

Sunday,
June 22,
2014

Kidzone KG and 1st Grade Small Group

TEACHER BIBLE STUDY

Ezra Read the Law

Nehemiah 8:1-12

Ezra was a priest in Babylon at the end of the exile. More than 50 years after the first group of exiles to return to Jerusalem had completed and dedicated the temple, Ezra led a second group back to Jerusalem.

Just as God had been with Nehemiah, He was with Ezra—granting him favor with the Persian king. The king gave Ezra permission to go to Jerusalem. He provided Ezra with a letter and access to resources to ensure safe travel. (See Ezra 7:11-26.)

Ezra traveled to Jerusalem with a purpose. God’s people had spent 70 years in exile, and they needed to be reminded how to live. As a scribe, Ezra was an expert on the law of Moses, and he had “determined in his heart to study the law of the Lord, obey it, and teach its statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10).

Under Nehemiah’s leadership, the people had rebuilt Jerusalem’s walls. They gathered together at the Water Gate to hear the law of Moses. Men, women, and children—anyone who could understand—came to listen to the reading of God’s Word.

From early morning until midday, Ezra read from the book of the law of Moses. He stood on a high wooden platform where everyone could see and hear him. Ezra opened the book of the law, and everyone stood up. The Levites helped the listeners understand the words of the law.

The people reacted strongly to hearing and understanding the law of Moses. Verse 9 says the people were weeping. The law revealed their sin.

God’s Word is powerful. The law reveals our sin and how short we fall to meeting God’s standard. As you teach kids, help them recognize that we cannot meet God’s requirements. We need a Savior. God sent Jesus to obey the law perfectly and die for our sins. We can trust in Him for salvation.

YOUNGER KIDS BIBLE STUDY OVERVIEW

Session Title: Ezra Read the Law

Bible Passage: Nehemiah 8:1-12

Big Picture Question: Why did Ezra read God’s Word? God’s Word helped people obey God so they could be holy.

Key Passage: Malachi 4:2

Unit Christ Connection: God restored a faithful remnant and reminded them of His promise of a new covenant through Jesus Christ.

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Small Group Time

Welcome time
Activity page (5 minutes)
Session starter (10 minutes)
Key passage activity (5 minutes)

Bible story review (10 minutes)
Activity choice (10 minutes)
Journal (5 minutes)
Prayer (5 minutes)

THE BIBLE STORY

Ezra Read the Law

Nehemiah 8:1-12

The walls around Jerusalem were finished—at last! The people had worked hard, and with God’s help they finished rebuilding the walls and the city gates in just 52 days. **All the people in Jerusalem gathered together very early in the morning at one of the city gates. Men, women, and children—anyone who could understand—came to listen to the reading of God’s Word.**

As the sun was just coming up, Ezra (EZ ruh) the priest brought out the book of the law of Moses that God had given to His people. God’s words were written on a scroll. Ezra stood on a high wooden platform. Some men stood next to Ezra on his right and on his left. Ezra opened the book where everyone could see it.

Ezra began to read. He read the law for several hours, **and all the people listened carefully. All the people stood up. They had respect for God’s Word. Ezra praised God, and the people lifted up their hands.**

“Amen! Amen!” they said. **The people in the crowd bowed down with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped God.**

Some of the leaders there—the Levites (LEE vights)—explained the law to the people and helped them understand the words Ezra read. As the people heard the words of the law, they began to weep. The law was God’s rules for living, and the people had disobeyed God. **They realized they had sinned.**

Ezra, the Levites, and Nehemiah (nee huh MIGH uh) the governor said, “This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep.” Even though the people’s sin made them sad, this was a happy day.

Then Ezra said to them, “Go home and prepare a feast! Eat rich food and drink sweet drinks. Share what you have prepared with those who have nothing prepared.” And again Ezra said, **“Today is holy to the Lord our God. This is not a day to be sad because the joy of the Lord is your strength.”**

The people obeyed Ezra. They prepared a feast. They ate rich food and drank sweet drinks. They shared what they had with people who did not have food and drinks, and all the people had a big celebration. **They were glad because they understood the words of the law that were explained to them.**

Christ Connection: God's Word is powerful. When Ezra read God's Word, the people changed their ways and loved God more. The Bible says that Jesus is "the Word." Jesus is God who came to live with people on earth. Jesus has the power to change our hearts.

