

## God Brought His People Home

Ezra 1-3

## How did God plan to fix what sin broke?

Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah.

In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

Isaiah 25:9

### Story Point:

The exile was over, and God brought His people back to Jerusalem.



### PREPARE HEARTS

- Welcome - Finish It
- Starter Activity - A Firm Foundation



### ACTIVATE HEARTS

- 9:20 - Bible Lesson in LG2
- Review and discuss the Bible Story
- Reflection and Prayer
- Questions from Kids Video



### ENGAGE HEARTS

- Key Passage Activity - Building Blocks
- Group Activity - Re-Building the Foundation
- Group Activity - God Provides

## SHEPHERD GUIDE

The Bible is described as a book about God fulfilling His promises to His people, and in Ezra 1-3, we see how God fulfilled the promise He made to bring His people home after 70 years in captivity. God used King Cyrus of Persia to issue a decree that allowed the Israelites to return home.

Just as the prophecies of Daniel remind us of God's control over the kingdoms of the world, so do the first few verses of Ezra. We learn how God "roused" the spirit of King Cyrus to move him to release the Israelites. God's control over kings and kingdoms was even more evident because Cyrus didn't send the Israelites home empty-handed. They returned with resources provided by the king and their neighbors. Only God could reverse the Israelites' fortunes in such a quick way—from exiles with nothing to a returning remnant with resources to rebuild.

God often works through a remnant of people, no matter how large that group may be. Once this remnant of God's people returned to their homeland, they set about the process of rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple. At the center of their rebuild, the leaders of the people rightly recognized the importance of worship. Just a few months after returning from exile, they began rebuilding the altar of God so they could restart their worship according to God's commands. They knew the rebuild would only succeed when God's people turned to Him in proper worship, turning away from their sin and obeying Him.

Before the foundation of the temple was laid, the leaders rebuilt the altar, demonstrating their desire for God's people to atone for their sin. Through opposition and uncertainty, they established a place for the priests to offer burnt sacrifices on behalf of the people.

Like the remnant of Israelites, we need to remember that true restoration begins with a reconnection of God through worship. We were created to worship God and glorify His name. Encourage kids to remember that before we try to rebuild the outer elements of our lives, we must first prioritize the exaltation of our Savior.

**REMINDER:** Our VIP meeting is from 8:30-8:40 in C1. Your supply bin will be in your classroom.

## MAIN TAKEAWAYS: We want our kids to:

- \*KNOW that God keeps His promises.
- \*BE joyful in God's faithfulness.
- \*WORSHIP God and OBEY His Word.



*As children arrive - Welcome them by name and invite them to play with you and the other children. Use this time to get to know your kids - ask them about their week, about their likes and dislikes and about their school, family and friends.*

*Ways to connect - Play a game from the closet, color or draw together, build with legos/blocks, etc.*

*When most kids have arrived for first service (by 9:05ish), ask them to clean up the toys and find a seat at one of the tables to begin the class.*

*\*Pen Pal Kit!!*



## PREPARE HEARTS

### OPENING QUESTIONS:

- What do you love most about your home?
- What do you like to do at home?

### WELCOME

#### Finish It

activity page,  
pencils,  
markers

Invite kids to complete the "Finish It" activity page.

Today, we will see how God's people came home to Jerusalem and how they finished building the new temple's foundation



### STARTER

#### A Firm Foundation

- Books of the Bible names on sheets of paper (4 sets)
- Wall tape

Before the session, write the following Bible book names on individual sheets of paper: Exodus, Ruth, Ezra, Jeremiah, John, Ephesians, Hebrews. Create four sets. (This will already be done for you!)

Form kids into two teams and provide each team with a Bible and tape. Tell kids that you will distribute a set of papers with the names of Bible books on them.

Explain that groups will work together to find the book in their Bible. When they do, they should send one kid to bring the Bible to you and show you the book. Then the team can tape their Bible book paper to a wall to begin laying a "foundation." The first team to find all the books and lay a "foundation" wins.

