

THE PEOPLE WORSHIPED GOD

NEHEMIAH 7-13



CHRIST CONNECTION: The people promised to obey God, but no one can obey all the time. We all do wrong things. Only Jesus obeyed God perfectly, so we can trust Him to help us when we sin.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is the Bible about? The Bible is about God's plan to save people through Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE: These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah.
John 20:31

STORY POINT: God's people promised to obey Him.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The second half of the book of Nehemiah shows a remarkable rededication of the Israelites to God and His law. As Ezra read from the book of the Law, the people were confronted with their sin and overwhelmed by God’s faithfulness toward them despite their unfaithfulness. Nehemiah 9 tells us that the people stood and listened to the book of the Law for many hours. As they listened, they were reminded of the history of God’s people. They recognized their ancestors’ sinful patterns of unfaithfulness to God’s covenant, and yet God was always faithful. The people heard that, amid their rebellion, God always called them back.

In Nehemiah 9:17, we are reminded of a description of God that is found throughout the Old Testament. Nehemiah 9:17 says, “But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love, and you did not abandon them.” This description of God reflected His unwavering commitment to Israel despite their repeated rebellion. Echoes of this description are found in Exodus 34, Psalm 103, and Jonah 4. As God’s people declared this truth, they understood how God remained faithful to them, just as He had been faithful in the past. And because God’s character is unchanging, His faithfulness remains true today.

One of the most beautiful descriptions of God in this passage is found in the word *gracious*. The Hebrew word used here conveys the idea of unmerited favor, such as a king stooping down to give favor to one of his subjects or an adult stooping down to comfort a child in need.

This concept of God’s graciousness, however, finds its fullest expression in Jesus Christ coming to earth. Philippians 2 reminds us that Jesus did not consider equality with God something to be held on to; rather He descended to us. Jesus stooped down to our level to grant us something we never deserved. Point kids to God’s unchanging character and His faithfulness to His people. Help kids see how God’s faithfulness to His people was a part of His gracious plan to send Jesus to into the world.



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

Lead preschoolers to love the God of the gospel

30–40 MINUTES



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

Build homes with blocks

- Big Picture Question Poster



LEARN

Guess the pictures

- whiteboard or chalkboard
- whiteboard marker or chalk

Tell the Bible story

- "The People Worshipped God" video (optional)

Review the Bible story

- Bible Story Picture Poster

Learn and practice the key passage phrase

- Key Passage Phrase Marker
- small globe or world map beach ball



LOVE

Put on old clothes

- brown paper grocery bags, 1 per child
- brown yarn or fabric strips, 8–10 per child

Match letters

- table tennis balls, 6 per group of 2 or 3 children
- muffin tins, 1 per group of 2 or 3 children
- large dot stickers, 6 per group of 2 or 3 children
- tongs, 1 per group of 2 or 3 children
- small bins or bowls, 1 per group of 2 or 3 children
- permanent marker



LIVE

Spell Jesus

- small bins, 1 per group of 5 preschoolers
- sand
- finger pointers, 1 per group of 5 preschoolers

Missions activity

- "Bowman Family Photos" printable
- shallow bin with play sand
- toy desert animals
- toy desert plants

Snack and transition

- hand sanitizer (optional)
- "Count What God Has Made" activity page, 1 per child
- Big Picture Cards for Families



BONUS

Say the key passage phrase

- Key Passage Phrase Marker

Place star stickers

- assorted star stickers

Drive cars

- toy cars
- painter's tape



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.

BUILD HOMES WITH BLOCKS

On a table just inside the classroom door, place the Big Picture Question Poster within easy sight of preschoolers. Arrange blocks, accessories, and toy plants around the poster on the table. Greet parents and children at the door. Help children put away any of their personal belongings, then guide them to the block table. Guide the children to work together to build houses and a neighborhood of homes and then arrange the plants, bushes and accessories around the houses. As the children build and play, review the big picture question.

SAY “ Hello friends! I am so glad to you this morning. I love the neighborhoods and houses you’ve built together. What are some of the fun things that you like to do at home? **[Allow responses.]** (Be sensitive to different family and living situations.) In our Bible story today, we will read about how God’s people were finally home in Jerusalem. Ezra read God’s word, and **GOD’S PEOPLE PROMISED TO OBEY HIM**. They also thanked God with a big celebration. But even though **GOD’S PEOPLE PROMISED TO OBEY HIM**, they didn’t always keep that promise. They needed someone to save them. This is why God sent Jesus. Our big picture question says, **What is the Bible about? The Bible is about God’s plan to save people through Jesus.** ”

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





LEARN the Bible Story

1 GUESS THE PICTURES

Invite preschoolers to the group time area to play a game with you. Tell them that you are going to draw some pictures and that they should guess what you drew. Draw these pictures on the board: Bible, stars, flowing water, cloud, fire, house. As you tell the Bible story to the children, point to each picture as it is mentioned. Leave the pictures on the board for the remainder of the lesson.

