

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

- "Rebuild the Temple" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- blindfolds, 3 or 4
- 4–5 feet long rope



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 2)

- empty cardboard tube, 1 per group
- tape
- dry erase board and marker

Reflection and Prayer

- Bible story coloring 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
- dry erase board and marker (optional)

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)
- ball of yarn



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 “Have you ever had something break and you needed to fix it? What was it? How did you fix it?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “Rebuild the Temple” activity page.

SAY “Your temple drawings look great! Today, we will learn how God’s people continued to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: SHAPING TOGETHER

Invite three or four volunteers to sit before the group. Place a blindfold on each kid. Then provide the kids with a 4–5 feet long rope. Challenge the kids to create the shape you call out, such as a square, triangle, circle, oval, etc. Invite the remaining kids to offer help by instructing the kids how to manipulate the rope into the correct shape. Allow the kids 30–45 seconds to create the shape. Then remove the blindfolds so they can see how they did. Repeat, inviting a new group of kids to create a shape.

SAY “What was the most challenging part of forming the shape? [Allow responses.] While challenging at times, you all showed that by working together and following instructions you were willing to create the shape. Today, we will learn that God’s people were working to rebuild the temple. But as they did, they also faced challenges. However, we’ll see that when they trusted God, obeyed Him, and worked together, they were able to rebuild the temple.”

OPTION 2: ISSUE AN ORDER



Choose one kid to be It. Direct It to give orders for the other kids to obey. However, kids must only obey when It says, “The king says...” For example, It may say “The king says hop on one foot” or “Spin in a circle.” Kids who follow the order without the phrase “The king says” are out. Play as time allows, inviting different kids to be It.

SAY “Great job following the orders! Today, we’ll see how a king searched the royal records for an order that would allow God’s people to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. We’ll learn that **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 so happy you are here to learn from God’s Word, the Bible. If you brought your Bible, can you please hold it up? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] The Bible is how God speaks to us, and through it, God shares His most wonderful plan: how to save people from sin by faith in His Son, Jesus!

Last week, we saw how God’s people returned to Jerusalem and built the foundation of the temple. 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 that You control kings and kingdoms to bring about Your purposes. Guide us to listen with our hearts and minds as we read about how You called Your people to obey and worship You.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “ We’ve started learning the 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**.

God’s plans never fail. Just as we’ll learn how God planned for His people to rebuild the temple, God also planned to make the way for Messiah to come into the world. 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

Draw and tell: Draw pictures or write names on a dry erase board as you tell the story.

Active listening: Encourage kids to make a sad face each time God’s enemies try to stop the people and clap each time God makes a way for His people to keep rebuilding.



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 “ The plans to rebuild the temple came to a sudden stop when God's enemies wrote a letter to the king. Can you remember what King Artaxerxes did when he received the letter? [Allow responses.] King Artaxerxes ordered God's people to stop building the temple. For sixteen years no one worked on the temple. But even when it looked like the temple would not be completed, God's plans cannot be stopped. God was working in His perfect timing.

Who was the prophet God sent to His people, and what did he say? [Allow responses.] God instructed Haggai to remind the people to obey Him and keep rebuilding the temple! God had protected His people from other kings and rulers, and He protected His people from those who tried to stop them from finishing the temple. Maybe you have felt like giving up because something was too hard or you didn't understand how God was working. Sometimes we all need a little encouragement. We can be comforted with the truth that even when things are difficult, God is with His people and His plans will never fail.

Why were God's people able to continue rebuilding the temple? [Allow responses.] King Darius discovered that King Cyrus had given an order to rebuild the temple many years before. God had provided the way for the temple to be finished years before! Our God is able to use people, both mighty and small, to accomplish His plans. **GOD'S PEOPLE REBUILT THE TEMPLE TO WORSHIP HIM.** God calls us to worship Him, and we don't need a temple to worship God. God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Jesus provides something better than the temple; He gives us Himself. Anyone who trusts in Jesus can worship God anytime or any place because His Spirit lives in us. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ God provided us with something better than a temple; God provided us with Jesus! The temple could not save people or make them right with God. Instead, God sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins. When we confess that Jesus is Lord, we are restored to a 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?

