

EZEKIEL GAVE HOPE

EZEKIEL 37



KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 145:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is holy, good, and loving.

CHRIST CONNECTION: God breathed life into dead bones in front of Ezekiel. The apostle Paul said that we are dead in our sins, but God gives us new life in Him when we trust in Jesus. God will forever be the God of all people who trust in Jesus.

STORY POINT: God promised to restore the land to His people and be their God forever.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

Have you ever had a lingering question or been in a difficult situation in which you knew only the Lord could truly answer or provide clarity? God presented an interesting question to the prophet Ezekiel amid a dire setting. The Spirit of God took Ezekiel to a valley of bones and asked him, “Son of man, can these bones live?” Ezekiel replied, “Lord God, only you know.” (Ezekiel 37:3).

God then instructed Ezekiel to speak to the bones, saying, “Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Lord God says to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you will live” (Ezekiel 37:5). Ezekiel did as God said, and as the prophet was speaking, the bones began to rattle and reconfigure into human bodies. After that, God told Ezekiel to prophesy to the breath, commanding it to breathe life into the dead bodies. Ezekiel did as he was instructed, and the beings came to life.

Ezekiel’s prophecy was a picture of the people of Israel. They were like dead bones with no hope, but God would give them life. God would make the way for those dead in their sin to have life resurrected.

Then God had Ezekiel take two sticks—one for Israel and one for Judah. He told Ezekiel to take the sticks in front of all the people and join them to make one stick. Through this imagery, God was demonstrating how He was going to take the Israelites out of the nations where they were scattered and bring them into their own land. God was going to unite His people and give them one King to rule over them.

Ezekiel reminded the people of the promise God had made to David hundreds of years before. The new King would come from the family of David, and He would have the power to raise dead, sinful people to life.

Without Jesus, we are like the dead bones with no future hope. We are dead in our sins. But by faith in Jesus Christ, we are made alive (Ephesians 2:1-5). God’s promise to Ezekiel remains true: King Jesus will unite all who trust in Him, and through the Holy Spirit we will walk in His ways.

Thank God for the hope we have because of Jesus. Remind boys and girls of the new life Jesus gives to those who trust in Him. As you point boys and girls to the God who can make dead bones come to life, pray for each kid to understand that nothing is too difficult for God.



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

- ☐ "Made New" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- ☐ flexible straws, 2
- ☐ strong tape
- ☐ paper bags, 2



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 2)

- ☐ hot plate or crock pot (optional)
- ☐ melted white chocolate chips
- ☐ pretzels, 10 per kid
- ☐ mini marshmallows, 20 per kid
- ☐ parchment paper, 1 sheet per kid
- ☐ plastic tablecloths, 1 per table
- ☐ plastic baggies, 1 per kid

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

- ☐ "Ezekiel Gave Hope" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ hand-held fan (optional)

Questions from Kids

- ☐ "Unit 15, Session 5" Questions from Kids video

Key Passage Activity

- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "The Lord Is Good (Psalm 145:9)" 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 is something you own that you wish you could make new again? Maybe a bike or a doll. How could it be made new?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Made New” activity page.

SAY “Today, we will learn how God promised to give His people new life and return them to their land.”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: IN AND OUT

Before the session, create a lung model for kids to see how we breathe in and out. First, tape two flexible straws together, allowing the flexible ends to point away from each other. Then, tape a paper bag to the flexible end of each straw. Make sure no air can leak out and the tape is secure. For added fun, consider creating a “face” and taping it to the top of the straw, away from the “lungs.”

Ask kids to point to where their lungs are in their body. Ask kids what God made their lungs to do. Discuss how we can’t live without lungs because they supply our bodies with oxygen. Tell kids that we need breath to live. Demonstrate how our lungs work by slowly blowing air through the straws. The paper bags should inflate. Then inhale to deflate the paper bags, or squeeze the air out of the bags. Repeat several times.

SAY “Today, we will learn how the prophet Ezekiel saw a valley of dry bones. The bones were dead and had no breath in them. But we will see how God called the dry bones to hear the word of the Lord, and then caused breath to enter the dry bones so they came alive.”

☐ OPTION 2: GATHER THE STORY POINT



Before the session, write each word of the story point on individual sticky notes. Lead kids to stand in a circle. Place the sticky notes in the center of the circle. Add 10 other sticky notes of a different color to the pile. Choose four kids and give each kid a paper plate. Tell the four kids that their job is to “blow (or fan)” the sticky notes away from the other kids using their paper plate. When you say “go,” challenge kids to gather all the sticky notes with the story point within 30 seconds while the four kids try to “blow” them away. Play again, choosing four different kids to “blow” the sticky notes away.

SAY “Today, we will learn how God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel to give His people hope. Even though God’s people were like dry, dead bones, God would speak and breathe new life into them. **GOD PROMISED TO RESTORE THE LAND TO HIS PEOPLE AND BE THEIR GOD FOREVER.**”

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 today we will hear a Bible story that gave God’s people hope while they were in Babylon. Did you bring your Bible with you? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] Let’s open our Bibles to the book of Ezekiel. [Assist kids in finding Ezekiel in their Bible.]

