

week six

NUMBERS 21:4-9

A bronze snake is coiled around a wooden staff. The background is a warm, golden sunset over a desert landscape with mountains in the distance. The snake's body is highly detailed, showing its scales and a lighter-colored stripe along its side. The staff is a simple, dark wooden pole.

A BRONZE SNAKE AND GOD'S LOVE

Life Group Discussion Guide

RHYTHM REMINDER  Prayer

LEAN IN

Which is harder for you—admitting you’re wrong or asking for help—and why? _____

LOOK DOWN

Read Numbers 21:4-9 (pg. 110). What are the people complaining about? How does God respond in judgment, and why is His solution of the bronze serpent unexpected? _____

LOOK OUT

We often chase “self-improvement” as a cure-all for our problems. How does this Scripture clash with self-improvement? _____

LOOK IN

How might God be inviting you to stop striving and start trusting? What change would that require from you? _____



CHRIST CONNECTION

By Munyoki Mulwa | Lead Pastor of Mariners Anaheim

John 3:16 is a familiar passage. It is a verse many of us hold dear as a simple and powerful reminder of God’s love. This verse is found in the middle of a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader. In John 3:14-15, Jesus points Nicodemus to a story that would have been deeply familiar to him, found in Numbers 21.

In the midst of Israel’s lack of trust in God, a common reality for them in the desert, He provided a way for them to be saved from certain death by poisonous snakebite. A bronze serpent was lifted up on a pole. For the Israelites, they did not need to strive or prove themselves. They only needed to look and believe.

Nicodemus connected with the story as a religious leader. Then Jesus says, “...so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” Then comes John 3:16. For the Israelites in the wilderness, looking at the lifted serpent brought relief from the poison in their blood. For us today, looking to Jesus lifted up brings eternal healing from the deepest sickness of all: our sin.



IF I BE LIFTED UP

By Monica Brislawn

In the book of Numbers, we read of the Israelites and their complaining in the desert. They complained about the food and against Moses and the Lord. In response, the Lord brought snakes that bit them, and they fell ill and died. After they cried out to God, God made a way for them to live and avoid death from the snake bites. Moses placed a fiery, bronze serpent on a pole. Whoever was bitten by the snakes would look to the bronze serpent and live (Numbers 21:4-9).

Jesus Christ referred to this account, speaking of Himself and how those who look to Him will live. He declared, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15, ESV).

Jesus was speaking of His crucifixion. He would be lifted up to die, and through His work on the cross, whoever would believe in Him would receive eternal life. Christ likens

His ministry to the bronze serpent, which, when looked upon, caused the observer to escape death.

May these words of Christ encourage us to share our faith. Recently, I was reminded of the importance of sharing Christ and began to pray and ask the Lord to give me an opportunity to tell someone about Him.

The call came in when I was running some errands. It was Tom (not his real name), the nurse who worked for my dad's doctor.

"I submitted the prescription to the pharmacy; you can go pick it up today. This should help with the increasing agitation associated with your dad's dementia," he explained.

Driving down a street in Garden Grove, I came to a red light and stopped in the far-right lane. Tom continued to explain things about my father's medication until I couldn't listen anymore; there was a car honking aggressively, and it overtook our conversation. Soon, shouting and yelling



Look and Live

Original Artwork by John Bell

accompanied the horn blasting. I peered into my rearview mirror to see what was going on, wondering how such drama could be happening on a street in Orange County.

Scoping things out, I was shocked! I was the problem! The gentleman in the car behind my car was honking and shouting at me. I should be turning and not waiting. The well-traveled lane had faded traffic symbols; apparently, we were in a right-hand turn-only lane, and there was no need to wait for the red light to turn green. I was needlessly stalling, and stalling him. He continued to yell and blast his horn, holding it down for long increments.

In a moment of terrible human weakness, I concluded there was only one plan of action to take. I would not move the car so I could make him angrier. Shifting the car out of drive and into park, I remained still. It was an easy plan. And I would soon learn it was quite effective. His yelling and honking continued, and soon it was accompanied by violent arm waving. Could he just easily fix things and pull out to an inner lane and bypass me? Nope. Too many cars, all lanes were full. He wasn't going anywhere. His anger escalated. Now he was exiting his car and walking to mine. The yelling continued as he approached the car and started knocking loudly on my window. Maybe my plan was not so smart after all! Thankfully, he realized he wasn't going to get anywhere and returned to his car.

