



Lesson Nine

Honoring God's Chosen Leaders



Growing as a Teacher

Scripture

Numbers 16–17

Bible Truth

God punished the people who rebelled against Moses and Aaron, the leaders he had appointed.

Lesson Aim

To know that God puts people in positions of authority and expects us to show respect to them.

Memory Verse

REVIEW:

PSALM 121:7–8

Optional:

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority.

1 PETER 2:13a

Since Adam and Eve rebelled against God's authority, people have struggled with the sin of pride, which is often manifested in refusal to submit to those whom God has placed in authority. Whether it's the three-year-old who runs in the opposite direction when called, the teenager who defies her curfew, the employee who goes around his supervisor to get what he thinks he deserves or the driver who speeds, we are all tempted to resist authority.

God expected the Israelites to respect and follow the leaders he had provided, but two groups of dissidents from the tribes of Levi and Reuben united to challenge Moses' and Aaron's authority. God had given the Levites the privilege of serving him in the tabernacle, but instead of being thankful, Korah and his followers were jealous of Aaron because only he and his descendants could be priests. Jealousy is often intertwined with the refusal to submit to authority. The Reubenites accused Moses of poor leadership, blaming him for taking them away from the comforts of Egypt, not taking them into the Promised Land and causing them to wander in the wilderness. As is typical, the rebels distorted the truth: their lives as slaves in Egypt had been hard, they had refused to enter the Promised Land and they deserved to remain in the desert.

The dissidents opposed God himself when they rebelled against his appointed leaders, and it was clearly God who brought judgment upon them. Imagine seeing the earth open up and swallow the defiant leaders, and fire descend upon their followers! Amazingly, instead of falling to the ground in fear and submission to the all-powerful God, the whole Israelite community confronted Moses and Aaron and accused them of killing the Lord's people. In his wrath against the stubborn and ungodly people, the Lord declared he would kill them all. The plague he sent spread so quickly that 14,700 died before Aaron could make atonement for the people.

God's holiness and justice demanded the Israelites' obedience. His judgment exonerated Moses and Aaron of the charges brought against them, and it affirmed his authority over his people and the authority of the leaders he appoints in every realm of life—the family, church, society and civil government.

Lesson Nine at a Glance

Step	Minutes	Children's Activities	Supplies (complete list, p. 11)
1 Welcome	5–10	Play <i>Who Am I?</i> to begin thinking about people in authority.	
2 Bible Time	15–20	Listen to the story of the Israelites who rebelled against their leaders.	<input type="checkbox"/> TA 1a map* <input type="checkbox"/> TA 9 Complaining Israelites*
3 Memory Verse	5–10	Review Psalm 121:7–8. Make an accordion book to review all of Psalm 121.	<input type="checkbox"/> TA 1b Psalm 121** <input type="checkbox"/> SA 9 Psalm 121 accordion book** <input type="checkbox"/> Crayons, tape
4 Activities	10–15	Complete the activities on the inside pages of <i>At Home 9</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>At Home 9</i> ** <input type="checkbox"/> Pencils/markers or crayons
5 Final Focus	5	15 Sing “My Help Comes from the Lord” (<i>Songbook</i> , p. 24) and close in prayer.	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Songbook</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Optional</i> : song poster, <i>Younger Elementary Vol. 1</i> CD

Total time: 40–60 minutes

* *Younger Elementary Teaching Aids Pack*
 ** *Younger Elementary Student Activities Pack*



Enrichment

To acquaint the children with one of the leaders God has given his church, invite an elder to visit your class. Explain to the children that he is a member of the session, which is the governing body of the local church. Ask him some simple questions about the session's role in the church. Decide together beforehand what you will ask so that he can be prepared. For your final question, ask him what children can do to help in the church.

(See more tips in **Practical Preparation** at right.)



Practical Preparation

If you're planning to use the **Enrichment** activity this week (in sidebar), be sure to use a question/answer format with the elder who visits. This will help keep the discussion on the children's level and be easier for them to follow. Talk with him ahead of time to develop a short list of simple questions, and alert him that your final question will concern what the children can do to help in the church. This could include such practical things as volunteering to sharpen the pencils in the sanctuary, putting trash in the wastebaskets and walking instead of running.

As you study the lesson, rehearse aloud the account of God's punishment of the rebellious Israelites. Try to convey to the children the great drama of that event.

In **Memory Verse**, the children will make **SA 9 Psalm 121 accordion books**. Make one ahead of time so you can show it to them.

If you want your students to present the choral reading of **Psalm 121** to the class of fours and fives the last week of the quarter (see **Memory Verse**, p. 91), contact the teacher of that class now to make arrangements.

