

LESSON 76

The Exiles Return

EZRA 3:1-13



BIBLE TRUTH

GOD MOVES IN THE HEARTS OF MEN TO REBUILD THE TEMPLE
AND ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSE

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING ACTIVITY AND INTRODUCTION 5 MIN

SUPPLIES: Room-ransacking team

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

SUPPLIES: *The Gospel Story Bible* (story 76)

3. BIBLE STORY DISCUSSION 5 MIN

Where Is Jesus?

SUPPLIES: Bible (ESV preferred); Review “Where Is Jesus?” to prepare

4. SNACK QUESTIONS 10 MIN

SUPPLIES: Snack food/water

5. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5–10 MIN

6. ACTIVITIES AND OBJECT LESSONS (CHOOSE ONE OR MORE) 20–30 MIN

Coloring Page 76

SUPPLIES: markers/crayons

Construction Begins

SUPPLIES: thirty cardboard bricks or brick-shaped blocks (at least one for each student in the class); felt board and flannelgraph set of the temple rebuilding; masking tape

Celebrate with Cymbals

SUPPLIES: strips of purple cloth to represent the vestments of the priests; rhythm band instruments including some kazoos and a few sets of cymbals (pan lids can work); a recording of a familiar celebratory worship chorus

7. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

TOTAL 60–75 MIN

THE LESSON

OPENING ACTIVITY AND INTRODUCTION 5 MIN

In today’s lesson the children will learn about how God brought the exiles back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.

Prior to class, arrange with a couple of teens or adults that when you lead your class out on a “practice” fire drill they are to sneak into your classroom and ransack it by overturning chairs and tables and strewing torn up paper around. They should be ready to restore the room to order when you give them the signal.

Tell the children you are going to practice what you would do as a class in case of a fire. (Be sure to clear this activity with your children’s ministry leadership team.) Line up the children single file and walk them slowly out of your class.

Take enough time to give your volunteers a chance to ransack the room. Then when you return with the children observe their reactions. Draw them out about what they see and how they feel to return to a room that was all messed up.

Signal to your volunteers to come in and allow the children to help in putting the room back in order. While they are working, explain that in today’s Bible story the people of Israel are going to return to Jerusalem, but they will come back to see their once beautiful city with a grand temple destroyed and in ruins.

Once the room is put back in order, celebrate as a class.

Pray for the remainder of the class time before moving forward with the lesson.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read story 76, “The Exiles Return,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

BIBLE STORY DISCUSSION 5 MIN

After reading the story, use the following questions to involve the children in a discussion:

- What are the people trying to do?
(They are trying to rebuild the temple.)
- What part of the temple did they finish?
(They finished the foundation.)
- What did they do when the foundation was laid?
(They shouted and praised God, but some were sad because the old temple was more beautiful and they were sad that it was gone.)

SNACK QUESTIONS 10 MIN

While the children are eating the snack, engage them by asking:

- What was the temple built for?
(The temple was God’s house in Israel. It was where the people came to sacrifice animals in worship of God.)
- Do we have a temple building in which to worship God today?
(No, there is no longer a temple building.)
- If we don’t have a temple building anymore, where does God’s Spirit live today?
(When we become a Christian and are saved, God’s Spirit comes into our hearts and lives within us and we become part of God’s living temple.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5-10 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECT LESSONS. 20-30 MIN

Coloring Activity

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page 76—one copy for each child

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

Where Is Jesus? _____

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Passage: Ezra 3:8–13

Some of the people of God who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon were very old. If a child had been a ten-year-old when first captured, he would be an eighty-year-old now after the 70-year captivity in Babylon.

The older men remembered how beautiful Solomon's temple had been before being destroyed. That's why they were sad and crying. But their children, who had grown up in Babylon, had never seen Solomon's temple, so they rejoiced when the foundation was laid.

Even though the new temple was not as big and beautiful as the original, something very special would one day happen there. Jesus would visit this rebuilt temple; he would walk across the very foundation they were laying. The older men had good reason to be sad, but if they had only known that Jesus would teach and heal in the rebuilt temple, they would have rejoiced instead of crying.

Jesus is the new temple. When we become Christians we become a part of Christ's body, the church—we become a part of the new temple (1 Corinthians 3:16–17). God's new, most glorious temple is not man-made but God-made. The same presence of God that filled Solomon's temple fills the heart of every Christian.

- Why are the people celebrating?
(The people are celebrating because the temple foundation has been laid.)
- Did everyone celebrate, or were some of the people sad?
(Some of the people were sad.)

Tell the children to draw a tear on one of the men's eyes. Tell the children that some people were sad because the new temple was not going to be as nice as the old one.

Construction Begins

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ thirty cardboard bricks or brick-shaped blocks (at least one for each student in the class)
- ✓ felt board and flannelgraph set of the temple rebuilding
- ✓ masking tape

Prior to class arrange the “bricks” in a large rectangle. Mark off the rectangle's dimensions with tape and then scatter the bricks around the class.

Read Ezra 3:1–13 to the children and use a felt board to show the people gathering to rebuild the temple. Tell the children that they are the builders standing amid the ruins of the once magnificent temple in Jerusalem. Tell them to each find a brick to add to the tape that marks the foundation.

One by one have the children individually carry the bricks to the tape mark. (As they work, mention that the foundation is the bottom of the temple wall and it needs to be heavy and strong to support the wall.)

When the foundation is laid have all the children shout as they did in Zerubbabel's day. Explain to the class that the older priests were sad because of how much more wonderful the first temple was. Pick some of the class to pretend to cry while the others shout.

Ask the children why the temple was important. Explain that it was where God lived and so it represented God's presence with his people. The temple also was the center of Jerusalem and marked the people's return home.

Celebrate with Cymbals

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ strips of purple cloth to represent the vestments of the priests
- ✓ rhythm band instruments including some kazoos and a few sets of cymbals (pan lids can work)
- ✓ a recording of a familiar celebratory worship chorus

Use this activity in conjunction with the previous one or separately.

Celebrate the completion of the foundation laying and the beginning of the temple construction. Hand out the purple “vestments” to some of the students and musical instruments to the others. Line them up in a circle. Move in a circle, dancing to the music and celebrating, saying phrases such as:

- God is good.
- Thank you, God.
- We are home.
- Goodbye Babylon.

Assign a phrase to each child to keep repeating.

PRAY **5 MIN**

Take time at the end of class to thank God for all you learned today. Include parts of your Bible lesson in your prayer as another way for the children to remember what today’s lesson was about.

LESSON 76 - THE EXILES RETURN

