

GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE HOME

EZRA 1-3



CHRIST CONNECTION: God kept His promise and brought His people home. One day, God will bring all His people together to a new, perfect place where no one will cry anymore, and everyone will be happy and worship God forever.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How did God fix what sin broke? God sent Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: This is our God. We waited, and He saved us. Isaiah 25:9

STORY POINT: God brought His people back to Jerusalem.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

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 small 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.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10–15 MINUTES

Greet preschoolers and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach preschoolers the story of the gospel



LOVE

30–40 MINUTES

Lead preschoolers to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

Lead preschoolers to live the mission of the gospel



BONUS

60–65 MINUTES

Teach preschoolers for an additional hour



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a supply of the following items available during all teaching sessions: Allergy Alert, Bibles, washable markers, crayons, scissors (adult use), blunt-tipped scissors, construction paper, copy paper, glue sticks, glue, tape, baby dolls, blocks, play dough, and a beanbag.

WELCOME

Find gold and silver

- Big Picture Question Poster
- gold foil wrap
- silver foil wrap



LEARN

Name things that make you happy

- poster board

Tell the Bible story

- "God Brought His People Home" video (optional)

Review the Bible story

- Bible Story Picture Poster

Learn and practice the key passage phrase

- Key Passage Phrase Marker



LOVE

Dot paint letters

- heavyweight paper, 1 per child
- dot paint markers
- art smocks

Pack and pretend to move

- suitcase
- various trip packing items



LIVE

Celebrate together

- Key Passage Phrase Marker
- noisemakers

Missions activity

- "Jim and Jean Leeper" missions video

Snack and transition

- hand sanitizer (optional)
- "Circle Gifts" activity page, 1 per child
- Big Picture Cards for Families



BONUS

Say the key passage phrase

- Key Passage Phrase Marker

Paint paper hearts

- heavyweight paper
- art smocks
- washable finger paints

Build a house

- masking tape
- craft sticks



WELCOME Preschoolers

Provide as many learning activities as possible from the Love and Live sections to give preschoolers choices to learn. Incorporate the Bible story, the Christ Connection, story point, and key passage phrase in your conversations as the preschoolers engage in learning activities throughout the session.

Use the following activity to greet children as they enter the room. Talk about the big picture question and answer. After each child completes the welcome activity, encourage him to participate in the activities provided from the Love and Live sections of the leader guide.

FIND GOLD AND SILVER ITEMS

Before children arrive, wrap items from the room in gold and silver foil. Hide items around the room for children to find. Display the Big Picture Question Poster. Tell children to look for gold and silver items. After they find all the items, hide the items again as time allows. As children search for items, review the big picture question and answer.

SAY “ I’m so glad to see you today! The gold and silver items you found are important to our story. Many years before our story took place, the people of God disobeyed Him. God’s people were taken into exile to a land far away from Jerusalem. But He promised they would come back one day. In our story today, **GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE BACK TO JERUSALEM.** God kept His promise and brought His people home. One day, God will bring all His people together to a new, perfect place where no one will cry anymore, and everyone will be happy and worship God forever. Sin has broken our relationship with God. **How did God fix what sin broke? God sent Jesus.** ”

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





LEARN the Bible Story

1 NAME THINGS THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY

On a poster board, list items that children share make them happy. Display the poster within sight of children.

SAY “ Let’s fill this poster with things that make us happy. What makes you happy? [Allow responses.] There are lots of things that make people happy. This is a great list! In our story today, **GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE BACK TO JERUSALEM** from exile in Persia, where they had been for 70 years. The people were so happy to be going home to Jerusalem! Let’s find out what happened. ”

2 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Open your Bible to Ezra 1. Tell the Bible story using the following summary. You may choose to review the Bible story by showing the video.

GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE HOME

SAY “ A long time ago, God made a promise. He told His people that after a long time, they would go back to their special city called Jerusalem.

One day, a king named Cyrus said, “God wants me to help build His house in Jerusalem. God’s people can go there to help. Everyone else should give them silver, gold, and animals to take with them.”

God’s people got ready to go back to Jerusalem to build God’s house. Their neighbors gave them gifts of silver, gold, and animals. The king even gave back some special things that had been taken from God’s house.

