



May 21, 2017

Dear Teacher,

This week we learn about Ezra. As we wind down our study of the Old Testament, Ezra is an important figure not to gloss over. His presence and leadership was integral to the Israelites resettling the Promised Land. He not only brought God's Word back to Jerusalem, he confronted those Israelites already there about their sin and taught them God's Word. Ezra is a model for trusting in God's promises and provisions in an unstable environment.

We encourage all classrooms to engage with the story from the options provided in class. Teachers, tell the story using any of the provided helps (Vos, Jesus Story Book Bible, Gospel Story Book Bible or printed Handout). If you would like, read the selected Scripture passages aloud in class, discuss or explain what the passages mean, and use the questions below to help guide the discussion. Also, use time in class to teach the Scripture Memory and the Catechism Questions.

Morning Overview

Lesson: *Return:* Ezra

Lesson Objective: To communicate to children that God always keeps His promises despite circumstances and even our inability to trust Him. God wants us to trust Him and obey His commands.

Scripture: Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah 8

Story: Vos Children's Bible, Chapter 109 (Pages 257-259); Gospel Story Book Bible, Pages 154-155.

Teaching Summary:

- God's promises do not change despite circumstances, people and even our inability to believe them. God keeps His promises even when we do not trust Him or follow His commands.
- God alone is worthy of worship.
- God's people lived far away from home for a long time, but they were returning to Jerusalem and Judah.
- Ezra was a teacher of God's Word and returned to Jerusalem to teach the Israelites.
- Ezra traveled with gold, silver and precious dishes for the Temple along with priests and many Israelites.
- Upon arriving back in Jerusalem, Ezra learned that Israelite men had married pagan-worshipping women. This infuriated Ezra. Ezra knew that this would lead the Israelites back to idol worship.
- Eventually promises were made to no longer marry pagan-worshipping women by all of Israel.
- Ezra, and Nehemiah, led in restoring Israel, building God's Temple and the Wall, and worshipping God.

9:30am Sunday Schedule

For the Sunday Schedule, please see "Sunday Schedule for Preschool" found in Handbook on the teacher's table.

Cherub Church

- Kindergarten/5's – 9:35-10:00 (Classroom's: 162, 163, 121, 123, 124)
- 3's/4's – 10:05-10:30 (Classroom's: 166, 165, 164)

Craft: God's Word Booklet and Paper Clip Bookmark

Supplies: Cardstock booklet cover, inside page with verse, paper clip, fabric strip, stapler, crayons/markers

Instructions:

1. Fold cover and inside page
2. Staple together in book crease
3. Tie fabric strip onto paper clip
4. Color booklet if desired



Snack

11am Sunday Schedule

Craft: Fasting and Praying

Supplies: Cardstock sheet, paper plate, glue, crayons/markers

Instructions:

1. Glue paper plate to cardstock sheet
2. Color sheet
3. Draw "fasting" items on plate



Story: *Return:* Ezra

1. **PRAY** for your time and any requests the children may have.
2. **ASK** Boys and girls, today our story is about a man that had to share God's Word with God's people. He had to travel for a long time to do it! Does anyone want to guess how long he had to travel? [4 months]. Let's find out more to our story...
3. **TELL** the Story. Use the Vos Children's Bible, the Jesus Storybook Bible, the Beginner's Bible, or the story below to aid in telling the story.
4. **REVIEW** the questions to help children understand the story.

Questions for Review

Scripture Memory (Nehemiah 1:5)

Catechism Questions (1-17)

Hymn of the Month: A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Free Play

Questions for Review

Questions for Younger Children:

- What was the name of the priest and teacher in our story?
- Where did Ezra live?
- How long did it take for Ezra to travel to Jerusalem?
- What did Ezra pray for before he and the Israelites traveled?
- What did Ezra discover about the Israelite people once he returned to Jerusalem?
- What did Ezra tell the Israelite people to do?
- What did Ezra and Nehemiah do with the people of Israel?

Questions for Older Children:

- What does the story tell us about God?
- What does this story tell us about God's faithfulness?
- What does this story tell us about worship?

Scripture Memory for May:

O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments. (Nehemiah 1:5)

Catechism Questions:

- Question 1 – Who made you? *God*
- Question 2 – What else did God make? *God made all things.*
- Question 3 – Why did God make you and all things? *For his own glory.*
- Question 4 – How can you glorify God? *By loving him and doing what he commands.*
- Question 5 – Why are you to glorify God? *Because he made me and takes care of me.*
- Question 6 – Is there more than one true God? *No. There is only one true God.*
- Question 7 – In how many persons does this One God exist? *In three persons.*
- Question 8 – Who are they? *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*
- Question 9 – What is God? *God is a Spirit and does not have a body like men.*
- Question 10 – Where is God? *God is everywhere.*
- Question 11 - Can you see God? *No; I cannot see God, but He can always see me.*
- Question 12 – Does God know all things? *Yes. Nothing can be hidden from God.*
- Question 13 – Can God do all things? *Yes. God can do all His holy will.*
- Question 14 – Where do you learn how to love and obey God? *In the Bible alone.*
- Question 15 – Who wrote the Bible? *Chosen men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit.*
- Question 16 – Who were our first parents? *Adam and Eve.*
- Question 17 – How did God create man? *God created man, male and female, in His own image.*

Story

Transition

Boys and girls, today our story is about a man that had to share God's Word with God's people. He had to travel for a long time to do it! Does anyone want to guess how long he had to travel? [4 months]. Let's find out more to our story...

