



LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Ezra 3:1-13

John 2:18-22

Session Theme:

Restoration

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Warm Up: Brick by Brick

Bring a brick or large block to class with you. Ask kids what it is and what they might build if they had thousands of bricks. Invite them to guess how many bricks it might take to build a house. How many might it take to build a church? Hint: Masons use 5,226 bricks to cover 2,400 square feet of space (www.reference.com).

In today's story, the Israelites were so excited! They had been living far from home in a place called Babylon and finally were able to return, rebuild, and restore the temple in Jerusalem. How long did they wait before they started worshiping there again? Let's find out!

c. Opening Prayer

Faithful Lord, we are happy to worship you and give you praise. Thank you for giving us a community of faith where we can come together. Help us to listen to your Word and trust in your promise, that we may go forth to serve you in our daily lives. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- "Rejoice in the Lord Always!" (kids' song, round)
- "Holy, Holy, Holy" (hymn)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today's Lesson is from the Old Testament
- Scripture Section: Return

God brought King Cyrus of Persia to power over the Babylonians. God's people were allowed to return home to rebuild their temple and their nation under leaders including Ezra and Nehemiah.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level.

Upper Elementary: Read the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read the Scripture text from the Bible

For Upper and Lower Elementary, use the Storyteller questions to help the students think about the events of the story.

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Upper Elementary: Worksheet and Drama

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, Questions)

Adult: Bible Study Sheet (Introduction and Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day's lesson one last time. If you have not already done so, introduce the Theme Word for the week, providing the definition, and asking how the lesson connects to that theme.

Youth/Adult: Discuss "Reflection for the Week Ahead"

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Upper Elementary: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format



Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Ezra 3:1-13

1. What are the names of the two important leaders mentioned in Ezra 3:2? (These two figures are also spoken of by the prophet in Zechariah 3:6-8 and 4:8-10.) Which was the political leader and which was the religious leader?

Jeshua/Joshua is specifically mentioned as “high priest” (Ezra 3:2, Zechariah 3:1). Zerubbabel is said to have laid the foundation of the house (Zechariah 4:9). Though it is not specified here, Zerubbabel was the Persian-appointed Jewish governor of Judah after the Exile.

2. The Feast of Booths (v. 4) was a commemoration of the time when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years. How was that time similar to what the exiles experienced in Babylon? Where did God's promise bring them in the end?

During the time of Moses (c. 1260 B.C.), the Israelites wandered in the wilderness of Sinai for 40 years. As punishment for their sins, they were not allowed to come into the Promised Land. In the time of the Exile (c. 586-539 B.C.), they had been removed from the Promised Land as a punishment for straying to other gods. In both cases, returning into the land of Israel was a fulfillment of God's promise.

3. How was the expense of rebuilding the temple paid for? Who carried out the work? In what way does our worship of the Lord also include offerings of our time and money?

Scriptures says that from “the offerings of everyone who made a freewill offering to the LORD ... they gave money to the masons and the carpenters ...” (v. 5, 7). As it was in the days of the Bible, offerings are a practical necessity for the operation of the Church and the carrying out of our God-given mission in the world.

But the reason we give of our time and money has a deeper motive. We offer our thanks and praise to God in gratitude for all he has first given to us.

4. Why is the Levite tribe mentioned so often in these verses? What special function did they serve?

In the Law of Moses, the tribe of the Levites was set apart as the priests and caretakers of the temple, and they were the ones who offered sacrifices on the altar of God. (This is

commanded by God in Numbers 3:5-10 and elsewhere.) For this reason, the Levites did not inherit their own tribal lands, but were to serve the Lord and his people wherever they lived.

5. According to verses 10-11, what was the atmosphere on the day that the temple was rededicated? Are there special times of year when worship in your congregation is particularly festive? Why are times like this important for a community?

From the way it is described in the Bible, the dedication of the temple was a day of celebration. People gathered to take part in feasts and to make their offerings. They praised the Lord with trumpets and cymbals.