In Jerusalem, a priest named Jeshua and a leader named Zerubbabel started building an altar where they could give gifts to God. Then they began to build God’s house. Special helpers called Levites worked with them.

When the first part of God’s house was done, everyone was so happy! They played music and sang, “God is good. He loves us forever.” They shouted with joy.

But some older people were sad. They remembered the first temple, which was very beautiful, and they felt sad because this new one was not the same. They cried loudly while others were happy and cheering. ”

Christ Connection: God kept His promise and brought His people home. One day, God will bring all His people together to a new, perfect place where no one will cry anymore, and everyone will be happy and worship God forever.



3 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

Display the Bible Story Picture Poster and reference to prompt discussion. Remind children that when we go on a trip, we need to take supplies with us. Take turns having children share the item they would take. Repeat until each child has a turn. Discuss the items God's people took with them on their journey.

SAY “ That was a fun game, wasn't it? We could all name something we would take with us if we had to move to a new place. In our Bible story, we learned that **GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE BACK TO JERUSALEM** after they were away for many years. The Bible tells us the people were given gifts of gold, silver, and animals to take back with them. They worked to rebuild God's house. God kept His promise and brought the people home. One day, God will bring all His people together to a new, perfect place where no one will cry anymore, and everyone will be happy and worship God forever. ”

4 SING A SONG

Sing the song to the familiar tune of “The Farmer in the Dell”:

This is our God.
This is our God.
We waited and He saved us.
This is our God.

5 LEARN AND PRACTICE THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker at Isaiah 25:9. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Learn the key passage phrase. Say the key passage phrase together as you walk in place as if going on a long journey.

SAY “ God's people had been in exile in Persia far away from Jerusalem for many years. Finally, **GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE BACK TO JERUSALEM**. They waited for God to save them from exile and He did. They were able to return to Jerusalem and begin rebuilding God's house. ”

6 PRAY

Pray, thanking God for keeping His promise to return the people to Jerusalem.





LOVE God because of what we learned

1 PLAY A “KING CYRUS, MAY I?” GAME



Assist children in forming a line, all standing shoulder to shoulder. Encourage children to spread out at a safe distance. Give each child a basic command and encourage her to ask, “King Cyrus, may I?” before each action.

SAY “ The Persian king, Cyrus, knew he was supposed to help build God’s house in Jerusalem. He sent God’s people there. He told the Persian people to give them silver, gold, and animals to take with them. God’s people got ready to go to Jerusalem with their gifts. The king also gave back some special things that had been taken from God’s house. Just as God promised, **GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE BACK TO JERUSALEM.** ”

2 DOT PAINT LETTERS

Write the letters J, L, Z on heavyweight paper for each child. Assist children in putting on art smocks. Distribute papers and dot markers to children. Discuss the shape of the letters and the sounds the letters make when we read them. Repeat the names Jeshua, Zerubbabel, and Levites as children work.

SAY “ The Bible says that a priest named Jeshua and a leader named Zerubbabel started building an altar where they could give gifts to God. Once the altar was built, they began to build God’s house. Special helpers, called Levites, worked with them. The Bible also tells us the name of someone else whose name begins with J. It’s in the answer to our big picture question, **How did God fix what sin broke? God sent Jesus.** Jesus also begins with J. ”

3 PACK A SUITCASE

Display an opened suitcase in the group time area. Nearby, create a pile of items typically used when packing for a trip. Encourage children to bring you items from the pile to add to the suitcase. Discuss together items needed for a trip.

SAY “ God’s people lived in exile in Persia for 70 years. **GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE BACK TO JERUSALEM.** What kinds of things do you think they would need to take with them? The Bible tells us they took gifts from the people in Persia. They gave them gold, silver, and animals. The king gave them back the items taken from God’s house as well. ”

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





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE for God out of love

1 CELEBRATE TOGETHER

Use the Key Passage Phrase Marker to learn the phrase together. Repeat the key passage while children use noisemakers. Celebrate God's faithfulness while repeating the key passage phrase.

SAY “ The Bible says, ‘God is our God. We wait for Him and He saves us.’ That is something we can celebrate together! God loves us so much; He sent Jesus to fix what sin broke. God made the way to be saved. ”

2 MISSIONS ACTIVITY

Show the “Jim and Jean Leeper” missions video. After the video, pray, thanking God for the Leepers and other missionaries around the world who tell people the good news about Jesus.

