

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 - Find the Way Home
- 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 - Promise Punch

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's the longest trip you've taken? Where did you go?
- What was the first thing you did when you returned home?

Invite kids to complete the "Find the Way Home" activity page.

Today, we will learn that God's people were able to return to Jerusalem after being in exile for seventy years.

WELCOME

Find the Way Home

activity page,
pencils,
markers



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 - 4th 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

**

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!

**

In small groups (or as a large group), talk through these questions.

God's people had lived in Babylon many years, and the kingdom of Babylon had been conquered by the Persians. **Who was the new king, and what did God move him to do?** Look at Ezra 1:1-2 [Ask a volunteer to read Ezra 1:1-2 aloud.] Cyrus of Persia had become king, and he issued a decree allowing anyone to return to Jerusalem and begin rebuilding the Lord's temple. Even though Cyrus was king, God was in control and His plans for His people would be fulfilled.

How did God provide for His people so they could rebuild the temple and have supplies to meet their needs? Look at Ezra 1:5-7. [Ask a volunteer to read Ezra 1:5-7 aloud.] God also moved the people's spirits to give treasures and materials to help with the rebuilding of the temple. Not only were God's people released to go home, but God provided for all their needs.

Two years after God's people arrived in Jerusalem, they began to rebuild the temple. Finally, the people finished laying the temple's foundation. **How did the people respond?** Look at Ezra 3:10-12. [Ask a volunteer to read Ezra 3:10-12 aloud.] Some people praised God and were happy the foundation was complete. Other people were sad because they missed the first temple. Yet despite both reactions, God had been faithful to His people. The exile was over, and God brought His people back to Jerusalem just as He promised. The people had many reasons to be thankful and offer praise to God for His mercy shown to them.



Reflection and Prayer

Journal Page

Have children use their journal page. 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

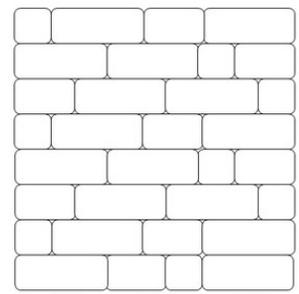
Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Isaiah 25:9 together.

Key Passage Activity:

Building Blocks

- Key Passage Poster

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!



Draw "brick" rectangles on the white board and write the words from the key passage in each "brick". Review the verse several times as a group.

Choose one kid to erase a word from a brick. Have the class say the verse together, filling in the blank as they go. That kid will choose another kid to erase another word or two.

Continue in this way until the whole verse is erased. Challenge the kids to say the whole verse together without any of the words left on the board.



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.



Promise Punch

- Cups with bible verse reference inside - covered with tissue paper (2 sets)
- Promise Punch slips of paper
- Pens
- Bibles

Set out the cups with the following bible verse references on a table in front of the class. There will be two sets, each set will have a different color of tissue paper on top.

- John 1:12-13
- John 5:25
- John 14:27
- 1 John 1:9
- 1 Peter 1:3-4



| Promise Punch | |
|--|-------|
| What does God promise in these verses? | |
| John 1:12-13 - | _____ |
| John 5:25 - | _____ |
| John 14:27 - | _____ |
| 1 John 1:9 - | _____ |
| 1 Peter 1:3-4 - | _____ |

Form kids into two teams and assign each team a color. Provide each team member with a Bible, a pen, and a “Promise Punch” slip of paper. Explain that each team will send a kid to a cup of their color from the table. They will punch it, and bring the slip of paper back to their team. Together, the team will look up the reference. Then teams will write down what the verse promises on their piece of paper. Once they write down their answer, they can send another kid to a cup to punch and bring back another slip. Repeat until each team punches all their cups. Once both teams are done, review their answers and talk about how God keeps His promises.

SAY: God kept His promise to bring His people home, and He has promised followers of Jesus many wonderful gifts. He promises eternal life, peace, forgiveness of sin, and so much more! God’s love endures forever, and He will keep His promises.