There are certain festival days in the year of the church where we get to be part of similar celebrations. These include Easter, Christmas, Pentecost and other special recognitions. These holy days (holidays) give people the chance to get together, eat, celebrate, and thank God.

6. Why do you think that some of the old-timers wept at the sight of the temple being rebuilt (v. 12-13)? What do you think they were feeling?

Some may have shed tears of joy at seeing the Temple restored, thinking it would never happen. Others may have cried because the new Temple did not meet their expectations. The previous temple had been much more grand than this version. The elders would have seen the difference; maybe they were disappointed.

7. The theme of change runs throughout the Book of Ezra. How can change bring excitement and renewal in faith? In what ways can change also be a scary thing? How do both require trust in God?

Nothing can grow and increase without change. Nothing can be healed without change. It is an exciting thing when God makes this happen among us. But sometimes, the unknown of what will be can frighten us. Even though change can be good, we often put up with the way things are because it seems safer. We need to trust in God.

8. Read John 2:18-22. The temple was destroyed and rebuilt several times over the years. How did Jesus use this metaphor to give a promise about himself?

Jesus used the image of destroying the temple and rebuilding it as a metaphor for his own death and resurrection. He would be killed, but he would return alive. Jesus was (and is) the true presence of God with us — but he is not limited to any single location. He is with us wherever we are. He has made his temple in us (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

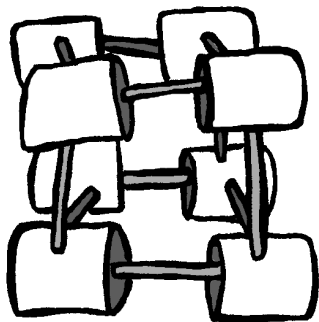
Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: Build a Temple Activity

Materials Needed:

- Small plates
- Mini marshmallows (large ones could work too)
- Toothpicks



Instructions:

Give each person a plate, a handful of marshmallows and 10 or more toothpicks. (Have extra supplies available.)

Explain that in this challenge, everyone will build a temple using the supplied marshmallows and toothpicks. Creativity can rule here as kids try different building strategies!

When finished, each person can explain what their process was and show off their tower. Then, give everyone some fresh marshmallows to eat!

Imagine building a temple using no machines! It would take a very long time. That's just what the Israelites did in today's story, however, and they were happy and excited to do it. They could not wait to restore their temple!

Activity 2: Make a Joyful Noise!

Materials Needed:

- Paper
- Pencils or pens



The singing, shouting and crying after the temple was rebuilt was so loud, the Bible tells us, it was heard from miles around!

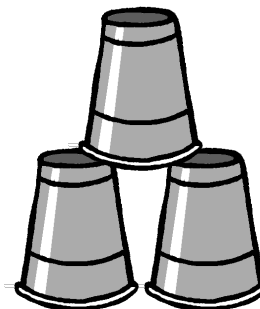
For this activity, challenge kids to write a celebration piggyback song. (A piggyback song is one that's written to a familiar tune, like "Happy Birthday.")

Their song should be one that says something about today's story. It could be about working hard on an important job, or about God's love for his people, or about being thankful. Give kids about 5-10 minutes to write their piggyback song. While no one should be required to sing their song aloud, those who want to do so certainly can!

Activity 3: Cup Stacking Game

Materials Needed:

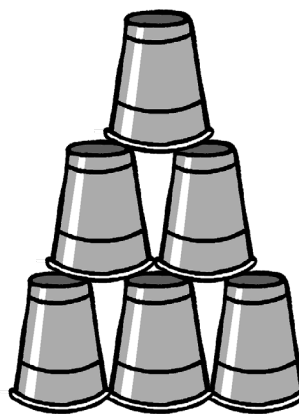
- A few packages of plastic or paper cups
- Timer



Instructions:

Divide the class into groups of 2-3 students. Give each group at least 12 cups, with more available.

Show kids how cups can be stacked by making a base of three cups, balancing two on top of the three and one on top of the two. Give the groups a few minutes to experiment with different building formations.



Explain that when you say, "Start!" kids are to work together, stacking as many cups as possible to build a temple within an allotted amount of time. The object of this game is to use as many cups as possible and build as tall a structure as possible before the timer sounds.