SAY “I’ve drawn a Bible, some stars, the sea, a cloud, some fire, and a home. In today’s Bible story, God’s people are going to gather to pray and worship God. As I tell the story, listen for each of these items.”

2 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Open your Bible to Nehemiah 7. Tell the Bible story using the following summary. You may choose to review the Bible story by showing the video.

THE PEOPLE WORSHIPED GOD

SAY “God’s people were finally home in Jerusalem. They heard Ezra read God’s Word and were sorry for not doing what God wanted. The people wore old clothes, put dust on their heads, and did not eat. The leaders helped the people pray a long prayer to God.

The people prayed, “God, you made everything—the sky and stars, the earth, and the sea.

“You kept your promise to give Abraham and his family a special place to live. You saw your people in trouble in Egypt, so you helped them. You made a path through the water so they could get away. You showed them the way with a cloud in the day and fire at night. You gave them good rules and took care of them.

“But our people did not listen to you. They made a golden calf and prayed to it. But you loved them and did not leave them. Then you gave them the special land you promised. Again, they did not follow your rules. You let their enemies take over, but you still loved them.

“Now, we are home in this land. We promise to obey your rules and follow you.”

Then the people celebrated. They sang loudly and thanked God.”

Christ Connection: The people promised to obey God, but no one can obey all the time. We all do wrong things. Only Jesus obeyed God perfectly, so we can trust Him to help us when we sin.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

3 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

Show children the Bible Story Picture Poster. Point to each picture on the board and guide the children to tell you what they remember about that word from the Bible story.

SAY “ God’s people prayed a long prayer. They thanked God for making everything. They thanked God and for keeping His promise to Abraham and for leading them out of Egypt. **GOD’S PEOPLE PROMISED TO OBEY HIM**, but no one can obey all the time. We all do wrong things, called sin. Only Jesus obeyed God perfectly, so we can trust Him to help us when we sin. ”

4 SING A SONG

Sing the song to the familiar tune of “God Is So Good”:

God’s plan is Jesus.
God’s plan is Jesus.
God’s plan is Jesus,
The Bible tells us so.

5 LEARN AND PRACTICE THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker at John 20:31. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Read the key passage phrase aloud and guide the children to repeat it with you. Pass the globe to a child and prompt him to pass it back while saying the key passage phrase. Repeat the activity as time allows.

SAY “ The key passage reminds us that God always planned to send Jesus. From the very beginning of time when He created everything, God knew that people would not always obey Him, even when they promised to keep His rules. We need Jesus to save us from our sin. ”

6 PRAY

Pray, asking God to help us obey Him even when it’s hard.

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





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God because of what we learned

1 CREATE A PRAYER MURAL

Tape together seven or eight sheets of construction paper to create one long piece of paper. Flip the paper so the tape is on the back and lay it out on the floor. Place bins of washable markers around the paper. Invite children to be seated on the floor near the paper. Lead the children to draw things that God made, such as the sky, stars, the earth, the sea, and people.

SAY 🗨️ Look at all the things you drew that God made. God made so many wonderful things. He is very creative! What is your favorite thing God made? [Allow responses.] In today's Bible story, the people prayed a long prayer to God. They talked to Him about all the things He made and how He gave them a special place to live. **GOD'S PEOPLE PROMISED TO OBEY HIM**, but no one can obey all the time. We all do wrong things. Only Jesus obeyed God perfectly, so we can trust Him to help us when we sin. 🗨️

2 PUT ON OLD CLOTHES

Before the session, prepare paper grocery bags by cutting large holes for neck and arms of preschoolers. Cut brown fabric or yarn into 3- or 4-inch strips, 8–10 per preschooler. Provide paper bags, glue sticks, and fabric strips to preschoolers. Encourage children to glue fabric or yarn strips onto the bags to create “old clothing.” Assist children in placing the bags over their heads to put on the “old clothes.”

SAY 🗨️ Do you know why God's people wore old clothes in the Bible story? After Ezra read God's Word, the people were sorry for not doing what God wanted. Putting on old clothes, putting dust on their heads, and not eating was a way for them to show that they were sorry. **GOD'S PEOPLE PROMISED TO OBEY HIM** and prayed a long prayer. 🗨️

3 MATCH LETTERS

Before the session, write the letters P, R, A, Y, E, R on table tennis balls with a permanent marker, one letter per ball. Place a sticker in each cup of the muffin tin. Write the same letters on the stickers, one letter per sticker. Place the prepared balls in a small bin or bowl. Place the bins, muffin tins, and tongs on the tables for each group of two or three children. Demonstrate how to pick up a ball with the tongs, look at the letter written on it, and then place it into a muffin cup with the same letter. Encourage the child to match all the balls to the letters in the tin's cups.

