



FEBRUARY 1, 2026

GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE HOME

EZRA 1-3

CHRIST CONNECTION

Just as God promised, He brought His people back from exile to Jerusalem. **One day, God will bring all His people together**—all who trust in Jesus to save them from sin. There will be no crying that day. The people will worship Him in the new heaven and new earth.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION

How did God plan to fix what sin broke? **Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah.**

MEMORY VERSE

Isaiah 25:9

PREPARE



Take time to reflect
on today's lesson.

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 large 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, showing 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.

WELCOME



Connect with kids as they arrive.

OPENING ACTIVITIES

Greet each kid as they arrive. Use this time to build relationships and help new kids connect to your group. Before heading to Large Group, you can play a game, chat with kids, or do the Memory Verse Activity below as a group!

MEMORY VERSE

It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

Isaiah 25:9, ESV

MEMORY VERSE ACTIVITY

Each month, we'll have a new memory verse that goes with the lessons we're learning from the Bible. Choose one of the provided activities in your room's Memory Verse folder to review the verse with the kids. A hand motion video is also available to learn and review on your room's TV.

Note: Our next Bible Bucks Day will be on February 22!



LARGE GROUP LESSON



Review what we're learning in Large Group.

GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE HOME

God, through the prophet Jeremiah, promised that He would bring His people back to Jerusalem after 70 years of captivity. Just as God promised, King Cyrus of Persia issued a decree, saying:

"The Lord has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build him a house in Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people may go to Jerusalem to build the house of the Lord, the God of Israel. Give your silver, gold, and livestock to them so they may bring these gifts to Jerusalem and offer them to God."

God's people prepared to go to Jerusalem and build the Lord's house. All their neighbors supported them with gifts of silver, gold, livestock, and valuables. King Cyrus also gave back some of the riches that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple of God.

A few months after they arrived in Jerusalem, Jeshua the priest, Zerubbabel, and their brothers began to build the altar of God so that they could sacrifice burnt offerings on it morning and evening according to the law of Moses. They also celebrated all the festivals and holy days as the Lord commanded in the law. Then, they began to buy the supplies needed to rebuild the temple.

Two years after God's people arrived in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and their brothers appointed the Levites to oversee the work on the Lord's house. Once they had laid the foundation of the temple, the priests led the people to praise God with trumpets and cymbals. They sang, "The Lord is good. His faithful love to Israel endures forever." All the people gave a great shout of praise.

While most people were happy, some of the older priests remembered the first temple. This new foundation was not as magnificent as the original temple, and they wept loudly. The people could not tell the difference between those who were weeping loudly and those who were shouting for joy.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Just as God promised, He brought His people back from exile to Jerusalem. One day, God will bring all His people together—all who trust in Jesus to save them from sin. There will be no crying that day. The people will worship Him in the new heaven and new earth.

ACTIVITIES



Do crafts and games with kids after Large Group.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Go into the Large Group room, the gym, or outside to play this game!

Have kids spread out across the space. Select one kid to be “it”. When you say “go,” the one who is “it” will try to tag other kids.

If someone gets tagged, they’ll form a chain by linking arms with “it” and assist in tagging other kids. As other kids get tagged, the chain will grow. If the chain breaks, they can’t tag anyone else until it reforms. The chain continues tagging others until all kids have been tagged.

Play again if time allows.

CONNECT THE DOTS



This game reminds us how God’s people had been exiled from Jerusalem, but God had a plan to gather them back together so they could go home. In our story today, we saw how God brought His people back to Jerusalem when the exile was over.

BIBLE SKILLS

Divide kids into two teams and have the teams gather on one side of the room. On the other side of the room, place the two paper bags (one for each team). Inside the paper bags are strips of paper with verses written on them. Make sure each team has Bibles, a pencil, and paper.

Explain that the teams will send one person to the bag to get one of the pieces of paper and bring it back. Then, the team will need to find that verse in the Bible and write down what the verse promises. Once they’re done writing, another person from their team can go retrieve another piece of paper. Continue until all the verses have been found and written about; the first team to finish wins!

KINDERGARTEN ADJUSTMENT: Give each kid a Bible (borrow from the Large Group room if needed) and work as a group to find the listed verses. Read the verse aloud, or have your co-leader read it, and discuss together what the verse promises.

CLOSING ACTIVITIES



Continue to engage kids before parent pick-up.

BIBLE STORY REVIEW

Ask the following questions and lead your small group to discuss.

1. Why did the people begin to rebuild the temple?
2. How did we see God work through people to accomplish His plans?
3. Some people were sad because they missed the old temple. How can we respond when situations don't turn out like we hope?
4. Why can we trust God's Word, the Bible?
5. After the foundation was laid, the people praised God and said His love endures forever. What does this mean?

HAVE EXTRA TIME?

If you have extra time or your group needs to get out some energy, play one of the games/activities in your extra time bin in the cabinet or the "extra time" folder on the TV.

If there's a new game or activity you want to have available for your group in the future, let Taylor know!

BEFORE YOU GO...

Second service leaders, please clean up by doing the following:

1. Put all extra supplies and binders back in the curriculum bins.
2. Clean all trash off the tables.
3. Put all crayons, markers, etc. back in the appropriate containers and cubbies.
4. Erase the whiteboards and put markers/erasers back in the holder.
5. Turn off the TVs as you leave.

THANK YOU FOR SERVING WITH US!