



3-4 GRADES

FUN + FRIENDS + FAITH



UNDERSTANDING YOUR LESSON

Imagine this for a moment: It's late Saturday night, and you've been out of the house all day. You've gone from place to place, striving to complete more than seemed possible from your calendar to-do list. You've just returned home and sat down for dinner. Suddenly, you remember that tomorrow is Sunday. You quickly recall that you are scheduled to serve with preschoolers tomorrow morning, your small group is having lunch together after church, and you have yet to plan out this upcoming week. The thought crosses your mind; What if I just sat this one out tomorrow?

Does this scenario hit close to home?

In Ezra 3, as the work had begun to rebuild the temple, there was an eager desire among God's people, leading them to anticipate what that place would afford them upon its completion. As the people worked and waited, even in the midst of their exhaustion, they made time to worship.

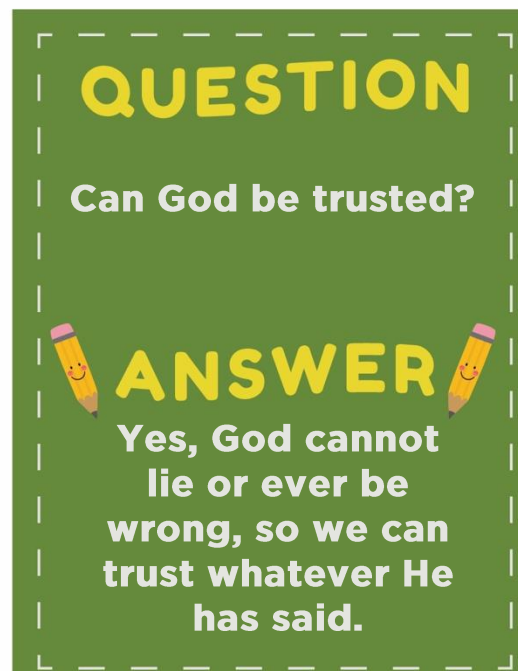
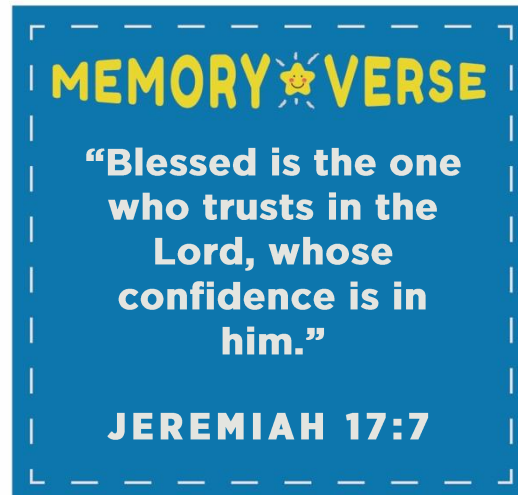
Read Ezra 3:6. Not only was the temple incomplete, but the first stage of the build was not yet done. Still, the laborers did not forget or fail to keep the purpose at the forefront of their minds. The goal was not the temple; it was the Lord.

We often find ourselves in scenarios like the one above, ready to make excuses to not do the things that matter most because we've misplaced our priorities—or at least lost sight of them in the whirlwind of life. Our decisions reflect what has the seat of greatest importance in our lives.

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching."

Understanding Christ to be our greatest purpose and prize ought to direct our paths toward prioritizing our lives around Christ and His church. Not only will this be good for us, but it will be good for the rest of God's children as well. When we are eager to be with the Lord and His people, not only will we be productive, but we will be truly satisfied.

PEOPLE TO KNOW Zerubbabel: grandson of King Jehoiachin. Zerubbabel returned from exile as a leader and helped rebuild the altar and lay the foundation of the temple.





BUSY HANDS

ARRIVAL ACTIVITIES

When the children arrive, introduce yourself, ask them their name, welcome them to the class and invite them to engage with the other children. When most kids have arrived for first service, ask them to find a seat at one of the tables to begin the class.

WELCOME AND OPENING ACTIVITY // Activity page “Finish the Temple”, pencils, colored pencils

DISCUSS ASK: Tell me about something you have built or helped build! Have you ever built a tree house, a derby car, a doll house, or a potato lamp?

Invite kids to complete the “Finish the Temple” portion of the activity sheet at the top of the paper. The children will finish the “Where can you worship God?” section of the page later in the lesson. Ask a child to read the directions for the activity: **Draw in the missing pieces on the grid to complete the rebuilding of the temple.**

The answers will vary so after several minutes take a look at the work the student have completed. SAY: It took a lot more work than just drawing for God’s people to finish rebuilding God’s temple in Jerusalem! In today’s Bible story, we will hear how God’s people finished the temple and how God encouraged them when their neighbors tried to stop them.

