

10 Rulz: Session 2 – Rule 1

Title: God says 'Put me first'

Bible base: Acts 14:8–20

Aim: To understand that God needs to come first.

Introduction

God told his people that lots of bad things would happen to them if they forgot about him and chased after other gods. Moses wrote them down in the form of sayings, called curses. A curse is a promise that something horrible is going to happen. Can you guess which are threats that are true and which are false?

Children can vote by putting their hands up, but if you have enough room to do so, designate opposite sides of the room as 'True' and 'False' and have them stand at whichever they think is right for each threat. Or ask them to stand up for 'True' and sit down for 'False'. Don't give the answer until the very end (which is that they are ALL true!).

- 1) They would be cursed in the city
- 2) They would have dreadful baskets
- 3) All their animals would suffer
- 4) It would be too hot
- 5) They would itch
- 6) They would be confused
- 7) They would build a house and not live in it
- 8) Their donkeys would be stolen (along with sheep and other animals)
- 9) Locusts would eat all the crops
- 10) They would live in constant fear of everything

Believe it or not, all these threats were true! In other words, if they worshipped other gods everything would get as bad as it possibly could. They might seem a bit over the top to us, but they show how serious God was about his people sticking with him.

On the plus side, there were also lots of nice promises if the people just worshipped the one true God. Not only would they not suffer any of these things, but they would have a great time.

Bible narrative

Explain that you are going to tell a story of something that happened a long time after God had given the Ten Commandments – in fact, after Jesus had lived on earth as a man, been killed, come alive again and gone back to be with God. If you have the Bible Timeline published by Scripture Union, show where Moses and Paul fit on it.

Either tell the story using the version called 'A visit to Lystra' in Bob Hartman's book *Telling the Bible* published by Monarch, or act it out as below. (This is taken from the version on pages 11 and 12 of *10 Rulz – 'Make up your mind'* – and is based on Acts 14:8–20.)

You will need a couple of old shirts that can be ripped (it might be worth putting a couple of cuts in the seam of the shirt at the back to help with this) and some dried or plastic flowers. Three children should mime the parts of a lame man, Paul and Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas should wear the old shirts. One child should be a priest and carry the flowers. The rest of the children take part as the crowd.

Before the story is read, teach the children to shout out 'The gods have come to earth' as loudly as they can.

Read the story through once and explain what the different characters do and when, including the children shouting out. At the appropriate moment the 'priest' brings on the flowers and mimes throwing them over Paul and Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas mime ripping their shirts.

Then read it again and have everyone do their part for real – thrown flowers, ripped shirts and all!

If you have good readers playing the parts of Paul and Barnabas one of them could read what Paul says, either directly from the Bible (Acts 14:15) or using the words in the script below.

The narrator reads the story as follows.

On one occasion the apostle Paul was telling the people about Jesus at a place called Lystra. There was a lame man in the crowd. Paul turned to him and told him to get up. Immediately he bounced onto his legs and started walking around. As you can imagine, the crowd went wild with excitement. They thought this was fantastic. They shouted out, 'The gods have come to earth!' at the top of their voices. They gave Paul the name Hermes, and his friend Barnabas they called Zeus. Then the priest who looked after the nearby temple of Zeus fetched some bulls and flowers in order to make a sacrifice to the two of them.

*Paul and Barnabas didn't like the idea of that at all. They tore their clothes (this was their way of showing how upset they were) and told everyone to stop. **'We are just like you – human beings. All we're doing is telling you not to follow useless gods, but to worship the one God who made everything. He is the one who has given you all the good things that you enjoy.'***

To talk about: Paul was very popular but he encouraged the people to see that it wasn't him that healed the man but it was God working through him. The crowd wanted to make a big fuss of him and Barnabas, like putting flowers around their necks but Paul refused and made a point that they were only human beings just like them but it was God that they needed to follow. Give an example from your own life where you have prayed for someone and God has answered it and explain that it could not have been you but God who did it.

Puzzle sheet

Make copies of the Session 2 puzzle sheet 'Unscramble the words' for the children to complete.

Song

Sing 'So cool' from the CD *Reach Up!* (available from www.scriptureunion.org.uk/light/reachup.asp).

Tablets of stone

Don't forget to add this week's rule to your stone tablets.

Prayer

Thank God that he is so special. If the children are confident, invite them to say what they think is so special about God and express this as a prayer either altogether or in groups.

Memory verse

'Turn away from these worthless things. Turn to the living God.' (Acts 14:16, New International Reader's Version.) Devise a beat and rap the words several times. As they say the word 'turn' each time, the children must jump 90° to the left.