Today, we will see how God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel to share good news: **GOD PROMISED TO RESTORE THE LAND TO HIS PEOPLE AND BE THEIR GOD FOREVER.** [Display the Story Point Poster.] Through this promise, God would also make the way for His people to have new life. We’ll see how God is able to take dead, sinful people and give them new life in Jesus. Let’s pray: ‘Dear God, thank You for Your words that bring life. Please help us to hear and believe what You say so we might live through Jesus. Amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “ What is God like? [Allow responses.] **God is holy, good, and loving.** As we finish learning our big picture question and answer, we can remember that God always acts for the good of His people. Even though His people sinned and deserved punishment, God promised to bring them back home and provide the way for them to have new life. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

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

SAY “ At this point on our timeline, both Israel and Judah had been destroyed by foreign nations. The king of Assyria attacked Israel and took the people captive. Then more than a hundred years later, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked Judah and took the people captive in Babylon. But God loved His people and wanted to give them hope and new life. Long before Israel or Judah sinned against God, He had promised to send a Savior who would give people new hearts and new life. Today, we will see how God spoke through Ezekiel to remind the people of this hope. ”



LEARN the Bible Story

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

Open your Bible to Ezekiel 37. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Ezekiel Gave Hope.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

EZEKIEL GAVE HOPE

“Ezekiel was a priest and a prophet. While God’s people were captives in Babylon, God called Ezekiel to give them hope. The Spirit of God led the prophet Ezekiel to the middle of a valley full of bones. God said to him, “Ezekiel, can these bones live?”

Ezekiel replied, “Only you know, LORD God.”

God told Ezekiel to speak to the bones and say, “Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! ‘I will cause breath to enter you, and you will live. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’”

While Ezekiel was saying these words, he heard a rattling sound, and the bones came together into the shape of people. Then, muscle and skin grew over the bones. They looked like people, but they were not alive; they were not breathing.

God said to Ezekiel, “Say to the breath: ‘Come from the four winds and breathe into these dead people so they may live!’” Ezekiel did so, and the breath entered them, and they came alive!

God explained to Ezekiel that this was a picture of the people of Israel. They were like dried up bones, without hope, but God would put His Spirit into them, and they would live and live in their own land. God said, “I have spoken, and I will do it. This is the declaration of the LORD.”

Then God told Ezekiel to take two sticks and write “Israel” on one, and “Judah” on the other. God told Ezekiel to take the sticks in front of all the people and join them into one stick, and then to say, “This is what God says: ‘I am going to bring all my people from the nations where they have gone. I will gather them and make them one nation again, and one king will rule over them, a descendant of King David. They will no longer worship idols, and they will follow my laws and obey Me. They will be my people, and I will be their God. My dwelling place will be with them. And when I make my home with them forever, all the nations will know that I make Israel holy.’”

Christ Connection: God breathed life into dead bones in front of Ezekiel. The apostle Paul said that we are dead in our sins, but God gives us new life in Him when we trust in Jesus. God will forever be the God of all people who trust in Jesus.”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Make facial expressions: As you tell the story, invite the kids to use facial expressions to show how Ezekiel might have felt. Remind them that God’s people were sad and hopeless as a result of their sin, but Ezekiel brought a message of hope.

Use a fan: Hold up a hand-held fan and walk about the room, blowing air on the kids as you tell about the breath God breathed into the dead bones.



2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ After leading Ezekiel to a valley of bones, God asked Ezekiel if dry bones could live. Ezekiel understood that only God knew the answer to that question. What did God tell Ezekiel to do? [Allow responses.] God commanded Ezekiel to speak to the bones and they would live. Then He told Ezekiel to call for breath to enter the bodies. Ezekiel obeyed God both times, and the bones that were once dead became living people.

What did God say this event was a picture of? [Allow responses.] God explained that the people of Israel were like dead bones without hope. But He promised Ezekiel that when He put His Spirit in them, they would live. Only God can make something dead come alive. This is a message of hope for all people because all people are dead in their sins (Ephesians 2:1-2). We all need to hear the good news about Jesus to be forgiven and be made alive.

What did God say the sticks showed? [Allow responses.] God promised He would bring Israel and Judah back together as one nation. **GOD PROMISED TO RESTORE THE LAND TO HIS PEOPLE AND BE THEIR GOD FOREVER.** Judah had been ruled by both good and bad kings, but God’s people were in need of a greater King who could make them alive and able to obey God. Jesus Christ is the only King who can raise our dead, sinful hearts back to life. Through faith in Jesus, people receive the Holy Spirit, who gives them power to obey God. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ The people of Israel and Judah were dead in their sin and without hope. The Bible tells us that we are dead in our sins, but God gives us new life in Him when we trust in Jesus. God sent His son Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. God will forever be the God of all people who trust in Jesus. Have you trusted in Jesus? ”

(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 15, Session 5” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. What does it mean to be raised to life again?
2. New life in Jesus means we want to follow His commands. How are you obeying His commands?

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Remind kids that many people in North Africa and the Middle East are Muslim or Jewish. Tell kids that these religions do not believe in Jesus as God’s one and only Son sent to save people from sin.

