

REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

EZRA 4-6; HAGGAI 1-2



KEY PASSAGE: Isaiah 25:9

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

CHRIST CONNECTION: God's people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to worship God. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Jesus provides something better than the temple; He gives us Himself.

STORY POINT: God's people rebuilt the temple to worship Him.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

Like many projects, rebuilding the temple began with enthusiasm and purpose, but eventually the work stopped. Upon their return from exile, God's people were excited about rebuilding the temple and having a place to worship their God. Eventually their passion for rebuilding diminished due to the opposition they faced from their enemies. Instead, the people turned their efforts to work on their own dwellings.

God used the prophet Haggai to remind His people of the importance of rebuilding the temple. Specifically, the prophet asked the people why their houses were completed and adorned beautifully when the house of the Lord lay in ruins. Because of the encouragement of the prophet, the people returned to rebuilding the temple. This time, they would persevere through all of the challenges to complete the rebuild.

So why was the rebuilding of the temple so important for the people of God who had returned from exile? For them, the temple was the place where the presence of God dwelt among them. Following the Exodus, God's manifest presence was experienced by His people in a number of ways. He dwelt with His people in the cloud and fire that guided and protected the Israelites on their journey. He dwelt with His people in a movable tabernacle where they were able to worship. And eventually, God dwelt with His people in Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. When the temple was destroyed, it was symbolic of God removing His presence from His people. When God's people returned, the rebuilding of the temple demonstrated God was with His people, inviting them to return to Him in prayer and worship (2 Chronicles 6:36-39).

Today, we are reminded that our God does not dwell in a house made by the hands of people. When Jesus died on the cross, a symbolic act occurred in the temple. At the moment of Jesus' death, the curtain in the temple that separated the people from God's presence split from top to bottom. The splitting of the curtain demonstrated our new reality that Jesus' death and victory over sin and the grave gives us direct access to the Father. Remind kids that God desires to be with them, and through faith in Christ, believers are promised His presence forever.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10-15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25-30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- "Search It" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- plastic cups, 6 per team
- rubber bands, 6 per team
- 2-foot-long strings, 3 or 4 per team



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- dry erase boards, 2
- dry erase markers, 2
- music

Activity Choice (Option 2)

- craft sticks, 24

Journal and Prayer

- Journal Page
- "Complete It" activity page



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- countdown video
- Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- "Rebuilding the Temple" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Questions from Kids

- "Unit 17, Session 2" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment

- "Jim and Jean Leeper Photos" printable

Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- "This Is the Lord (Isaiah 25:9)" song
- worship song of your choice (optional)



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY “What’s a project or craft you’ve worked on? Were you ever afraid you wouldn’t finish it? Why or why not?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “Search It” activity page.

SAY “Today, we will learn how a new king of Persia searched the royal records to see if God’s people could rebuild the temple.”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: TOUGH BUILD

Before the session, gather six plastic cups per group of three or four kids. Place a rubber band around the center of each cup. Then tie three or four strings around each rubber band. Each string should be about 2 feet in length. On your start, challenge kids to each grab one of the strings on a cup and lift the cup by moving the string upward. Direct kids to stack the cups into a pyramid. Kids will need to manipulate the strings to turn the cups over and lift them up or down. If the rubber band comes off the cups, kids can pull the strings to stretch the rubber band back around the cup. Kids can only use the strings to contract and compress the rubber band against each cup to move it. The first team to stack all of the cups wins.

SAY “It was challenging to stack the cups, wasn’t it? Today, we will see how God’s people faced challenges as they worked to rebuild God’s temple. We’ll learn how they worked together and how God provided the way for the temple to be rebuilt.”

OPTION 2: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR



Before the session, set up chairs to form a circle. Make sure there is one less chair than the total number of kids. Select one volunteer to begin by standing in the middle. All the other kids must choose a seat. The volunteer in the middle will say, “I love my neighbor who...” and complete the sentence with broad statements. Examples include: “I love my neighbor who has a dog, plays soccer, like cheeseburgers, has brown eyes, etc.” All kids who the statements applies to, including the kid in the middle, must move and find a new chair. Whoever is left standing will now be in the middle and will call out the next statement.

