

EZEKIEL

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

RESPONSIBLE PROVERB EXILE FREE WILL SYMBOL WATCHMAN WATCHTOWER

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Ezekiel 18:1-4; 19-24

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help the students know that they're responsible to God for their actions and understand the importance of confessing their sins to him

MEMORY VERSE

"Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you" (Jeremiah 7:23b, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

"The devil made me do it!" is a phrase that can cause us to smile or even laugh. But we all know that it is human nature that leads us to excuse ourselves and escape our responsibility for the evil we did. People want to avoid the punishment and consequences of their actions. It is therefore easy to blame others, including Satan. However, we all know very well that there is nobody to blame for our actions but ourselves. In today's lesson, the students will learn that it is right to take responsibility for their actions, despite the consequences. As a result of this lesson, they'll learn that they cannot blame their parents, siblings, ancestors, or peers for their own sins. We all face circumstances that influence our decisions, but each person is directly responsible before God for his/her choices. Sometimes, preadolescents are falsely accused and punished for the bad actions of others. It is possible that many cannot prove their innocence. Therefore, as a teacher, show a compassionate attitude to those who have experienced situations of this type, and help them respond with grace and forgiveness to those who caused them evil.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The prophet

Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel was also a priest and prophet. But unlike him, Ezekiel prophesied far from Jerusalem. In the year 597 BC, he and some others were exiled to Babylon as a warning of what would happen to the entire nation. For years, Ezekiel sent messages with warnings to “his home.”

Ezekiel was similar to the other prophets: he communicated God’s message through sermons and prophecies. But at other times, he was different from the others. He provided intriguing details of visions he had had, such as that of a wheel inside another wheel (1:15-21) or the one of a valley with dry bones (37:1-14). In addition, he acted out his messages.

In a way, Ezekiel is the most difficult to understand and the least read, unlike Isaiah or Jeremiah. However, many people find in Ezekiel a deeply inspiring prophet, because he used powerful and dazzling images.

Back to Proverbs

What does the proverb mentioned in Ezekiel 18:2 mean? Perhaps the people—both those who were in exile and those who had been warned of their coming deportation to exile—viewed and mentioned this proverb with a touch of fatalism, that is, the people had no power to change what was going to happen to them. The people complained. They said that the present situation was a problem, that due to the actions of their ancestors there would be an early destruction. It was their way of saying: “We cannot do anything, but it is not our fault either.” “Why are we being punished? It was their fault, not ours!”

In the discussion of chapter 18, Ezekiel responds emphatically, saying: “Each person is responsible for his/her own actions and reaping the consequences.”

The prophet makes and emphasizes this point with the following details:

Children obedient to God will not bear the blame of their disobedient parents to God, nor vice versa (v. 19-20).

When a wicked person repents, God forgives that person and does not remember what that person did. That person will live (v. 19-20).

Sadly, the opposite is also true. If a righteous person sins and departs from righteousness and commits evil, no righteous things that person has done will help. All people will be judged for their sins (v. 24).

This is the point that everyone, young and old, should remember: God gave us free will, and he respects our decisions. We will not be blamed for the mistakes or sins of others. But at the same time, we cannot blame others for our mistakes and sins. We are responsible for what we do.

Remember that the last thing God wants is for someone to die in sin. With persistence, God insists on calling us and drawing us to him.

God rejoices when we return to him and choose life. He is not only a just God, but also a God of love who wants all of us to find life in him.

As you prepare this lesson, consider this in prayer: Ezekiel 8 removes any hope that we can justify our mistakes or sins by blaming others. Based on the example of Ezekiel, how can you help your students understand that they’re responsible for their own choices and that they cannot blame other people or circumstances?

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Cycles

Ask the preadolescents what things or situations have a cycle. For example: the circulatory system (blood travel), the seasons of the year, the route of a train, etc.

Ask: “Can these cycles be broken? (No, not without severe consequences.) What happens if a cycle breaks?” (The seasons cannot be altered except with the disruption of the planet or the sun; if there are stops in the circulatory system, we’ll be seriously injured or die; if a train is delayed or derailed, crashes can occur, causing deaths, etc.)

Say: “We have learned that there are cycles that cannot be broken, but there are other cycles that must be destroyed. Today we spoke of the cycle that the Israelites found themselves in, the cycle of sin—a cycle that had to be broken.

Important word

Responsible: One can choose for himself between the good and the bad. Able to take responsibility for his/her actions and decisions.

Write this important word (responsible) on a large card and if possible hang it on a wall or on the blackboard or wall. After teaching, ask students to give examples of how they're responsible. For example: "If I borrowed a book from my best friend, my responsibility is to return it to him," etc.

TEACH THE LESSON

Read Ezekiel's story entitled: "The Bitter Cycle of Sin." Or, ask a volunteer to read it.