The light turned green, and I concluded I should move along with all the other cars. Turning right, he did too and as the street broadened quickly, he pulled out from behind and sped off, continuing to scream and shake his fist, until he was out of sight.

This little plan proved to be emotionally taxing. Pulling over into a commercial parking lot, I explained to Tom the incident

was over, and we could resume our talk about the prescription.

"Are you okay?" Tom asked, a caring health professional. "I will stay on the phone with you for a little bit, until you feel better."

And there we were. Well, I was, anyway: I had parked the car and was looking directly at Christ Cathedral.

"Are you familiar with Christ Cathedral?" I asked Tom, making small talk, as we took time for me to settle down.

"Oh, is that the big glass church? Yes, I know of it. I visited it a while ago."

Based on his friendly response, I decided to throw out another comment and see if it would go anywhere.

"Yes, Christ Cathedral. Did you know, they are currently running a conference called 'I AM, A Beacon of Hope'?"

I enjoyed saying the name of this conference, since it referred to the great "I AM" statements proclaimed by Jesus Christ.

I continued, "Yes, the great 'I AM' statements of Jesus Christ—He proclaimed many. Some of them include, 'I am the Bread of Life,' and 'I am the Door,' and 'I am the Good Shepherd.' They are all recorded in John's Gospel."

"I am going to read about all this at my lunch hour," Tom responded. "This is great."

I stopped suddenly, remembering Tom was always caring for twice the number of patients he should be, addressing the needs of so many.

"Tom, do you need to go? I know how busy you guys get."

"Oh no!" he responded. "This conversation is very interesting. I do not need to go."

Knowing I was not holding someone hostage on the phone just so I could share the good news, I continued with great freedom.

"While you are doing your reading, you could also go to the third chapter of John," I



explained. "In the third chapter, Jesus is speaking to a Jewish ruler, and Jesus tells him how he can get to Heaven. He says one must be 'reborn.' To be reborn, of course, someone cannot reenter his mother's stomach and enter the world again. One can simply pray and ask God to become His child. He can ask God to take away all his sin and ask Him to fill him with His Spirit. This is how one can be reborn. This is the way to Heaven."

Tom made further comments that he was enjoying what he was learning and would review these things at lunch.

"Yes," I emphasized, "Jesus Christ can take away all your sin, you just need to ask for His forgiveness."

Tom shared a little of his spiritual background, explaining he had not heard these truths and was very glad to hear them. I encouraged him to call or text with any questions.

Tom concluded, suggesting maybe, just maybe, the traffic incident had not been a coincidence, but actually intended, so we would stay on our call and have our spiritual discussion.

I drove off, amazed at how God had opened a door to share the gospel. I had been asking Him to provide a way to tell someone about Christ.



Do you also wonder how you can share your faith with others? We are so busy, doing so many things, wishing we had more interactions with those who do not know Jesus. That's why I decided to pray and ask God to open a door. And He can do the same for you. Just pray! And see what He does!

I was humbled, too. God had allowed me to share the good news of Jesus Christ right after I had been so unkind to the driver, breaking the second great commandment. You do not need to be perfect to share His love.

And don't worry about what you are going to say. Just keep a few verses in mind describing the good news and have them ready. When God opens a door, proclaim His love and forgiveness with great courage! Then be sure to share it with your family and friends and celebrate together how God is using you to bring the good news to a world in need.



▼
A Unanimous Victory for Believers
Original Artwork by Byul Chung

LIFT UP AND BEHOLD THE ONE

By Darlene Welling

When we entertain negative thoughts,
a good word given is often tossed.

Our smiles that once lit a room
are now clouded with gloom.

When weary of the same old thing,
any kind of remedy becomes inviting.

When we allow others to determine our worth,
the next thing we know, we question our birth.

When we lose hope, and anger becomes our gear,
deep down inside the grip is fear.

Sin lurks at the door to appease our hearts,
when truly its end is to lock us in the dark.

A good ending awaits us, if we listen to the wise.
Behold the One who holds the scepter, and rise.

When we trust in the One,
we have already won.

Lift up the One who is True,
the Restorer who makes all things new.

Behold the One who paid the price for our sins,
in whom our eternal life begins.

Lift up and behold the One, our Savior Jesus Christ,
who lifts us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

