

GOD'S PEOPLE LISTEN AND OBEY

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

TRUST OBEY SUFFER SUBMIT PATH

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Ezra 7; Nehemiah 8

MEMORY VERSE

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV*).

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help children understand that Jesus suffered to become our Savior.

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

In the Hebrew Bible, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were one, which was called the "Book of Ezra." In our Bible, this book contains distinctive narratives: (1) From Chapter 1 to 6, the return of some Israelites to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel and the rebuilding of the temple. (2) From Chapter 7 to 10, the second return under the leadership of Ezra with great help from Nehemiah, who arrived later. In between events there is a silent period of 60 years.

Ezra was a scribe and priest who lived in Persia. King Artaxerxes greatly rewarded him. (He is very likely to have given him a high position in his court.) One day he asked the king to permit him to go to Jerusalem on a mission of teaching, and he not only gave permission but let all Israelites in his kingdom, including priests and Levites who wanted to go, join him (Ezra 7:13). In addition, he gave authority from him and his court to act as a messenger and inquire about Judea and Jerusalem (Ezra 7:14).

Fifteen hundred men took advantage of this opportunity in the second return. With their families and servants, the number reached about five thousand people. To reach Jerusalem, the exiles had to walk 1,500 km. The trip took them four months.

Even in exile, Ezra was a serious child of God's law. He believed that the people should hear it. Nehemiah Chapter 8 illustrates their commitment to teach others.

The reading of the Law of God by Ezra in Nehemiah 8 happens shortly after the finishing of the wall of Jerusalem. The leaders asked him to read them the book of the Law so that everyone could see and hear. They built a great platform on which he could stand. The audience included all the people, men, women and children.

As people listened, they recognized that they had broken the Word of God and felt guilty. However, Ezra wanted them to see God's law as an occasion of gratitude and joy. The people promised to obey.

Ezra instructed them to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-43). This is the feast that was characterized by joy. The Israelites recounted God's provision during their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land.

ADAPTATION

Modern cults and sects attempt to discredit, add to, or misrepresent the teachings of the Bible. Some school teachers have teachings and ideas that contradict Christian beliefs. It is therefore very important that children know what the Bible teaches us, and it should not be seen only as one more book.

When you teach this lesson, emphasize that the Bible is the Word of God, and therefore, its content is true. In it, God tells us the right way to live.

Many of your children have their own Bible, but have no ability to read. Encourage your children to ask their parents or an adult to read them Bible stories. If someone wants to give them a book, suggest to them that it be Christian. (Suggest some that you know and understand that they are biblical.) Tell them to pay attention when the pastor or Sunday School teacher reads the Bible.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Tell the group: "Discouragement was present in Israel for a long time, and the possibilities for change were few. To build a city in these conditions in order to raise the mood was a difficult task. But God worked again with people who were willing to trust and obey. The people were not only encouraged, but also did the task in record time. The next step was to help the people know the law of God. This would be a very spiritual wall, more important and necessary than a city wall, because it would help reject the erroneous teachings. We will learn more about this in today's lesson."

TEACH THE LESSON

Carefully study Ezra 7 and Nehemiah 8 prior to this session. Be prepared to tell the story in your own words.

Emphasize how hard it was for the people to rebuild the walls, because they had none of the machinery that now exists. However, they did so with the help of God. After the important work, God gave them the most important job of all: to know the Word of God; and to know it, the people must decide to do it.

Emphasize that God's people not only listened to him, but also obeyed his Word. If you can, take several sizes of Bibles or any type of parchment, in order to exemplify how the Bible was in the time of Ezra.

Remind them that the teaching of all the lessons of this unit has been the same: "trust and obedience." Each of the people mentioned in the biblical stories, both men and women, were always willing to believe and to trust in God's promises. As pointed out in the Global Wesleyan Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology (Branson 2020):

The biblical idea of obedience is expressed in the expected relationship between the Creator and the creatures...To obey, then, is to engage in the relational act of listening to another's voice and heeding what is said or valuing and holding on to what one has been given. This vocabulary frames obedience as an act of love rather than as a matter of subjection or legalism...Abraham's descendants were promised blessings for obeying God. Abraham was assured that through his offspring God would bless all nations (Genesis 22:18). Later, Moses urged the Israelites toward a fully embodied obedience, "to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul," reminding them that observing "the LORD's commands and decrees" was for their "own good" (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

If possible, make a paper or cardboard heart (preferably red) and enter the text of Psalm 119: 9 and 11 on it, verse 9 on one side and verse 11 on the opposite side. You can use these verses as you teach the lesson.

CONNECT THE LESSON

Ezra reads the Word of God

You will need Student Activity Sheet #127-A and #127-B for the children, scissors, and crayons.

Give each child their activity sheets and follow the instructions on them. After they have made their pyramids, ask them to place them on a table and ask the question: "How can I hear the voice of God to obey it?" (Let the children tell what is happening in the figures of the pyramid.)

Read Psalm 119:11. This passage tells us to keep the Word of God. Ask, "Where do we keep the Word of God?" (In our hearts.) Use the time while the children are making their pyramids to review the lesson and give them ideas of how to apply the lesson personally.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

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This is the last lesson of the unit. Bring all materials used for the memory verse from all the lessons in this unit: heart, words, and other things that you have made. Put them on the wall for your children to see.

Ask what they remember about each lesson; review the lessons with them using each of the options you used for the unit. If you can, bring some kind of reward for those children who have learned the verse for this unit.

WRAP-UP

Pray

Conclude with a prayer. You can make a circle with your children. Ask for volunteers to pray. Thank God for Moses, Joshua, Hannah, Samuel, Ezra and Nehemiah. Pray for the children. Do not forget to ask for prayer requests and to include them in your closing prayer.

Encourage

Help children not to forget everything they need to take home. Thank everyone for attending today's class. If you consider it appropriate, allow some to take home some of the teaching materials you used during the unit.

Invite

Create anticipation for the next session. Tell the group that they will start a new unit of lessons. Tell them the topic to make a connection and awakening interest in them for not missing. Challenge them to invite others to join the group.