SMALL GROUP OPENING

Session Title: Ezra Read the Law

Bible Passage: Nehemiah 8:1-12

Big Picture Question: Why did Ezra read God's Word? God's Word helped people obey God so they could be holy.

Key Passage: Malachi 4:2

Unit Christ Connection: God restored a faithful remnant and reminded them of His promise of a new covenant through Jesus Christ.

Welcome time

Arriving Activity: Through the gate

Invite two volunteers to form a gate by holding hands. Give the "gatekeepers" a secret word. If given the secret word, they must open the gate and let the kid who said it through. Give the other kids a hint about the password. Choose a kid to walk to the gate and say her guess. If she fails, provide another hint and let another kid try. Once a kid passes through the gate, play again.

Say • Nehemiah continued his work on the wall in today's Bible story, including several gates. We'll see if he and the Jews were able to finish the wall.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Word Wall" activity page, 1 per kid
- crayons or markers

Guide boys and girls to complete the activity page.

Say • Walls were very important in Bible times for protection. What are some things we use to protect ourselves?

Session starter (10 minutes)

Option 1: Crack in the wall

- paper wads, 6

Choose two volunteers. Invite the other kids to form a large circle with space between each kid. Position the volunteers outside the circle on opposite sides. Provide each volunteer with three paper wads each. Explain that the two volunteers will attempt to get their paper wads to land inside the circle. The kids in the circle should face them and try to block the paper wads without moving their feet. Remind the kids only to throw underhand. If a paper wad goes through the circle and out the other side, it does not count. The volunteer with the most paper wads in the circle wins. Choose new volunteers and play again.

Say • Those in the circle had to form a wall to keep out the paper wads. Nehemiah and the Jews had problems building the walls to keep enemies out of Jerusalem. We will find out what they did about those problems.

Option 2: Two things at once

- tape
- balloons, 2 per team
- Allergy Alert

Form two or more teams. Tape a start and finish line several feet apart. Provide each team with one inflated balloon. Instruct the teams to line up single file at the start line. The first kid in line will race to the finish line and back while tapping the balloon into the air. If the balloon touches the ground, he must start over. Play another round. This time each kid must try to play keeping two balloons in the air at the same time.

Say • Was it harder to keep two balloons in the air? It is usually harder to do two things at once. Nehemiah and God's people had to do two things at once if they wanted to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. We'll find out what they had to do and how God protected them in today's Bible story.

SMALL GROUP LEADER

Session Title: Ezra Read the Law

Bible Passage: Nehemiah 8:1-12

Big Picture Question: Why did Ezra read God's Word? God's Word helped people obey God so they could be holy.

Key Passage: Malachi 4:2

Unit Christ Connection: God restored a faithful remnant and reminded them of His promise of a new covenant through Jesus Christ.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- dry erase board and markers (optional)

Make sure the key passage, Malachi 4:2, is visible for each child, either as the printed poster or written on a dry erase board. Read the verse together.

Say • A calf is a baby cow. A calf is often placed in a small fenced area called a stall. When released from this small place, it will happily run around. This verse talks about Jesus and how those who trust in Him will be like the happy and free calf. Without Jesus, we are trapped by sin, but Jesus frees us from sin.

Invite the kids to repeat the key passage together. Encourage them to jump in the air each time they say a word. Then challenge them to recite it faster. You may also choose to allow them to jump forward each time they finish saying the key passage. After about five attempts, see who jumped the farthest.

Bible story review (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Small Group Visual Pack
- Big Picture Question Slide or Poster

Encourage the kids to find Nehemiah 3 in their Bibles. Help them as needed.

Say • In which division of the Bible do we find Nehemiah? (*History*) What rebuilding project does Nehemiah tell us about? (*the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem*) Nehemiah also led God's people to repent and promise to follow God.