**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 abroad.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

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

SAY “ God’s people had to wait to rebuild the temple, and they had to wait for His promised salvation. We can rejoice because God has fulfilled His promise through Jesus Christ. Let’s work on learning our key passage which reminds us of the promised salvation we have through Jesus. ”

Instruct kids to stand in a circle. Direct one kid to say the first word or phrase of the key passage aloud while holding a ball of yarn. Then she should toss the yarn to a kid in the circle. Invite him to say the next word or phrase of the key passage. Continue until the entire key passage has been recited and a web of yarn has formed.

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 “ God, we praise You because You have kept Your promise to send Jesus to save us from sin. Give us the confidence to share the joy of salvation with those who don’t know Jesus. Amen. ”





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 2. Explain that the book of Haggai is in the Minor Prophets division of the Old Testament. Tell kids that Haggai was a prophet of God.

Consider pointing out Jerusalem (H5) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Haggai 2:4 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verse aloud.

SAY “ Haggai encouraged God’s people to remember that because God was with them, they could be strong and continue the work He called them to do. With God’s help, His people would not fail, and they would rebuild the temple.

We can be strong in the Lord, remembering that because of Jesus, God is with us. This is one reason why Jesus is greater than the temple. The temple could only be in one place at one time. But Jesus is with His people in any place at any time because the Holy Spirit lives in them. Not only that, but Jesus saves us from sin! The temple couldn’t save people or make them right with God. Believers can have confidence and hope to do any work God calls them to do because He is with them. ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “ Haggai encouraged God’s people with God’s words. How can we encourage others? ”

Answers will vary. Remind kids that the Bible is God’s Word to us, and we can share its truth with others, telling them of God’s promises and His plan to save people from sin. Share how all people need encouragement, and the Bible gives us the truth we need to hear.

SAY “ God’s Spirit lives in Christians. How would this help Christians be brave and obey God no matter what? ”

Discuss how the Holy Spirit guides people in truth. Even when others or the world might tempt us to disobey God, the Holy Spirit helps believers follow God by convicting them of what is true.

SAY “ What are some ways we can worship God? ”

Answers will vary. Prompt kids to think about how we can worship God through obedience to His commands and dependence on Him in prayer. Share how we can also worship God by loving one another, giving generously, turning away from sin, sharing the gospel, and so much more. Remind kids that God desires that we worship Him in Spirit and in truth.





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: OBEY THE LIGHT



Instruct kids to line up on the opposite side of the room from you. Explain that you are going to call out a light color, and the kids will move toward you accordingly. Green means walk, yellow means walk in slow motion, and red means stop. If any of the kids are still moving when you say “red light,” they must go back to the starting line. The first kid to reach the finish line wins. Consider adding in additional light colors, such as purple means hop or orange means crawl. For additional rounds, invite kids to call out the lights.

SAY “ During this game, you had moments when you had to stop and not go forward. God’s people had to stop a lot as their enemies tried to prevent them from rebuilding the temple. But God made a way for them to finish the temple. His plans can never be stopped! **GOD’S PEOPLE REBUILT THE TEMPLE TO WORSHIP HIM.** Through Jesus, God has made the way for us to be saved from our sin and worship Him forever. ”

OPTION 2: UNROLL THE SCROLL

Before the session, create a “scroll” by using tape to link eight pieces of paper together. Then tape one end of the linked papers to an empty cardboard tube and roll up the papers around the tube. Create a scroll for each team of three or four kids.

Write the story point on a dry erase board. Form kids into teams of three or four and give each kid a marker. Place each team’s scroll at one end of the room and lead teams to line up on the opposite end of the room. Explain that one kid from each team will run down to their scroll, unroll it, write the first word of the story point on the first paper, and roll the scroll back up. Kids will run back to their team, and the second kid will repeat the process, writing the second word of the story point on the second paper. The first team to finish writing the story point on their scroll wins.

SAY “ God was always in charge, and He provided for His people. King Darius found a scroll from King Cyrus that read: ‘Let the house be rebuilt as a place for offering sacrifices.’ The temple was rebuilt to worship God. God is always worthy of worship. ”

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.