SAY “ Missionaries in North Africa and the Middle East have a heart for those who do not know



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

Jesus. They desire to display God's love to others so they can know what God is like and how He loves them. Missionaries share the gospel to offer hope: though people are dead in their sins, by faith in Jesus they can be made alive! Romans 10:14 reminds us how people cannot believe in Jesus if they have never heard about Him. Just as Ezekiel shared God's words, missionaries go and share the good news of Jesus so people may hear and believe. ”

Pray for missionaries serving in North Africa and the Middle East. Pray the people living in those areas will hear and believe the good news about Jesus.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Before the session, create two sets of key passage cards. Write a word from the key passage on each card, including the reference. Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Psalm 145:9 together.

SAY “ God is good! God shared with Ezekiel that He would not leave His people in Babylon. Just as He wanted to bring His people back to their land and be with them, God wants a relationship with us too. In His goodness, God sent Jesus so everyone who trusts in Him can be with Him forever. ”

Form kids into two groups and give each group a set of key passage cards. Challenge groups to arrange their cards as mirror images, being sure to place the cards in the correct order. Remind kids that God promised to bring His people together as one nation, and He promises to bring us into His family when we trust in Jesus.

Lead kids to sing “God Is Good (Psalm 145:9).” 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, thank You that You are good to everyone. You always remain faithful to Your people, despite our sin. Help us share the good news of Jesus with others so they can be made alive and live with You forever. In Jesus' name, amen. ”

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





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 Mediterranean Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Ezekiel 37. Explain to the kids that the book of Ezekiel was written by the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel was also a captive of Babylon.

Consider pointing to Babylon (E11) on the Old Testament Mediterranean Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ezekiel 37:21 or have the kids follow along as you read the verse aloud.

SAY “When the people were taken captive to Babylon, God promised they would only be in exile for 70 years. Through Ezekiel, God reminded the people of this promise and told them that He would bring them back to their own land. **GOD PROMISED TO RESTORE THE LAND TO HIS PEOPLE AND BE THEIR GOD FOREVER.**

When we trust in Jesus, God promises to be our God forever. We will live with Him in His kingdom, a kingdom without sin that will last forever. Just as Ezekiel gave the people hope while they were in Babylon, God gives His people hope through Jesus.”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “In the valley of dry bones, what did God tell Ezekiel to do first?”

Tell kids that God told Ezekiel to speak to the bones and say, “Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! ‘I will cause breath to enter you, and you will live. Then you will know that I am the Lord.’” Before we can be made alive and saved from sin, we first need to hear the gospel. We need someone to share God’s Word with us so we can know how to be saved from our sin.

SAY “The bones had flesh, but they were still dead. What did God tell Ezekiel to do next?”

Remind kids that God said to Ezekiel, “Say to the breath: ‘Come from the four winds and breathe into these dead people so they may live!’” Ezekiel obeyed God, and the dead people came alive when the breath entered them. Share how we can only be made alive when we trust in Jesus and the Holy Spirit comes to live inside us. Tell kids that the Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5-8). Explain that the Holy Spirit gives new life to people and helps us to live for God.

SAY “How can we, like Ezekiel, share hope with people?”

Encourage kids to remember that if they are a Christian, God has given them a message of hope. We call this message the gospel. God commands us to share the good news of how Jesus lived a perfect life in our place, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again to defeat sin and death forever. Anyone who trusts in Jesus will be saved from sin, made alive through the Holy Spirit, and live with God forever.

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





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: SAVE THE CITIZEN



Form kids into two teams. Use tape to divide the room in half. Instruct each team to select one kid from their team to be the “citizen.” The citizens must move over to the opposing team. Explain that each team’s goal is to save their “citizen” from the opposing team by bringing them back across the line. If kids are tagged by a member of the opposing team while trying to rescue the “citizen,” they are out. Play until a team has successfully saved their citizen. Then play again, choosing a new kid from each team to be the “citizen.”

SAY “ God’s people were in exile in Babylon because of their sin, but God gave Ezekiel a message of hope to share with God’s people. One day, God would rescue His people from Babylon and make the way for them to have new life. **GOD PROMISED TO RESTORE THE LAND TO HIS PEOPLE AND BE THEIR GOD FOREVER.** ”

☐ OPTION 2: EDIBLE BONES



Before the session, melt white chocolate chips in a sauce pan. Because the chocolate needs to remain melted, consider keeping the pan on a hot plate or melting the chocolate in a crock pot. Cover tables with plastic tablecloth.

Provide a sheet of parchment paper for each kid, 10 pretzel sticks, and 20 mini marshmallows. Lead kids to stick a marshmallow on each end of their pretzel sticks. Then carefully assist kids with covering their pretzels and marshmallows with the melted white chocolate. Place the pretzels on the parchment paper to dry. Provide plastic baggies for kids to take their edible bones home in.

SAY “ God breathed life into dead bones in front of Ezekiel. The apostle Paul said that we are dead in our sins, but God gives us new life in Him when we trust in Jesus. When we trust in Jesus, God promises to be our God forever, and we will live with Him in His kingdom. ”

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.