SAY 🗨️ P-R-A-Y-E-R spells prayer. God's people prayed a long prayer to God. They said, 'God, You made everything and kept Your promise to help us to find a special place to live.' They also promised to obey God's rules and to follow Him. Even though **GOD'S PEOPLE PROMISED TO OBEY HIM**, no one can obey all the time. We all do wrong things. Only Jesus obeyed God perfectly, so we can trust Him to help us when we sin. 🗨️

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





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE for God out of love

1 SPELL JESUS

Pour a small amount of sand into shallow bins for each group of five preschoolers. Place the bin and finger pointer on tables for each group. Write the letters J, E, S, U, S on to the board. Lead each child to write one letter of J, E, S, U, S in the sand using the finger pointer. Review the key passage phrase with the children. As time allows, encourage children to take turns drawing pictures from today's Bible story in the sand.

SAY “ J-E-S-U-S spells Jesus. Our key passage phrase reminds us God’s Word was written, from beginning to end, to teach us that God sent Jesus to save us from our sins. ”

2 MISSIONS ACTIVITY

Print and display the “Bowman Family Photos” printable. Place a shallow bin of sand on a table. Scatter the toy desert animals and plants in the sand. Encourage preschoolers to take turns playing with the desert sensory bin as you talk about the missions story.

SAY “ Brian Bowman is a pastor of Valley Life Church. Because Valley Life Church wants to help start new churches. Valley Life Church also helps another organization meet the needs of people who are homeless in the Phoenix area. The church has community events throughout the year to meet people in the neighborhood around them so they can tell the people how much Jesus loves them. [Lead a prayer.] ”

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 “ The people promised to obey God, but no one can obey all the time. We all do wrong things. Only Jesus obeyed God perfectly, so we can trust Him to help us when we sin. ”

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 TOSS A BEANBAG

Invite children to join you in the group time area for a game. Toss a beanbag to a child and prompt her to toss it to another child while saying one word of the Story Point. Encourage the children to continue tossing the beanbag back and forth as time allows. Challenge the children to keep the beanbag from touching the ground. When you have finished playing, guide the children to be seated. Thank the children for following your directions and ask them to listen carefully for how the people prayed to God.

2 TALK ABOUT THE BIBLE STORY

Open the Bible to Nehemiah 7. Use the summarized points below to talk about the Bible story:

THE PEOPLE WORSHIPED GOD

- God's people were finally back home in Jerusalem. They heard God's Word and were sorry for not listening to God.
- They prayed, "God, you made everything and kept your promise to help us and give us a special place to live."
- Even when the people did not listen and chose to sin, God still loved them and helped them. He never left them.
- The people promised to obey God's rules again. Then they had a big celebration to thank Him.

3 SING A SONG

Sing the song to the familiar tune of "God Is So Good":

God's plan is Jesus.
God's plan is Jesus.
God's plan is Jesus,
The Bible tells us so.

4 SAY THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker at John 20:31. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage and read the phrase aloud. Guide the children to raise their arms over their heads and move their hands back and forth while saying the phrase. Remind the children that praying and reading the Bible are both ways to worship God. Ask them to tell you some other ways that we can worship God. Guide the children to repeat the phrase again.

5 PRAY

Pray, praising God for His perfect love for us, even when we don't love Him perfectly.

BONUS Teaching Hour Activities

6 FOLLOW AN OBSTACLE COURSE



Set up a small obstacle course in the room. Designate spaces as the starting and ending points of the course. Create a path through the classroom that goes around chairs, under a table, over a small toy, and so forth, until the path reaches the designated end point. Lead the children to line up at the start. Demonstrate for the children how they should walk through the created course and give them the rule that they must walk, and not run, in order to be safe. Then, encourage each child to take a turn walking the course.

SAY “ Did you enjoy following our obstacle course? In order to know what to do, you had to obey and follow the directions I gave to you. In today’s Bible story, God’s people prayed a long prayer. They talked to God about how they had not obeyed His rules and obeyed Him. Then, **GOD’S PEOPLE PROMISED TO OBEY HIM.** ”

7 PLACE STAR STICKERS

Before the activity begins, write a large capital letter J on a sheet of construction paper for each child. Place the Key Passage Phrase Marker, prepared construction papers, and star stickers on each table. Read the key passage phrase aloud to preschoolers. Remind the children the name of Jesus begins with a J. Encourage the children to decorate their papers with stickers.

SAY “ What does J stand for? Yes! It’s the first letter in the name of Jesus. Our key passage phrase says, ‘These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah. John 20:31.’ This means that God’s Word was written for us so that we can learn about Jesus and God’s plan to save people through Jesus. ”

8 DRIVE CARS

Using painter’s tape, write the word OBEY on the floor in very large letters—large enough that children can push small cars along the taped letters. Place the cars next to the taped words. Invite children to place cars on the tape letter roadway on which to push the car. As children drive cars along the tape roadways, read the letters aloud.

SAY “ O-B-E-Y spells obey. What does it mean to obey? [Allow responses.] To obey means to follow God’s way instead of our own way. In our Bible story, we heard how **GOD’S PEOPLE PROMISED TO OBEY HIM**, but no one can obey all the time. We all do wrong things. Only Jesus obeyed God perfectly, so we can trust Him to help us when we sin. ”

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