Use the small group visual pack to show kids where today's Bible story is on the timeline. Review the Bible story provided using the bolded text, or summarize the story in your own words. Invite the kids to form a circle and hold hands to form a wall. Each time you say "wall" or "walls," the kids must leave their spot in the wall and find another spot to join.

Say • Nehemiah and the Jews rebuilt the wall and gates around Jerusalem in just 52 days. That's amazing when you realize that it took about 20 years to rebuild the temple. Again, God's people had to trust God for protection when their neighbors tried to stop them from building.

These same enemies were amazed when the walls were complete. They knew that God had to be with His people for them to have repaired the walls so quickly.

Show the big picture question slide or poster.

Say • *How did God protect His people? God used Nehemiah to lead the people to rebuild the city walls.*

When we repent and trust in Jesus, we are protected from the worst enemies ever, sin and

death. Jesus defeated both when He lived a perfect life, died on the cross, and rose from the grave.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

Option 1: True gate

Choose four volunteers. Send two of the volunteers to one side of the room and the other two to the opposite side of the room. Each pair will form a gate by holding hands above their heads. Several gates were built into the wall around Jerusalem. You will name two possible gates, but only one was an actual gate in the wall. Explain that one pair of volunteers is one gate while the other pair is the other gate. The remaining kids must choose which gate is mentioned in Nehemiah by walking through the actual gate. Here are some examples:

• Horse Gate and Cow Gate (*Horse Gate*) • Camel Gate and Sheep Gate (*Sheep Gate*) • Open Gate and Old Gate (*Old Gate*) • Valley Gate and Mountain Gate (*Valley Gate*) • Fish Gate and Chicken Gate (*Fish Gate*)

Say • Nehemiah led the Jews to rebuild the gates and wall around Jerusalem in only 52 days. ***How did God protect His people? God used Nehemiah to lead the people to rebuild the city walls.***

Option 2: Easy zipper pull

- heavyweight paper strips
- tape
- hole punch
- paper clip
- crayons and markers

Provide each kid with a 1-by-3-inch strip of heavyweight paper and a 1-inch piece of tape. Demonstrate how to place the tape in the center of one of the narrow ends. Fold the tape so that half of it is on one side of the paper and half is on the other side. Punch a hole through the strip and taped portion. Thread a paper clip through the hole to create an easy zipper pull. Invite the kids to decorate the paper like a brick and write *Jesus protects me!* on both sides. Encourage the kids to thread the paper clip through a zipper pull on a backpack or lunch bag.

Say • ***How did God protect His people? God used Nehemiah to lead the people to rebuild the city walls.*** God sent Jesus to protect us from sin. Through His life, death, and resurrection, we are saved.



Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

- Journal Page, 1 per kid
- markers or crayons
- Bible Story Coloring Page

Distribute each child's journal page provided with this session. Instruct the kids to draw a picture of what they think one of the gates might have looked like. Writers can write the key passage.

Say • Let's take a final look at the big picture question, ***How did God protect His people? God used Nehemiah to lead the people to rebuild the city walls.***

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the coloring page provided with this session. Pray, thanking God for His protection. Pray for each child by name, asking God to use him to tell others about how Jesus died and rose again to protect people from sin.

Dismiss to parents – Make sure to check security tags when dismissing children.