Set a timer for 5 minutes and have kids begin. When the timer sounds, the game ends,

and whoever has used the most cups and built the highest structure wins!

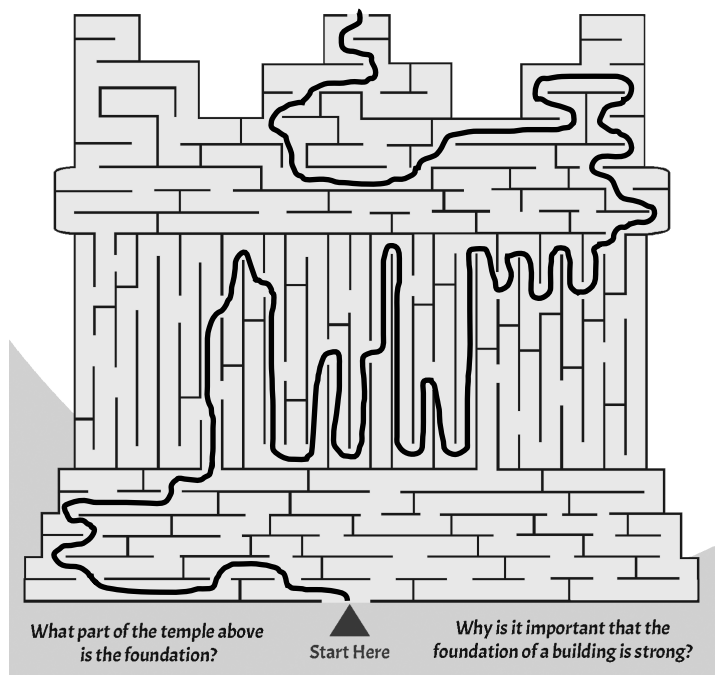
If kids enjoy this game and time permits, play a second round. This time, mix it up a bit and have kids try to build a structure that will withstand high winds. When the timer sounds, go from structure to structure and fan it with a paper. The tallest one that is still standing wins this round.

Builders have to be very careful about which materials they use to make a building and where they place those materials. They often have to work under time constraints, too, just as we did in this game. The second Temple in Jerusalem (the one started in today's story) lasted more than 500 years before it was destroyed by the Romans.

Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the answers and solution to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

Maze Route



Discussion:

- 1) In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus says that "those who hear my word and act on it" are like the man who built on a solid foundation. When we refuse to listen to God or obey him, things often tend to fall apart in our life.
- 2) In Ephesians 2:17-12, Paul says that the apostles and prophets (writers of the Bible) are the foundation of what we believe, and that Jesus himself is the cornerstone who holds the church together.

Map Answer Key

Details to point out on the map from the youth page:

The empire of Persia was so large that the capital shifted from city to city, depending where the king and his court were located. Four of the most important capital cities are listed on the map.

- 1) Susa
- 2) Persepolis
- 3) Ecbatana
- 4) Babylon

Jerusalem was the capital of Judah. The arrow shows the general direction of the return of the people from Exile.

Vocabulary Word for the Week:

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary:

Restoration

when you work to put something back
into a good and useful condition

*Ezra worked hard to get God's temple rebuilt
and to bring back worship of the Lord;
many people worked hard in the restoration.*

Reflection for the Week Ahead

Thinking of the various things we do as a part of worship in church, in what way do you consider the offerings you give as an act of worship? How does donating money or other goods give glory to God? Does God himself need the things we give? Who or what do our offerings go to serve?

Martin Luther once said: "God doesn't need our good works, but our neighbors do." This statement reflects the same sentiment Jesus expressed when he said, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40).



This week, make note of the practical opportunities you have to give for the sake of others — whether it be individuals, groups, or the community as a whole. How does it change your perception to think of good you do to others as a way of giving glory to God?

The Practice of Prayer

On the lines below, write a prayer thanking God for the opportunities you have to give of yourself. Ask for the Holy Spirit to provide you with a generous heart that is open to sharing both physical and spiritual blessings with others.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.