SAY “You made statements about loving your neighbor, and in the Bible, God calls us to love one another. Did you know that loving others is a way to worship God? Everything we do can be an act of worship to God when we do it for His glory and with hearts that love Him. Today, we will see how **GOD’S PEOPLE REBUILT THE TEMPLE TO WORSHIP HIM.**”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “ Welcome, kids! My name is [your name], and I’m excited to share our Bible story with you as we learn about how God’s people rebuilt the temple. If you brought your Bible, can you please hold it up? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] Today, our story comes from the books of Ezra and Haggai in the Old Testament.

We’ve learned how God kept His promise and brought His people home to Jerusalem. The people laid the temple’s foundation, but the temple was still unfinished. Today, we will learn that **GOD’S PEOPLE REBUILT THE TEMPLE TO WORSHIP HIM**. [Display the Story Point Poster.] Let’s pray together: ‘God, we know You are all-powerful and in control of everything. Just as You helped Your people rebuild the temple to worship You, You made the way for us to worship You anywhere through faith in Jesus. In Jesus’ name, amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “ Last week, we learned our big picture question: **How did God plan to fix what sin broke?** Do you remember the answer? [Allow responses.] The answer is, **Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah**. Let’s say the answer one more time: **Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah**.

The word ‘Messiah’ refers to the promised Savior who would come from God’s people—particularly, the line of Judah. In the New Testament, Messiah is translated as ‘Christ,’ which is why we call Jesus, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah who came to save people from sin and fix what sin broke. Today, as we hear about how **GOD’S PEOPLE REBUILT THE TEMPLE TO WORSHIP HIM**, we can remember that true worship can only happen when we first place our faith in Jesus. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “ Let’s review what we’ve learned over the past few weeks. First, we saw how God’s people were exiled to Babylon because of their sin. But we also learned through Jeremiah and Ezekiel that God promised to restore the land to His people and be their God forever. Next, we learned how Daniel was faithful to God in Babylon, and he was blessed with wisdom.

We also saw how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship the gold statue, and God rescued them. Then we learned how Daniel had visions, showing that God’s kingdom will last forever. Finally, last week, we saw that after 70 years, the exile was over, and God brought His people back to Jerusalem. Today, we will learn how God’s people rebuilt the temple. ”



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Ezra 4:6-22; 5:3,6-17; 6:1-5,16, 22; Haggai 1:3-14; 2:9. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Rebuilding the Temple.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

“When God’s enemies who lived in Judah heard that the people of God had returned and were rebuilding the temple of the Lord, they decided to stop them.

They wrote a letter to Artaxerxes (ahr tuh ZUHRK seez), king of Persia. The letter said, “Let it be known to the king that the Jews who traveled from your nation have returned to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding the city, finishing its walls, and repairing its foundations. We are loyal to the king, and believe that once the city is finished, the people will not pay taxes to you anymore. Search your record books, and you will discover that the city is rebellious and harmful to you.”

The king replied, “I searched our records and discovered that this city has rebelled against kings in the past. Therefore, I order the people to stop building the city until another decree from me.” The people stopped rebuilding the temple until King Darius became king of Persia.

God sent the prophet Haggai to speak His words to the people. The Lord said through Haggai, “Is it time for you to live in a nice house, while the house of God lies in ruins? Think carefully of your ways. Rebuild my house, and then I will send rain for the crops and help you prosper. Work, for I am with you! I promise that this temple will one day have more glory than the one that came before!”

The people obeyed and started to build again. Then Tattenai, the governor of the region, said, “Who gave you the order to rebuild this temple?” Tattenai sent a letter to King Darius that said, “Let it be known to the king that the people of God are once again rebuilding the temple. When I asked them why they were rebuilding, they told me that many years ago, King Cyrus issued an order to rebuild the temple of God. He also gave us the gold and silver that had been taken from the first temple. We have been rebuilding the temple from that time until now.”