SESSION STARTER: START AND STOP // Whiteboard, dry erase marker, half sheet of paper per child, pencils, stopwatch on your cell phone

Use a dry erase board to write, *The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever.* Distribute paper and pencils to each kid. Lead the kids to look at the dry erase board and read the message aloud.

Explain to the kids that they will need to copy the message as quickly and as legibly as they can in 30 seconds. Tell kids that when you say “start” they may begin writing but that when you say “stop”, they must pause writing. Continue saying “start” and “stop” throughout the 30 seconds. Ask kids if any of them could complete the message in 30 seconds with all the interruptions. As time allows challenge kids with this activity multiple times.

SAY: Was it frustrating to continue to be interrupted while trying to complete the message? Sometimes we can become upset or discouraged when things do not go as we had hoped. In our Bible story today, God’s people needed to be encouraged to trust God even when things weren’t going as they hoped.



ACTIVE MINDS

FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY // Bibles, countdown video (optional) big picture question poster, small timeline in your classroom, giant timeline in the hallway (optional)

Show the countdown video on the USB as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins. (optional)

SAY: Hello! I'm so glad to see you all here today! I brought my Bible with me this morning. [Hold up Bible.] We can trust everything we read in the Bible because it is God's Word, and God cannot lie. Who brought their Bibles with them this morning? [Distribute Bibles to those who don't have one.]

Our Bible story today is found in the Book of Ezra. Is Ezra in the Old or New Testament? [Allow responses.] Yes, it is an Old Testament book. We can find it in our Bible after 2 Chronicles and before Nehemiah. Allow kids time to find Ezra. An important message in Ezra is the reminder for God's people to return to right worship of God. One way God encouraged the people toward right worship was through the rebuilding of the temple.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION SAY: *Can God be trusted?* [Allow kids to respond.] *Yes, God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said.* Use the poster when needed. Sometimes we can be tempted to not trust God when our circumstances are difficult. If we have hard things happening in our life, we might wonder if God knows what He is doing. In the Old Testament, God's people reacted this way sometimes. But God can never lie or be wrong. We can trust that even when times are hard, God is working to show us that what we need most is Jesus. Knowing Jesus gives us hope in hard times and helps us remember that He came to undo all the horribleness of sin.

Let's say our big picture question together. *Can God be trusted? Yes, God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said.*

REVIEW THE TIMELINE Show the small timeline picture for the third story in this unit (The People Return). You may also visit the giant timeline located in the hallway to review the lessons. SAY: God's people disobeyed God and worshiped idols. God judged their sin and sent them into exile. But God promised that after 70 years, He would set them free. Just like God promised, His people went home to Jerusalem after 70 years in exile. But the city of Jerusalem was in ruins. God sent prophets like Zechariah to encourage God's people and give them hope while they rebuilt the temple. Let's read our Bible story to learn if the temple was completed.

THE PEOPLE REBUILT THE TEMPLE // Bibles, printed story, video on the USB: The People Rebuilt the Temple, Bible story picture poster

Open your Bible to Ezra 2-6. Use the script to tell the story or show the Bible story video: "The People rebuilt the Temple." Refer to the Bible story picture poster before you read the story.

Continue



ACTIVE MINDS

FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD

To make the story more interesting, form 5 groups of kids: Designate one group to be the priests, one to be the older people who wept and got discouraged, one to be prophets and workers, one to be the governors, and one to be King Darius' officials. Encourage kids to act out their sections of the story when read.

THE PEOPLE REBUILT THE TEMPLE

Zerubbabel (zuh RUHB uh buhl) and the high priest led a group of God's people back to Judah to rebuild the Lord's temple in Jerusalem. First, the priests rebuilt the altar. They gave burnt offerings to God and celebrated. Then they laid the foundation of the temple. When the foundation was finished, the priests put on special clothes and the people praised God. They sang, "The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever."

Not everyone was happy though. Some of the older people remembered what the temple had looked like before it had been destroyed. They cried and shouted loudly.

Sometimes other people interrupted the rebuilding of the temple by making the people of Judah discouraged or afraid. At one point, the building of the temple stopped for a while. God sent prophets to encourage the people, and they started working again.

At this time, Darius (duh RIGH uhs), the king of Persia, ruled over the land of Judah. The king was in charge of a lot of land, so he put governors in charge of some of the land. A governor named Tattenai (TAT ih nigh) noticed what God's people were doing.

Tattenai asked the workers, "Do you have permission to rebuild this temple?" The workers said, "We do." Still, Tattenai sent a report to the king about what God's people were doing. "They said King Cyrus gave them permission to rebuild the temple," Tattenai wrote. "Please search the royal records to see if this is true."

King Darius's officials searched the royal records for Cyrus's order. They found it—a scroll with a record from King Cyrus. This is what was written on the scroll: "Let God's temple be rebuilt. It will be a place to offer sacrifices. Let its foundation be rebuilt." King Cyrus had also ordered for the cost of building the temple to be paid for out of the royal treasury.