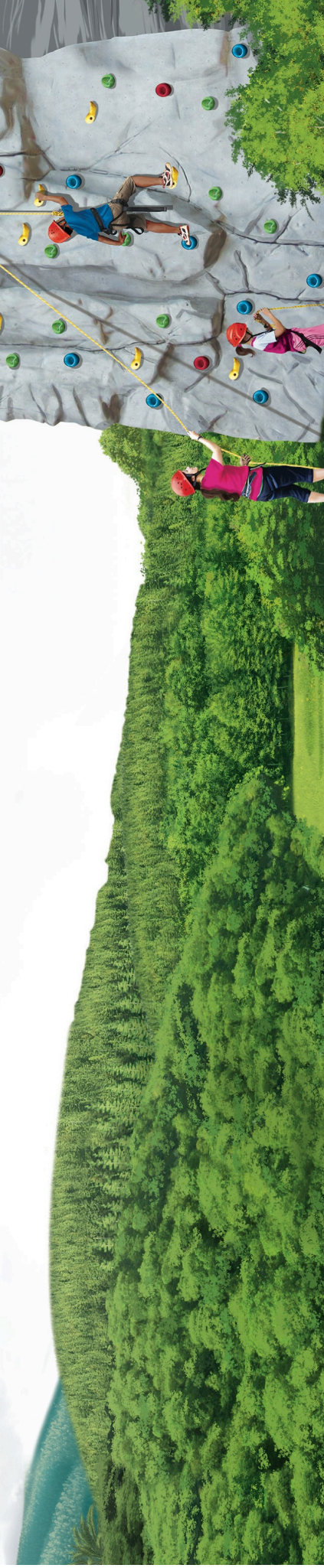


**But for you who revere
my name, the sun of
righteousness will rise
with healing in its rays.
And you will go out and
frolic like well-fed calves.**

Malachi 4:2

Why did Ezra read God's Word?

God's Word helped
people know how to obey God
so they could be holy.





Jerusalem Was Rebuilt

Invite kids to stand before the family and read aloud from the Bible. Kids may choose a favorite Bible passage or read Nehemiah 8:1-12. Remind them that the Bible is God's Word. The Bible tells us God's plan to save people from sin by sending Jesus to die on the cross. Provide crayons for kids to draw a picture of their favorite Bible story below.

Ezra Read the Law

Nehemiah 8:1-12

Preschool

Key Passage: Malachi 4:2

Big Picture Question: What did God's Word teach the people? God's Word helped them know the right things to do.

Christ Connection: *The Bible teaches us about God and Jesus. It helps us know the right things to do. We do wrong things a lot, but when we know and love Jesus, He helps us say no to sin. Jesus died to rescue us from sin.*

Kids

Key Passage: Malachi 4:2

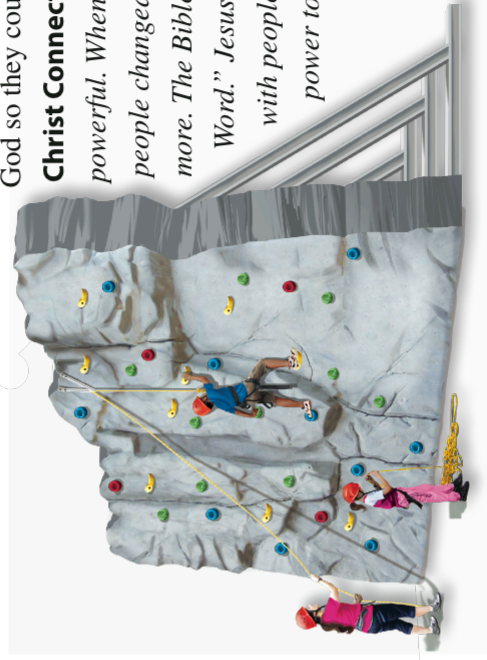
Big Picture Question: Why did Ezra read God's

Word? God's Word helped people know how to obey God so they could be holy.

Christ Connection: *God's Word is*

powerful. When Ezra read God's Word, the people changed their ways and loved God more. The Bible says that Jesus is "the

Word." Jesus is God who came to live with people on earth. Jesus has the power to change our hearts.



the

GOSPEL

GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

gos-pel – *noun*. good news. the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation.



GOD RULES.

The Bible tells us God created everything, including you and me, and He is in charge of everything. *Genesis 1:1; Revelation 4:11; Colossians 1:16-17*



WE SINNED.

We all choose to disobey God. The Bible calls this sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. *Romans 3:23; 6:23*



GOD PROVIDED.

God sent Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. *John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9*



JESUS GIVES.

He lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! *Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 2:8-9*



WE RESPOND.

Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus. *John 14:6; Romans 10:9-10,13*

ALLERGY ALERT



Today we will be tasting/
touching/sniffing:

Please notify the leader
if your child should not
participate.

Instructions: Print this poster. You may laminate it and reuse it throughout the quarter. Use a dry erase marker to fill in the necessary information. Display the poster where parents and kids can see it before class.