King Darius searched his royal records and found the order from King Cyrus. He knew the people were telling the truth. He issued a new law: “Leave the people of God alone, and let them rebuild the temple. In addition, you are to use all the tax money from that region to pay for everything that is needed to rebuild the temple. If anyone interferes with this order, they will be punished.”

The people finished the temple and had a great celebration. They resumed the worship of God at the temple and celebrated the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The people were glad and rejoiced in God.

STORYTELLING TIPS

Turn to it: Invite kids to open their Bibles to Ezra and Haggai.

Active listening: Tell the kids to place one fist on top of the other. Any time you say the words “rebuild” or “build” they can reverse their fists with a pounding motion.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

Christ Connection: God's people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to worship God. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Jesus provides something better than the temple; He gives us Himself. ”

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ When God's people returned to Jerusalem and began rebuilding the temple, their enemies in Judah wanted to stop them. Why did King Artaxerxes order the people to stop rebuilding the temple? Look at Ezra 4:18-21. [Ask a volunteer to read Ezra 4:18-21 aloud.] God's enemies wrote a letter to King Artaxerxes of Persia, warning him that the Jews were rebuilding their city and might refuse to pay taxes once it was completed. King Artaxerxes discovered that Jerusalem had been rebellious in the past. Because of this, he ordered the construction to stop. The people obeyed the king's command and stopped rebuilding the temple.

But God's plans cannot be stopped! Later, God sent the prophet Haggai to encourage the people to start building again. What did the prophet Haggai tell the people to do, and what did God promise them? Look at Haggai 1:7-11. [Ask a volunteer to read Haggai 1:7-11 aloud.] Through Haggai, God reminded them that while they were living in nice houses, His temple was still in ruins. He promised that if they obeyed and rebuilt the temple, He would bless them by sending rain for their crops and helping them prosper. The people listened to God's message and began working again.

God's people faced challenges again, however, when Tattenai questioned their right to rebuild. How did God prove He is greater than anyone and His plans will succeed? Look at Ezra 6:3. [Ask a volunteer to read Ezra 6:3 aloud.] Years before Darius became king, God moved the heart of King Cyrus to allow the people to rebuild the temple. King Darius searched the royal records and found proof that King Cyrus had ordered the temple to be rebuilt. **GOD'S PEOPLE REBUILT THE TEMPLE TO WORSHIP HIM.** They observed the Passover and rejoiced in God's faithfulness. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ God's people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to worship God. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Jesus provides something better than the temple; He gives us Himself. When we confess that Jesus is Lord, we are restored to a right relationship with God and will worship Him forever! ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 17, Session 2” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How do we know if we have the Holy Spirit of God in us?
2. Through the Holy Spirit, we can worship God anywhere. How do you worship God, no matter where you are?



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Display the “Jim and Jean Leeper Photos” printable. Tell kids that Jim Leeper grew up in Houston, Texas, and in Dayton, Kentucky. Later, Jim moved to Illinois to attend college where he met a woman named Jean. Jim and Jean were married in 1959. Share how the Leepers were appointed as missionaries to Turkey in 1965.

SAY “ Jim and Jean served as missionaries in Turkey for about 12 years until they were forced to leave by the Turkish government. After leaving Turkey, they went to Germany where they served the people of Calvary Church. Many of the people at Calvary Church were young married couples. Jim and Jean formed relationships with these young people and helped disciple them so they could grow in their faith. Many of the young people were only in Germany for one to two years, but the Leepers wanted the people to go back to their homes knowing how important it is to participate in missions so people in other countries can know about Jesus. ”

Pray, asking God to lead others to become missionaries around the world. Ask God to help your group think of ways you can encourage missionaries serving in your country and missionaries serving abroad.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Isaiah 25:9 together.

