that people made and called a god. But Dagon was not a real god. There is only one true God."

The next morning, the people of Ashdod got up early. And look! "Dagon was **fallen** upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD" (5:3). Dagon had fallen flat on his face on the floor, right in front of the ark! What did the people do? They picked Dagon up and set him in his place again (5:3). Say: "Their 'god' couldn't even get up by himself!"

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The story continues: The next morning they got up early again. And look! Dagon had fallen on his face before the ark of the LORD again. This time his head and both his hands were cut off and lay on the **threshold**, the doorstep. Only the stump, the bottom part, was left (5:4). Say: "The LORD showed that He is greater than any idol."

The Bible says "the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod" (5:6). Say: "That means God sent great trouble and sickness on the city." The people said, "The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us" (5:7). That means, "The ark can't stay here!" So they sent the ark to another city, **Gath** (5:8), and the LORD's hand was against that city too (5:9). Then they sent it to **Ekron** (5:10). The people of Ekron cried out, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place" (5:11). After seven months, the Philistines sent the ark home to Israel (6:1, 6:12).

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. Where did the Philistines put the ark of God? *(In the house of Dagon, beside Dagon, 1 Samuel 5:2)*
2. What happened to Dagon the first morning? *(He was fallen upon his face before the ark of the LORD, 5:3)*
3. Who had to pick Dagon up? *(The people of Ashdod set him in his place again, 5:3)*
4. What happened the second morning? *(Dagon fell again, and his head and both palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold, 5:4)*
5. Who is greater than any idol? *(The LORD, the one true God)*

4. Memory verse: Fall Down Verse (5 minutes)

Tape the 5 strips on the wall in order: *And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, / behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth / before the ark of the LORD. / And they took Dagon, / and set him in his place again. 1 Samuel 5:3.* Explain the old words: **arose early on the morrow** means got up early the next morning, and **behold** means look! Read the verse together. Then let one child "make Dagon fall": take one strip down and lay it on the floor. Read again. Keep taking strips down until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Dagon fell down, but the LORD is the one true God: 'The LORD our God is one LORD' (Deuteronomy 6:4). This one true God loves you very much. Everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: put God first. Before you play or watch anything, take a moment to pray and thank the one true God.

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Dagon and the ark word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/dagon-word-search), crossword, maze or worksheet, the craft (vbshq.com/crafts/dagon-craft), or **Stand or Fall:** set the yellow "ark" box at the front. The kids stand tall like statues. When you call out something only God can do ("Who made the sun?" "Who hears our prayers?"), they all point up and shout, "The LORD!" When you say, "Morning in Ashdod!", the "statues" flop down gently on the floor before the ark. Then they "set themselves in their place again" and play another round.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, You are the one true God, and there is none else. Help us put You first, and never let anything take Your place in our hearts. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: 1 Samuel 5:6–12 also tells how God smote the people of Ashdod, Gath and Ekron with emerods (painful sores) and how many in Gath and Ekron died. Read it yourself; the lesson says only that "the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them" and that God sent great trouble and sickness.

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