**SAY:** Today, we will see how God's people returned to Jerusalem and began to build the new temple's foundation. Yet, the temple was only a building. The people needed a better foundation to trust in. Jesus is the firm foundation we can build our life upon. The whole Bible points to Jesus and tells us how He came to save us from sin. Jesus will never disappoint us or let us down. He is faithful, and all who trust in Him will be gathered to live with Him forever.



## ACTIVE MINDS

### INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

(Quick 1 minute review!)

9:20 – 9:35

K - 4<sup>th</sup> Grade in LG2

### BIBLE STORY:

#### God Brought His People Home

Bibles, Powerpoint slides

Taught by the Bible Teacher:

Quick Review of where we are in the Big Story of the Bible and Big Picture Question:

**How did God plan to fix what sin broke?** Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah.

Open your Bible to Ezra 1-3.

#### STORYTELLING OPTIONS / TIPS:

**Roar like lions:** As you read the story, invite kids to “roar” each time they hear the word “lion.” Encourage kids to consider how God has control over all His creation, even the scariest animals.

**Read Matthew 6:5-6:** Read these verses in the New Testament, where Jesus taught how to pray. Remind kids that Daniel was not praying to be seen like the religious leaders in Jesus’ story. Instead, Daniel prayed to God by faith and for the glory of God.

God, through the prophet Jeremiah, promised that He would bring his people back to Jerusalem after 70 years of captivity. Just as God promised, King Cyrus of Persia issued a decree, saying:

“The Lord has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build him a house in Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people may go to Jerusalem to build the house of the Lord, the God of Israel. Give your silver, gold, and livestock to them so they may bring these gifts to Jerusalem and offer them to God.”

God’s people prepared to go to Jerusalem and build the Lord’s house. All their neighbors supported them with gifts of silver, gold, livestock, and valuables. King Cyrus also gave back some of the riches that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple of God.

A few months after they arrived in Jerusalem, Jeshua the priest, Zerubbabel, and their brothers began to build the altar of God so that they could sacrifice burnt offerings on it morning and evening according to the law of Moses. They also celebrated all the festivals and holy days as the Lord commanded in the law. Then, they began to buy the supplies needed to rebuild the temple.

Two years after God’s people arrived in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and their brothers appointed the Levites to oversee the work on the Lord’s house. Once they had laid the foundation of the temple, the priests led the people to praise God with trumpets and cymbals. They sang, “The Lord is good. His faithful love to Israel endures forever.” All the people gave a great shout of praise.

While most people were happy, some of the older priests remembered the first temple. This new foundation was not as magnificent as the original temple, and they wept loudly. The people could not tell the difference between those who were weeping loudly and those who were shouting for joy.

## CHRIST CONNECTION

Just as God promised, He brought His people back from exile to Jerusalem. One day, God will bring all His people together—all who trust in Jesus to save them from sin. There will be no crying that day. The people will worship Him in the new heaven and new earth.



### REVIEW AND DISCUSS

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Allow time to have the children think and process - however this works best for your class. We want our kids to feel known and heard!

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Blank paper, Bible Story coloring page, colored pencils/crayons

**In small groups (or as a large group), use the coloring page (on the other side of the worksheet) and have children color while you talk through these questions.**

God always keeps His promises! He promised to bring His people back to Jerusalem, and He did. Although King Cyrus was the ruler over Persia, God was always in control of everything that was happening. God worked through King Cyrus to bring an end to the exile of His people. **Do you remember what King Cyrus gave God's people to take back home with them?** [Allow responses.] Their neighbors gave them gold, silver, and animals. The king even gave back some of the treasures that had been taken from God's temple! God provided for His people just like He provided for us. We can always trust Him no matter what.

When the people returned to Jerusalem, they rebuilt the altar, offered sacrifices, and obeyed the commands of God's law. **What did the people do next?** [Allow responses.] The people began to rebuild the temple by laying down the temple's foundation.