SAY “ God wanted His people to build the temple, and He even gave them the support of the king. God wanted the people to gather together and worship Him, because He is worthy. ”

Lead kids in repeating the key passage after you. Recite the words in various voices such as robot, pirate, high-pitched, and low-pitched. Invite kids to share different voices to try.

Lead kids to sing “This Is the Lord (Isaiah 25:9).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “ Lord, we give You all praise. Thank You, Father, for all of the ways You care for us. Thank You for providing the way to be saved through Your Son, Jesus. Thank You for loving us so much. Help us love You and worship You in spirit and in truth. Amen. ”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Haggai 1. Explain that the book of Haggai is in the Minor Prophets division of the Old Testament. Remind kids that Haggai was a prophet who God used to encourage His people after they returned to Jerusalem.

Consider pointing out Jerusalem (H5) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Haggai 1:12 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verse.

SAY “ God spoke through Haggai and told the people to keep rebuilding the temple. The people obeyed because they loved and feared the Lord. This means God’s people had a right respect for Him by recognizing that God is greater than anything else. He is worthy of our obedience.

God speaks to us through His Word, the Bible. As we read God’s words, we can ask Him to help us obey Him and respect Him. We worship God and demonstrate our love for Him when we joyfully obey His commands. ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “ Why should we obey God even when others might challenge our obedience? ”

Discuss how God deserves our obedience because He is greater than anyone or anything. Even when others might encourage us to disobey, we can remember that God loves us and always wants what is best for us. Loving and obeying God will bring us the most joy. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Acts 5:29.)

SAY “ The prophet Haggai reminded the people to put God first. How can we show God is most important? ”

Answers will vary. Share that God is worthy of being as the most important person in our lives. Encourage kids to think about how they can seek God through prayer, the choices they make, reading His Word, etc. Tell kids that those who trust in Jesus desire to seek Him above everything else.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matt. 6:31-33.)

SAY “ What are some ways you can celebrate and worship God for how He has worked in your life? ”

Answers will vary. Remind kids that God was working in His people’s lives and providing the way for them to continue rebuilding the temple. Tell kids that God is working in our lives in more ways than we can recognize. Discuss how no matter what we are facing or what will come, God is worthy of our worship. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 95:1-3.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: STOP AND GO



Form kids into two teams. Place a dry erase board at the front of the room. Give each team a dry erase marker. Explain that each team will try to be the first to write the story point: **GOD'S PEOPLE REBUILT THE TEMPLE TO WORSHIP HIM.** Tell kids they can only write while the music is playing. When the music stops, they must stop writing. Allow each kid to write the story point while you play and stop the music. The first kid to finish writing the story point earns a point for their team. Play until all kids have had a turn to write the story point.

SAY “ Our game was similar to the process of the people rebuilding the temple—a lot of stop and go. But God was faithful, and He provided the way for the temple to be rebuilt. God had prepared the way through King Cyrus’ order. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to make the way for us to be saved. Jesus provides something better than the temple; He gives us Himself. ”

OPTION 2: GOD SPEAKS

Before the session, write the following books on craft sticks: Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Create two sets.

Form kids into two groups. Provide each group with a Bible and a set of craft sticks out of order. On your start, challenge each group to arrange the craft sticks in the correct order. Allow kids to use their Bible for help. The first team to arrange them in the correct order wins.

SAY “ The Bible book names you arranged are the 12 Minor Prophets found in the Old Testament. Today, we saw that Haggai was a prophet who God used to speak to His people, encouraging them to keep rebuilding the temple. Today, God speaks to us through the Bible. As we read God’s Word, we discover more about God and His plan to save people from sin. Like the people listened to God’s words through Haggai, God desires that we obey His words in the Bible. ”

2 JOURNAL AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page. As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas.

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

Review the gospel and encourage kids to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions. Then pray, praising God for providing Jesus so we can worship Him wherever we are. As time allows, lead kids to complete “Complete It” on the activity page.