We see it all the time. Especially now with the Israelites. When someone sins, the consequences appear. And everyone tries to discover whose fault it is. Some say that parents are to blame. Others say they cannot stop sinning - it's in their blood. But the word of the Lord came to me. And he said, "What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: 'The parents eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'?" God told me that this ancient proverb was not true about Israel.

Each person is an individual with a soul and a will of their own. And all, both the child and the parent, were created by God. We are individuals, and the one who sins will die. Some people are confused about this, and others still feel that the bad things that happen are a consequence for sin committed by people a long time ago. God wants us to know that we are not going to receive punishment for what others did, although sometimes we suffer indirectly from the consequences of what they did. Why will the child not bear the sin of his parent? Because if the child acted according to law and justice, kept all the statutes of God and fulfilled them, then he/she will live; but the soul that sins will die.

The child will not bear the sin of the father nor the father bear the sin of the child; "The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them."

"But if a wicked person turns away from all the sins they have committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, that person will surely live; they will not die. None of the offenses they have committed will be remembered against them. Because of the righteous things they have done, they will live."

Does God want the wicked to die? God says, "'Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live? But if a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked person does, will they live? None of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness they are guilty of and because of the sins they have committed, they will die."

Then Israel has a decision to make, beyond what their families and ancestors did. The people of Israel can return to God and change the cycle of sin, or they can choose to stay in the bitter cycle of sin.

(Taken from Ezekiel 18:1-4; 19-24)

At the end of the reading ask and discuss the following questions:

What does the proverb mean: "The parents ate the sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? (18:2) (Children often encounter the consequences of what their parents did; the effects of bad actions have consequences for a long time.)

Why do you think God told Israel to never quote this proverb again? (God created each one individually. Only the one who sins is the guilty one. The Israelites blamed their ancestors. God wanted Israel to break that cycle of sin.)

If God does not want the wicked to be lost forever, then why does he allow evil to happen? (He gives us free will: we can do whatever we want. He is just and gives us the opportunity to choose, even if we choose evil.)

God forgets our evil if we go to him, but he also forgets our good if we return to evil. Is that fair? (Encourage students to tell what they think.)

CONNECT THE LESSON

Review

Distribute Student Activity Sheet #373-A and help the group review the lesson.

Strange symbols

One of the goals of this unit is to present to the group characteristics of four of the prophets of the Old Testament: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Amos. Each of them has certain features that give their message power and interest. Isaiah is known by the images of the promised Messiah: both his birth and his ministry are fulfilled in Jesus. Jeremiah stands out for his care and concern for the people around him, and for that reason he is called the "weeping prophet." In this session we're studying the prophet

Ezekiel, whose most important characteristic is his extraordinary objectivity in the lessons he gave. After studying Ezekiel 18, expand your study to talk about this prophet and the original ways in which he gave the message of God. The book of Ezekiel is full of symbols.

Have your students find the activity in Student Activity Sheet #373-B "Say it with pictures." Ask them to read all the biblical passages. Then have them draw the symbols, make a description of them, and explain what they mean. You can divide into small groups. (It may be difficult for them to draw the watchtower, so tell them they can draw a tall tower with the shadow of a person inside, or a hill with a man on top. In the same way with the backpack, in which case they can draw a suitcase for a trip.)

Ezekiel 3:16-21: the watchman. In the days of Ezekiel, the watchtower was positioned on the highest part of the walls that surrounded the city or on some of the highest and closest hills. From the watchtower, the watchmen could observe the danger signs, such as wild animals or invaders that came near to the city.

Ezekiel 4:1-3: a block of clay and an iron pan. The brick symbolized the city of Jerusalem and the problems that would ensue. The iron pan symbolized God's dislike of them.

Ezekiel 12:1-6: a backpack (what can be carried on the shoulders in a trip or move). It symbolized the nation of Israel taken into captivity.

Ezekiel 37:1-14: the valley of dry bones. This image symbolized Israel in exile and its eventual return.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

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This week the students should already know by heart the whole verse of Jeremiah 7:23. Ask for volunteers to recite it. If there are several who do not know it, write it on the board and, after several repetitions, erase one or two words at a time while they recite and learn it. Give a small prize to those who say it by heart (for example, a pencil, an eraser, stickers, etc.).

WRAP-UP

Pray

Ask the students to pray for what they think is their most important responsibility and to pray what they see as the least significant responsibility they have. Tell them that the Lord knows what their responsibilities are and is willing to help them. At the end, pray for the responsibility we all have to tell others that God loves them and wants to forgive everyone.

Encourage

End with an appropriate chorus to encourage the group.

Invite

Tell something of interest about the next session to encourage the group to attend and to invite others.