1

Welcome

5–10 minutes

After you welcome the children, tell them you are going to play *Who Am I?* Explain that some of them will act out people in different jobs or roles without speaking, and the rest of the class will guess whom they are pretending to be. Ask for a volunteer, whisper the type of person and tell the child to pretend, without speaking, to do something that person would do. Examples:

- a policeman directing traffic
- a schoolteacher writing on the chalkboard
- a parent doing a household chore
- a firefighter pointing a hose at a fire

If no one guesses correctly, let the actor say something that the person would say, such as “Please turn in your homework.”

After the charades are completed, explain that all of the people who were acted out are people who have authority over us. That means they are in charge in our homes, our schools or the government, and we should obey them. *Then say* Today we’re going to learn about some people who didn’t respect and obey the people God had put in authority over them.

Display TA 1a map. When we left the Israelites last week, they were camped at Kadesh Barnea. *Point to it on the map.* They were very close to Canaan, the land God had promised to give them. *Ask* Were they thankful that God had kept his promise to bring them there? Did they say, “Hurry, let’s go into Canaan”? (*No, they refused to go in.*) What was their punishment for not obeying God? (*They would wander in the wilderness for 40 years.*) Today we’ll hear about something that happened while they were in the desert.

Early Arrivals



Ask early birds to cut out pictures of parents, teachers and government workers—police, firefighters, the president—and paste them on a sheet of poster board. Display the poster and refer to it during the lesson. You’ll need to provide poster board, magazines, scissors and glue.



2

Bible Time

15–20 minutes

Who was the Israelites’ leader? (*Moses*) When God first called Moses to be their leader, what was Moses doing? (*taking care of sheep*) God spoke to him in a burning bush and told him that he would lead the Israelites out of Egypt. *Ask* Did Moses say, “Yes, Lord, I’ve been waiting for an opportunity like this. I’ll go and tell them I’m their leader”? (*no*) Moses was surprised that God had chosen him. He told God several reasons why he could not be their leader. But God chose him and gave him the abilities he needed to do the job.

When the Israelites built the tabernacle, God chose Aaron and his sons to be priests. He chose other members of the tribe of Levi to be helpers in the tabernacle. Serving in God’s tabernacle was an



Wilderness Wanderings

After refusing to enter the Promised Land, the Israelites spent the next 40 years wandering around a relatively small area in the Desert of Paran.

Teaching Tip

As you describe this dramatic scene, let your voice and eyes express the drama. Look directly into the eyes of your students and don't hesitate to use a near-whisper at times and a loud voice at others.

important job, but one of the Levites, a man named Korah (*KOH-rub*), was jealous because Aaron and his sons were priests and he was only a helper. Korah had forgotten that Aaron had not chosen himself to be a priest; God had chosen him.

While Korah and his friends were grumbling about Aaron, two men from the tribe of Reuben were complaining about Moses. Those two men were named Dathan (*DAY-thun*) and Abiram (*ab-BY-rum*). Korah, Dathan and Abiram got 250 men to go with them to complain to Moses and Aaron. *Display TA 9 Complaining Israelites.* The men said, "Everyone in this community is holy. You're no better than we are. Why have you made yourselves leaders over us?"

Moses went away and prayed, then came back to give them an answer. He said, "God will show us who should be his priests and leaders. Every one of you bring a censer filled with burning coals and incense to the tent of meeting tomorrow morning." *Explain that a censer is like a little metal basket.* Moses also reminded the Levites that they should be thankful for the privilege of serving in the tabernacle instead of being jealous of Aaron.

The other grumblers, Dathan and Abiram, said to Moses, "You haven't been a good leader. You brought us out of Egypt, where we had everything we needed, and you didn't take us into the beautiful land that you promised to us. Now you're making us wander around in the desert." *Ask* Were the things they said true? (*no*) Did they have a fun life in Egypt? (*They were slaves who worked hard and were treated badly.*) Did Moses keep them from going into the Promised Land? (*No, they refused to go in.*) Did Moses say they had to wander in the desert? (*God said it because they disobeyed him.*)

The next morning, Moses and Aaron stood in the door of the tabernacle as Korah and his followers came with their censers. The rest of the Israelites came to see what would happen. Suddenly the glory of the Lord lit up the tabernacle. God told Moses and Aaron to move away so that he could destroy all the people. Moses could have said, "Go ahead. They deserve to be destroyed!" But he and Aaron cried out, "Don't destroy all of them because of Korah's sin."