**Why were some people sad when they saw the new foundation for the temple?** [Allow responses.] Some of the elders remembered the beauty of the old temple and were sad those days were gone. But God had a bigger plan. God brought His people back to their land, and He was planning to bring people back to Himself through the promised Savior. One day, God will bring all His people together—all who trust in Jesus to save them from sin. There will be no crying that day. The people will worship Him in the new heaven and new earth.



## Reflection and Prayer

Have children use a blank sheet of paper. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions. Or, just talk about it together.

• **What does this story teach me about God?**

*That God always keeps His promises. That God provided for the Israelites need and He provides for our needs as well.*

• **What does this story teach me about myself?**

*That I can trust God. That I can praise God and be thankful for all He has done for me. That I can obey God and worship Him in all I say and do.*

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we thank You for letting us gather together to learn about Your faithfulness in bringing Your people back to Jerusalem. This week, remind us of Your goodness to us, and help us trust in Your plans for our lives. Guide us to live out the lessons we've learned today, and may our hearts be filled with gratitude and praise. Amen.



## Questions from Kids Video

USB on TV

Show the "Unit 16, Session 4" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

- How much do we need to trust in Jesus to go to heaven?
- This earth is not Christians' forever home. Why will the new heaven and earth be better?



## ENGAGE HEARTS

### Key Passage Activity:

### Building Blocks

- Key Passage Poster
- Wooden blocks or legos
- Tape

Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Isaiah 25:9 together.

**SAY:** God's people were released from captivity in Babylon just as God promised. When they returned home, they began rebuilding a house of worship for God. They recognized God's faithful love and that He deserved their worship. God deserves our worship too!

Form kids into four groups and give each group a stack of blocks and slips of paper with the key passage on it.

Have them tape a piece of paper on each block. Then, challenge them to place the blocks in the correct order of the key passage in some sort of tower/temple shape. The first group to do so wins.





## Re-building the Foundation

- Worksheet
- Markers
- Colored Pencils
- Pencils

Talk about how the Israelites re-built the foundation of the temple when they came back to Jerusalem. Discuss how they think the Israelites would have been feeling.

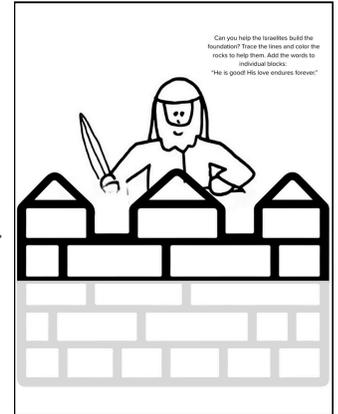
- examples - happy to be back, sad that their city was destroyed, thankful that God kept His promise, overwhelmed about how much work there was to do, etc.

Share how when they were rebuilding the foundation of the temple, they stopped to sing praises to God! Read Ezra 3:10-11.

Pass out the worksheet and have them help build the foundation by tracing the outline of the bricks and coloring them in. Have them add the words: **“He is good, His love endures forever!”** to individual bricks.

**SAY:** For any building to stand tall and strong, it must have a solid foundation. The people rebuilt the temple’s foundation using the materials God provided. We build our lives on the Savior God has provided: Jesus Christ. When our lives are built on Jesus, we can stand firm and secure, knowing He will always be faithful no matter what we face.

On the bottom layer of bricks, have the children add the words “Jesus Christ” as a reminder that we can stand firm and secure on Him.



## God Provides

- None

Prompt kids to think about the answer to the question, “How has God provided for you?”

Allow kids to think about their answer for about one minute. Then, invite kids to raise their hand and give their answer.

Write each kid’s answer on a dry erase board, emphasizing how much God has provided and how good He is to provide for our needs.

Remind kids of how God provided for His people as they returned to Jerusalem. Read Luke 1:68. Discuss how God provided what we need most: salvation. Tell kids that God kept His promise to send Jesus into the world to save people from their sins.

**SAY:** God provided for His people in the Bible, and He provides for us today! Everything we have is a gift from God, including the forgiveness of sins. We can praise God for how He sent Jesus to save us. And we can live in ways that model His generosity. As God gives us good gifts, we can share our good gifts with others.