A Student and A Teacher

There was a Jewish man living in Persia whose name was Ezra. Persia was a land far away from Jerusalem and the Promised Land. Persia was a mighty kingdom where many Israelites lived. Ezra, the Bible tells us, spent his whole life studying God's Word in Persia. Ezra not only studied God's Word, he taught it to others in Persia. Everyone in Persia knew about Ezra, even the king. God put within Ezra's heart and mind to go back to Jerusalem to teach the Israelites God's Word.

Ezra went to the king of Persia and asked for permission to go back to Judah. The king was very kind to Ezra. He let Ezra go, and he also allowed other Israelites to go. The king gave Ezra gifts of gold and silver and expensive dishes for the temple of God. This treasure was an offering to God. The king promised to pay all Ezra's expenses with his own money. The king of Persia thought that the God of the Israelites was worthy to be worshipped and praised! Even though the Israelites were taken away from their homes to the faraway land of Babylon long ago, God used His people to tell others about Him. The Israelites in Babylon and Persia could show others that there was only One, True God. The painful lesson of captivity for the Jews was a blessing to those who did not know God at all. Those who had never heard of God were finally able to do so.

Ezra Journeys to Jerusalem

Before Ezra and all the Israelites, about six to seven thousand, left for Jerusalem, they camped for three days on the banks of a river. Ezra told the people that they should fast. Ezra wanted God's people to humble themselves before God, to seek safe journey for themselves, their children and for all their goods. Fasting is when people don't eat, but pray to God for wisdom. Fasting only happens for a little while. The Israelites in our story eventually ate after a few days. Fasting is something God's people do to think about their need for Him, to spend that time in prayer and to try and understand what God wants them to do. The Israelites spent these three days in prayer.

Ezra also discovered that there were no priests to come with the Israelites. Priests served in the house of the Lord. So, the Bible tells us, Ezra, "sent back to ask some priests to come with us, so that we could have ministers for the house of our God. Two hundred and fifty priests and Levites joined" the group. Ezra chose twenty-two priests to guard the silver, gold and dishes that the king gave them. God heard the prayers of His people. The Bible says that the "hand of our God was on us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambushes by the way."

The Israelites traveled for four months until they reached Jerusalem. Many of the Israelites with Ezra had never seen the Promised Land.

Ezra Arrives in Jerusalem

Ezra and many Israelites finally arrived in Jerusalem after the long journey. When Ezra arrived he immediately set up judges over the people. The king had given Ezra special permission to do so. The king also gave Ezra authority to teach people God's Word. The Israelites that traveled brought the gold and silver to the house of the Lord just as the king of Persia told them to. Then the Israelites that traveled from far away offered sacrifices to the God of Israel. The strong and able men of this group with Ezra also helped with rebuilding the house of God.

Ezra Encounters Sin In Israel

Unfortunately, when Ezra arrived, he was given some very bad news. There were Israelites already living in the land. They had returned many years before Ezra did. Many of the Israelite leaders from the first group came to Ezra. They told him that many Israelites had married women who did not believe in God. This was not good news. God had told His people not to marry those who did not believe in Him. This was a strict command. Ezra was very upset. Ezra was so upset he tore his clothes and cried all day! Ezra was sad because if God's people married others who did not worship God, then God's people might not worship God either! Ezra was afraid God's people would start worshipping idols again. If this happened they would have to suffer God's judgments because they had forsaken Him.

That night, after crying all day because He was sad, Ezra went to the Temple and fell upon his knees. Ezra spread out his hands and prayed to the Lord. Ezra prayed, "My God, I am too ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to you. I am in disgrace because our sins are so many. Our sins even reach up to the sky. From the days of our ancestors long ago until now, we have been very guilty. Because of our sins, we, our kings and priests have suffered punishment. We have been punished by the sword and captivity. Foreign kings have taken away our things and shamed us. It is that way today."

Ezra Mourns

As Ezra was praying and confessing to God, a large group of Israelite men, women and children gathered around him. They were also crying loudly because of the sin the Israelites had committed. The Israelites knew that they could no longer be around the idol worshippers. Ezra made the Israelites make a promise. They promised not to marry anyone that did not worship God. Then Ezra left the Temple. Ezra was still sad about Israel's betrayal. Ezra had all the Israelites meet together in Jerusalem. Ezra told all the people they had sinned against God. Then the whole group answered Ezra. They shouted, "Ezra, you're right!" And all of Israel promised never to marry anyone who did not worship God.

Ezra Reads the Law

Many years later Ezra, and another faithful man of God named Nehemiah, gathered all the Israelites together. They asked Ezra, the teacher, to bring God's Word and read it. So, Ezra brought out God's Word and read it to the crowd. Men, women and all who could listen and understand had gathered. Ezra read God's Word from early morning until noon. All the people listened carefully to God's Word. Ezra praised the Lord. And all the people held up their hands and said, "Amen! Amen!" Then every Israelite bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Ezra continued to serve God and teach the Israelites God's Word.