SAY “ Jim and his wife, Jean, served as missionaries in Germany. Many of the people at Jim’s church in Germany served in the military and were young people away from home for the first time. Jim and Jean made everyone feel welcome, both in their church and in their home, like a big, loving family. ”

3 SNACK AND TRANSITION



Post an Allergy Alert. Serve the snack. As children eat, review and talk about the Bible story. When children finish their snack, lead them to complete the activity page. As they work, continue talking about the Bible story and emphasize the Christ Connection.

SAY “ God kept His promise and brought His people home. One day, God will bring all His people together to a new, perfect place where no one will cry anymore, and everyone will be happy and worship God forever. ”

Remember to communicate helpful information to the bonus teaching hour leaders. If parents are picking up children at this time, tell them something their child did well during the session. Distribute Big Picture Cards for Families. Encourage parents to engage with the family discussion starters and family activities during the week.



TEACHING HOUR

BONUS Teaching Hour Group Time

1 PASS BLOCKS

Seat the children in a circle and pass around blocks of different shapes, sizes, and colors. Talk about types of things that can be built with blocks. Discuss the building materials the people would have needed to rebuild the altar and the temple.

2 TALK ABOUT THE BIBLE STORY

Open the Bible to Ezra 1. Use the summarized points below to talk about the Bible story:

GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE HOME

- God promised His people that they would go back to Jerusalem.
- King Cyrus told the people to help build God’s house in Jerusalem and asked others to give them silver, gold, and animals.
- The people went back to Jerusalem, bringing gifts from their neighbors, and began building God’s house.
- In Jerusalem, Jeshua and Zerubbabel started building an altar and then, with special helpers, began work on God’s house.
- When the first part of God’s house was finished, everyone celebrated, but some older people were sad because they remembered the first, more beautiful temple.

3 SING A SONG

Sing the song to the familiar tune of “The Farmer in the Dell”:

This is our God.
This is our God.
We waited and He saved us.
This is our God.

4 SAY THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker at Isaiah 25:9. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Learn the key passage phrase. Encourage children to pretend stacking moving boxes as they say the key passage phrase together. Remind children of God’s promise to restore the people to Jerusalem and how He kept His promise.

5 PRAY

Pray, thanking God for always keeping His promises.



TEACHING HOUR

BONUS Teaching Hour Activities

6 BUILD AN ALTAR

Guide children to work together to build an altar with the blocks. Review the Bible story as children work.

SAY “ **GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE BACK TO JERUSALEM.** When they got there, they worked with Jeshua and Zerubbabel to build an altar and rebuild God’s house. When the first part of God’s house was finished, everyone celebrated. It was not as beautiful as the temple they remembered from before, and some people were sad about that, but God’s house was being rebuilt so the people could worship God again. God kept His promise. ”

7 PAINT PAPER HEARTS

Cut heavyweight paper into the shape of a heart for each child. Write *God loves us forever* on each heart. Assist children in putting on art smocks. Distribute paper hearts and washable finger paints to children. Encourage children to paint the hearts using many colors. Assist children in washing hands when their projects are finished.

SAY “ People use hearts when they talk about love. The heart you painted says, ‘God loves us forever.’ God kept His promise and brought His people home. One day, God will bring all His people together to a new, perfect place where no one will cry anymore, and everyone will be happy and worship God forever. God loves us so much He sent Jesus so we could be with Him forever. ”

8 BUILD A HOUSE

Use masking tape to form a simple house shape on the floor by making a large square with a triangle on top. Set craft sticks nearby and instruct preschoolers to line up the craft sticks on top of the masking tape to form a house shape. Celebrate together once the house is complete. Remove the craft sticks and repeat the activity.

SAY “ You followed the tape and built a house. God wanted King Cyrus to help rebuild God’s house, the temple, in Jerusalem. The king told his people to give the Israelites silver and gold to help them in this task. **GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE BACK TO JERUSALEM.** The people worked to rebuild the temple. After the first part of the temple was built, the people celebrated! They played cymbals and trumpets and sang, ‘The Lord is good. His love for Israel lasts forever!’ ”

Release preschoolers to parents according to your church’s security procedure. Tell them something their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session.