



Hold on Tight To God!

By Deborah Wassenberg

Introduction:

This lesson uses animals God has created as examples of 'holding on tight'. It's holding on tight that keeps these baby animals safe. The children learn how they should hold on tight to God, just like King Hezekiah.

Set the Scene: At the Zoo!

- Hang green paper streamers like jungle vines
- Add palm leaves or fronds (artificial or real)
- Add animal soft toys to your teaching area
- Ask your volunteers to dress as zookeepers

Warm-Up Activities: Tabletop games

- Snakes and Ladders
- Hungry Hippos
- Beetle (build a beetle)
- Zoo-themed jigsaw puzzles
- Animal-themed Snap/Go Fish/Memory playing cards

Animal Hand Puppets:

This lesson provides the perfect opportunity for your volunteers to use animal hand puppets. They can wander around the room and demonstrate the shy animal holding on tight to them, or have some fun with the cheeky animal that takes hold of a child and won't let go!

Bible Lesson: King Hezekiah

Bible Reference: 2 Kings 18:1-37; 19:1-37; 2 Chronicles 28:27-32:33; Isaiah 36:1-39:8; Jeremiah 15:4; 26:18-19

Visuals You Will Need:

1. Capuchin monkey and infant (page 7)
2. Otter with pup on her tummy (page 7)
3. Koala with a joey on their back (page 8)
4. Scorpions with scorplings on their back (page 8)
5. Child holding on tight to parents' hands

6. Evil King Ahaz and idols
7. Good King Hezekiah
8. Assyrian army invading
9. King Hezekiah seeks God
10. Child with arms up to God

Words:

1. Do you know what animal this is?
It's a monkey!
It's called a capuchin monkey, and it lives in the jungles of Central and South America.
Can you see where the infant monkey is?
The infant monkey is holding on tight to his mother's back.
Why do you think he is doing that?
The jungle can be a dangerous place.
Holding on tight means the infant monkey won't fall from the treetops.
Holding on tight means the infant monkey won't be eaten by jaguars, eagles or crocodiles.
Holding on tight means the infant monkey won't be left behind as the monkeys travel fast through the trees.
2. Do you know what animal this is?
It's an otter!
This is a sea otter that lives in the Northern Pacific Ocean.
Can you see where the baby otter, the pup, is?
He is holding on tight to his mother's tummy.
Why do you think he is doing that?
The ocean can be a dangerous place.
The waves can be rough.
Holding on tight means the pup will not be knocked off and carried away by stormy waves.
Holding on tight means avoiding being eaten by killer whales and sharks.
Holding on tight means they can drink their mother otter's milk.
Holding on tight means the mother otter can keep her pup warm in the cold water of the Pacific Ocean.
3. Do you know what animal this is?
It's a Koala!
It lives in Australia and only eats the leaves of certain species of eucalyptus trees.
Can you see where the baby koala, the joey, is?
He is holding on tight to his mother's back.
Why do you think he is doing that?
The bush can be a dangerous place.
Holding on tight means the joey will be safe from dingoes, eagles or pythons.
Holding on tight means the joey will learn what leaves it is safe to eat.
Holding on tight means the joey will learn how to climb trees and move from tree to tree.
Holding on tight means the joey will keep warm.

4. Do you know what arachnid this is?
It's a scorpion!
Scorpions can be found all over the world except Antarctica.
Can you see where the baby scorpions, the scorplings, are?
They are holding onto their mother's back.
Why do you think they are doing that?
Because the desert can be a dangerous place.
Holding on to their mother's back means the scorplings' exoskeleton (their skeleton that is on the outside of their body) has time to harden and darken.
Holding on tight means the scorplings are safe from owls, lizards and snakes.
Holding on tight means the scorplings have shelter.
5. Holding on tight gives these baby animals protection.
Holding on tight gives you protection, too!
You hold on tight to Mum and Dad when you cross the road.
You hold on tight to Mum and Dad when you learn to swim.
You hold on tight to Mum and Dad when you're in a crowd.
Did you know you can hold on tight to God?
Holding on tight to God is the best protection ever.
6. King Ahaz was the king of Judah.
He was a wicked king.
During his reign, God's people were attacked, killed or taken prisoner.
Their cities were plundered: their money, food and animals were stolen.
King Ahaz altered the layout of God's temple, where God was worshipped, nailed doors shut and cut up the furniture.
But worst of all, King Ahaz set up idols, false gods, on high places and street corners so the Israelites could worship them instead of the one true God.
7. When wicked King Ahaz died, his son Hezekiah became king of Judah.
He was only twenty-five years old.
King Hezekiah knew how to **hold on tight to God**.
He put God first in everything he did and followed God's commands.
So, he got to work.
He destroyed all the idols.
He reopened the temple doors.
He cleaned out the temple, and people worshipped God again.
The Kingdom of Judah began to prosper: they were successful!
8. Then came a day when the Assyrian army invaded Judah and began to march towards Jerusalem.
The Assyrians were fierce fighters.
They believed their idols were better than Israel's God.
The King of Assyria and his commander mocked God: that means they made fun of Him.