God answered their cry and didn't kill all the Israelites. Instead, Moses went to the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. God told the people to move away from the tents. Then Moses told them how they would know that God had made him their leader. Listen while I read what Moses said. *Read Numbers 16:29-30.* God did just what Moses had said. The ground under the men split open. The earth swallowed them up and then closed over them, and they were gone. But that wasn't all that happened. God also sent fire that burned up the 250 men who had brought their censers before the Lord.

Ask If you had been there and had seen the earth swallow up people and had seen fire come from God, would you have complained any more about Moses? But the very next day, the Israelites were grumbling again. They accused Moses and Aaron of killing the Lord's people! *Ask* Could Moses and Aaron have made the

ground open and fire come down from heaven? (*no*) Only God could have done that.

When God heard the Israelites grumbling again, he became so angry that he sent a plague. Many people became sick and died. Moses told Aaron, “Go quickly and make an offering for the sins of the people. Burn incense to the LORD before they all die.” Aaron carried his censer into the middle of the dying people and the plague stopped. The Bible says that 14,700 had died, but God spared the rest.

Then God told each tribe to bring a wooden staff to the tabernacle. The name of each tribe’s leader was written on each staff. Aaron’s name was written on Levi’s staff. All the staffs were placed in front of the ark of the covenant.

The next morning, Moses went into the tabernacle. Eleven of the staffs were still just dead, wooden sticks, but Aaron’s staff had sprouted buds, flowers and almonds—like a living tree. Suddenly the people realized that God really had chosen Aaron to be the high priest but they had not honored him. They were afraid of what God would do to them. But God did not want to destroy his people. He wanted to teach them to honor and obey their leaders. God told Moses to put Aaron’s staff in front of the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle as a reminder of what had happened. Every time the people came to worship God, they would remember that they must honor the people he appointed as leaders.

Ask Does God still expect us to obey people he puts in authority over us? (*yes*) God puts people in positions of authority in our homes, our schools, our church and our government. *Ask the children to name some of those people and discuss ways in which we must obey them.* *Then say* Listen to what the Bible says. *Read 1 Peter 2:13a:* “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority.” God wants us to obey the people in authority over us.



Memory Verse

5–10 minutes

To review **Psalm 121:7–8**, ask children to recite the verses with you or read them from **TA 1b Psalm 121**. Then divide the class into two groups. Have the first group stand and recite verse 7, then have the second group stand immediately afterward to recite verse 8. Try to have no gap between the two verses. Then reverse the groups and recite the verses again.

Hand out a **SA 9 Psalm 121 accordion book**, crayons and tape to each child. Have the children color the pictures (if limited time, they may color at home), then tear along the perforated line. Lay the bottom strip next to the top strip (line up the two “A”s). Tape the strips together. Fold it up like an accordion along the pre-folded lines. Tell the children they can use the booklet at home as review.



What a Job!

Leading the Israelites was no small job for Moses. When Joseph was a ruler in Egypt and Jacob and his other sons moved there to escape the famine, their family numbered about 70 people. As we read of the Israelites’ experiences after they left Egypt, we may picture in our minds a group several times larger following Moses around the desert. However, by that time, the Israelite men numbered more than six hundred thousand. Adding hundreds of thousands of women and children means that Moses was leader over a huge group of people!

Optional Memory Work

In addition to reviewing **Psalm 121:7–8**, some of your students may want to memorize **1 Peter 2:13a**:

Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority.





4

Activities

10–15 minutes

Give each child a copy of *At Home 9*, pencils and crayons or markers. Read aloud the title and directions for the part(s) you choose to do.

In *How Can I Obey?* talk about the scenes as the children work. Help them read the sentence at the bottom and fill in the blank. **Answer: God**

In *God Wants Me to Obey*, provide help as needed with the sentences. **Answers: 3, 2, 2, 2, 3, 3.** Then guide the children with the fill-in activity on the right. **Answers: Submit, Lord's, authority**

If you have planned to do the **Enrichment** activity (see sidebar, p. 64) and have invited an elder to your class, you may want to do that here and let the children complete their papers at home.

5

Final Focus

5 minutes

Since the children have now memorized all of **Psalm 121**, lead them in singing “My Help Comes from the Lord.” They learned this song based on the psalm earlier this quarter.

As you close, ask the children to repeat each sentence of your prayer after you:

Dear Lord,

Thank you for taking care of me.

Thank you for giving me parents and teachers to take care of me.

Please help me to respect and obey them.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

As the children leave, encourage them to show their *At Home 9* papers and **SA 9 Psalm 121 accordion books** to their parents.

15

“My Help Comes from the Lord”
Songbook, p. 24



Items to Send Home

- *At Home 9*
- SA 9 Psalm 121 accordion book