So King Darius sent a letter back to Tattenai. He gave this order: "Stay away from the workers in Jerusalem. Don't bother them or try to stop them. Give them whatever they need."

Tattenai obeyed the king's order. The Jewish leaders kept building, and they finally finished the temple of God! The people celebrated and made offerings to God. They chose priests and assistants to serve in the temple. Then God's people celebrated the Passover. God's people were so happy. Now the temple of God was finally complete.



OPEN HEARTS

LIFE APPLICATION & SCRIPTURE MEMORY

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION // Bibles, Questions from Kids video Unit 17, session 3, “Where Can You Worship God?” on the bottom of the activity page, pencils

SAY: The temple was the place the Jews worshiped God. It also represented God’s presence with His people. God’s plan for the people to rebuild the temple was meant to be a reminder that He was with them and that they should worship Him alone.

1.) What did God’s people do first when they settled back in Jerusalem? Look at Ezra 3:2. [Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ezra 3:2.] God’s people rebuilt the altar first. They offered sacrifices for their sin and praised God. Then they laid the foundation of the temple. Some of the older people were sad that the temple did not look like the original. Even though the temple was different, God was still with His people. It was not how the temple looked that was important, but how God had continued to be faithful to His people.

2.) Why were the neighbors of God’s people unable to stop the rebuilding of the temple? [Allow responses.] God put a plan in place to provide for His people years before they would need it! God’s promise was put in writing by King Cyrus. Nothing can stop God’s words from coming true. Can God be trusted? Yes, God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said.

Tell the kids to look at the bottom of their activity page: Where Can You Worship God? Place the pencils on the tables. Instruct the kids to use the decoder key to answer the question. Review the answer together.

QUESTIONS FROM KIDS Show the “Unit 17, Session 3” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How should we respond when others tattle on us or when someone lies about us?
2. Why can we trust in God in all circumstances?

KEY PASSAGE AND PRAYER // Key passage poster, key passage song on the USB: “Trust in the Lord (Jeremiah 17:7),” Bibles

Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Jeremiah 17:7 together from the poster.

SAY: Our story reminds us that we can trust God to do what is right and say what is true. We can worship God joyfully and thank Him for being trustworthy.

Continue



OPEN HEARTS

LIFE APPLICATION & SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Distribute Bibles to each child. Challenge kids to race to find Jeremiah 17:7 in their Bible and shout it aloud. Lead kids to study and reread the verse several times. This is the last Sunday for this passage. Invite volunteers to recite the verse from memory.

Lead kids to sing “Trust in the Lord (Jeremiah 17:7).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

PRAY Invite kids to pray. Ask if there are any prayer concerns or joys the kids would like to share. Also include prayer for our missionary family during this time. **SAY:** God, thank You for setting Your plans in motion before we even know we need it. Thank You that we can always trust You. Help us trust You more and tell others about You. Amen.

WRITE A PRAISE SONG // 8 full pieces of paper for third grade and 5 pieces for fourth grade, pencils, Bibles

Prompt kids to form groups of four to six kids. Distribute a piece of paper and a pencil to each group. Challenge kids to write a praise song including the sentences, The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever. Encourage kids to think of different music styles they might use to make their worship songs. Guide kids to look at the psalms for examples. Encourage kids to take turns sharing their praise songs with the class.

SAY: Like God’s people in today’s Bible story, we can sing songs to God to thank Him for keeping His word. No matter what situation we face, God is always worthy of praise. We can praise God for His faithfulness and trustworthiness. Can God be trusted? Yes, God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said.

GROUP DISCUSSION // Bibles

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY: Why is Jesus a better gift than a temple? Emphasize how a temple was a temporary reminder of God’s presence with His people. Remind kids that God sent Jesus to die for our sins and raise to life so that we can have forgiveness, life forever, and the promise of the Holy Spirit. Lead kids to understand that unlike a temple, which can only be in one place, God is with us always through His Spirit.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matt. 12:6.)

SAY: How should we respond when others might tempt us to disobey God?

Continue



EXTRA IDEAS

Guide kids to discuss how the Jews had a choice to continue to follow God's plan and rebuild the temple or listen to those who tried to stop them. Remind kids that following Jesus is better because He leads us to life and forgiveness. Encourage kids that they can pray, and God will be with them to give them courage.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Acts 5:29.)

JOURNAL // Journal on the reverse side of the activity page, pencils, Gospel poster (optional)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page. As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas.

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

Review the gospel with the Gospel poster and encourage kids to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

REMINDERS: The VIP meeting will be 8:30-8:40 in the Puddle Room. Attend for: Vision/Information/Prayer. Pick up your supply bin before going to class.

REVIEW the items in your bin, place the chairs around the tables, and be ready to greet the parents and children at the door.

FOLLOW protocol for sanitizing hands and cleaning large surfaces.