9. But King Hezekiah was **holding on tight to God**.
He tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth: a rough fabric used to make sacks.
This showed everyone he was grieved, humble and ready to ask for God's help.
He went straight to the temple courts to pray.
He sent his men, also dressed in scratchy sackcloth, to find the prophet Isaiah.
He sent them with this message: 'This is a day of sorrow and punishment and disgrace...The king of Assyria sent his field commander to make fun of the living God.'
The king asked Isaiah to pray for them.
God spoke through the prophet Isaiah.
'Don't be afraid of what you have heard. Don't be frightened by the words the servants of the king of Assyria have spoken against Me.'
Then the King of Assyria's field commander sent King Hezekiah a nasty letter.
King Hezekiah took the letter to the temple courts and spread it out before God and prayed.
The prophet Isaiah again sent word to the King.
'God says that because you prayed to Him...the King of Assyria will not get near the city. He will not even shoot an arrow.
I will defend this city and save it.'
And on a certain night, the angel of the Lord went out to the Assyrian camp and killed many, many soldiers.
The Assyrians still alive woke up and saw what had happened.
They packed up and left to go back to their own city.
God protected the city, King Hezekiah, and the people.
10. You can hold on tight to God, too.
You hold tight to God by trusting Him.
You hold tight to God by praying to Him.
You hold tight to God by obeying His commands. (*Joshua 22:5; Joshua 23:8*)
They are in the Bible. (*Proverbs 4:4; Philippians 2:14-16*)
You hold tight to God by agreeing with what He says. (*Hebrews 10:23*)
You hold tight to God no matter how frightening life is.
God will never let you go.
God will never fail you.
He will protect you.

Ministry to the Children:

There is only one thing that can stop God from coming near to you. That is your sin. That's why God asked His Son Jesus to come to Earth. Jesus arrived as a baby, grew up without doing one thing wrong, but then died on the Cross. He was innocent but took your sin on Himself. Well, God did not let His Son stay dead. He raised Jesus from the dead! If you tell Jesus you are sorry for your sin, and ask Him into your heart, your sin will be washed away, and God can come close to you. Then you live for God all your life, holding onto Him and holding on tight to what is good and rejecting things that are bad. (*1 Thessalonians 5:20-22*)

Memory Verse: Joshua 23:8

‘...but you shall hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day.’

Animal Relay Race

Setup:

- Words of the Memory Verse and laminate
- Animal cards
- Divide children into teams
- Establish a starting line and a turnaround point using cones or tape
- At the turn-around point, place a word of the Memory Verse for a child to retrieve

How to Play:

- Each team lines up behind the starting line.
- The first player in each team is given an animal to mimic (e.g. kangaroo, elephant, or crab).
- On the ‘GO’ signal, the first player performs the relay movement for the chosen animal.
- After reaching the turnaround point, retrieving a word of the Memory Verse and returning to the starting line, the first player tags the next person in line.
- The second player then performs the relay movement for a new animal, shown to them by a leader using an animal card.
- This continues until all team members have completed the relay and retrieved every word of the Memory Verse.
- The first team to have all members complete the relay, and to put the Memory Verse into the correct order, wins!

Morning Tea:

Use wild animal or jungle print tablecloths to cover tables.

- Bananas on sticks (bananas can be dipped in chocolate)
- Fruit kebabs
- Fruit platters
- Animal Cup Cakes (you’ll find inspiration on the internet)
- Popcorn-filled paper cups with an animal or animal print on them (make your own using stickers)

Games:

Monkey See, Monkey Do

Children stand in line behind a child designated as The Monkey. As The Monkey moves around, the rest of the kids have to imitate the actions of their leader!

Pin the Trunk on the Elephant

Similar to pinning the tail on a donkey, only using the picture of an elephant. Of course, using the traditional donkey game is perfectly fine.

Noisy Noah's Ark

Print out pairs of animal pictures. Separate the pictures. Place all the animal pictures inside a container. Each child picks out an animal. On 'GO', they must find their matching pair, but only by making the sound of the animal.

Elephant Race

Divide the children into two teams and line them up in two rows. Use cones or tape a finish line.

The first child in line bends over and lets one hand hang down (the trunk) and puts the other hand (the elephant tail) through his/her legs to the person behind him/her.

The next child bends over and grabs the first child's tail with his trunk. The process repeats so that all the elephants are holding on to each other.

On 'GO', the two teams race to the finish line, and the first team to reach it without breaking the chain wins.

Snake in the Grass

Divide children into small groups. Each group gets one jump rope. Two children are turners, everyone else jumps. The two turners kneel or sit on the ground and hold the rope to the ground. Their job is to move the rope back and forth, first slowly and down low, then faster and higher, while the jumpers try to jump over the rope without touching it. Turners and jumpers swap places so everyone gets a turn.

Craft Ideas:

You'll find examples of these easy crafts on the internet.

- Binoculars (made from cardboard tubes)
- Paper plate pandas
- Stretchy monkeys (paper plate body with accordion paper limbs)
- Cotton ball penguins
- Paper chain snakes
- Animal stick puppets



