

LESSON 8

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Persian Kings

In 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured Judah, the southern kingdom. He destroyed the city and took many of the temple treasures back to Babylon. By the time of Ezra, the kingdom of Babylon had fallen to the Medes and Persians. In 539 BC, King Cyrus of Persia allowed some of the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem. These exiles were led by Zerubbabel, about 50,000 strong. In 522, King Cyrus' son King Darius assumed rule (this Darius is distinct from Darius the Mede, who ruled during the time of Daniel. Darius the Mede may have been a local ruler under Cyrus, or another name for Cyrus himself). Darius was followed by King Xerxes, or Ahasuerus, the ruler whom we know as the king who married Esther.

Xerxes's son Artaxerxes ruled after him. In 458 BC, this ruler gave Ezra permission to return to Jerusalem, accompanied by another group of Jews. This second group returned to the Holy Land approximately eighty years after Zerubbabel's trip. Artaxerxes also allowed Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem in 445 BC to repair the city walls.

Ezra

Ezra the priest was a faithful servant of God who helped fulfill God's promises to the remnant of Judah in Babylon. This was during the 400s BC. He was the author of the Book of Ezra. The Bible is careful to show his genealogy all the way back to the high priest Aaron. In 7:10, it records that Ezra "prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel." This indicates that Ezra was determined to work for the Lord. Ezra's calling was not self-appointed, nor could anyone by his own power fulfill the kind of responsibilities to which he was called. Upon returning to Jerusalem with another group of approximately 1,800 exiles Ezra was able to revive the spiritual lives of the people of Israel.

Nehemiah

Nehemiah, meaning "comforted by Jehovah," was the son of Hachaliah of Judah. He was among the Jews exiled to Babylon. Nehemiah was a trusted cupbearer for Artaxerxes. When Nehemiah heard about the walls being in ruins, he determined to help repair them. It had been thirteen years since Ezra had returned to Jerusalem to help revive the people's faith. Now it was Nehemiah's turn to work for God. After praying to God, he asked for and received permission from Artaxerxes for permission to return to Jerusalem. Throughout his life and work, Nehemiah frequently prayed to the Lord for help and strength.

BIBLE TEXT

Ezra 7-9;
Nehemiah 1; 2; 6:15-16

BIBLE TRUTH

God answered the prayers of Ezra and Nehemiah and helped them return to Jerusalem to do great things.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To set our heart to seek the law of God.
2. To be ready to act upon the word of God.
3. To be able to teach others.
4. To be faithful.

MEMORY VERSE

"With thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

(Philippians 4:6b)

PRAYER

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Thank You for protecting us, almighty God. We know that You are always guiding us. When we are having problems or troubles, let us remember to turn to You in prayer. We know that just as You guided Ezra and Nehemiah out of their difficulties, You will also guide us and show us the way. We have faith and trust in You. We praise and thank You. Hallelujah! Amen.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDENTS

Both Ezra and Nehemiah faced many challenges in their work. Ezra's journey back to Jerusalem took four months, and even after his arrival, he had to work hard to help the people turn from their sins. Similarly, Nehemiah had no idea what to expect in his attempt to repair the city walls. He faced much opposition but was able to rebuild it in an incredible fifty-two days. These two workers of God were successful despite their many challenges because they placed their faith and trust in the Lord.

Your students face many challenges every day. These may include peer pressure, difficulty in schoolwork, obeying their parents, etc. To your students, these can be significant struggles. Encourage them with the examples of Ezra and Nehemiah. Our students need to develop their faith in God to give them strength to overcome their problems. Take time out to discuss their issues and provide them with practical solutions.

You can pass out small slips of paper for each student

to write down one thing that he or she currently needs God's help with in life. Students don't have to put their names on their slip of paper. When they are finished, ask them to fold their slip and put it in a basket. Take a few minutes to talk about what "faith" is. For example, faith means being able to believe and trust in the Lord before He actually solves our problem(s). Having faith in God does not mean that we should just sit there and do nothing while waiting for God's help. Instead, we should entrust everything to God and believe that He will lead and guide us. At the same time, we want to be proactive and come up with practical, incremental steps that can help our students to get us out of challenging situations. After this general discussion, quickly go over what the students have written on the slips of paper, and brainstorm solutions as a class for each challenge mentioned.

REVIEW

Last week, we learned about the story of Esther. Do you remember what nationality she was and to whom she was married? (She was a Jew who was married to the Persian King Xerxes.) What was the problem she encountered? (Her cousin and foster parent Mordecai, who worked at the king's gates, was hated by the wicked Haman because Mordecai refused to bow down before him. Because of this, Haman plotted to kill all the Jews in all of Persia.) What did Esther do after she learned about this news? (After praying and fasting, Esther tried to save her people by asking the king to come to two banquets. During the second banquet, Esther revealed Haman's evil plan.) What did the king do about it? (The king immediately took Haman out of the palace and had him hung. Then he made Mordecai a high-ranking official in his court.) What kind of order did the king issue to save the Jews? (To save the Jews, the king allowed Mordecai to write an order. The order said that they could defend themselves on the day of slaughter. Few people dared to harm the Jews after the king gave this decree.) We learned that Esther's bravery and trust in God helped save the Jews. We should also be courageous like her in our work for God.

VOCABULARY

- foreigner:** outsider, alien, a person from another place
- determined:** having made a firm decision
- disappointed:** unhappy because something did not turn out as desired
- shambles:** a total mess
- cupbearer:** a person whose job it is to serve drinks to the king

BIBLE STORY

Introduction

From many Old Testament stories, we have seen that God blessed and guided many good kings of Israel. However, we have also heard many stories about how God punished His people by allowing them to be taken away as prisoners to other lands. Dear students, why do you think God

allowed these bad things to happen to the Israelites? Didn't He love the Israelites? [Wait for students to respond.] You're right! The Israelites suffered because they often disobeyed God. Can any of you give some examples of how they sinned against God's commands? [Wait for students to respond. Answers include worshipping idols,

intermarrying with foreigners, etc.] There is no doubt about God's love for His chosen people. Even when the Israelites had been taken to foreign lands, God was always there to help when they reached out to Him.

Dear students, raise your hands if you have ever gone on a road trip with your family before. [Pause to see the show of hands.] For those of you who raised your hand, did you travel for a long time to visit someone or go somewhere? What was the longest period of time you stayed on the road? How did it feel to be away from home for so long? Did you feel like it was taking forever to get to your destination? In today's story, we are going to learn about Ezra, a man who spent four months on the road back to his homeland. On his journey, he faced many difficulties, but God was with him and helped him all the way until he arrived. Let's see what happened to him.

The People Rebuild the Temple

At this point in the story, we are in a period of time when the Israelites had been taken as prisoners to Babylon, a place far, far away from their homeland, Jerusalem. Because the people disobeyed God and worshipped idols, God punished them by letting the Babylonians capture them. The Babylonians were so cruel that they even destroyed God's temple and tore the place into pieces. For many years, the Israelites were living in a foreign land called Persia, doing hard labor.

However, God did not forget His people. When things seemed hopeless, God already had a plan for how His people would finally be released. God miraculously moved a good king of Persia, King Cyrus, to let the Israelites return to their homeland, Jerusalem. Wow—what wonderful news this was! After living in Persia for seventy years, they could now go home. Even though some Israelites decided to stay, there were over 50,000 people who wanted to return to Jerusalem. It was a very long journey through the desert. It must have been hot and very tiring. Finally, the people returned to their homes in Jerusalem. The first thing they did was to rebuild God's temple that had been destroyed many years ago by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar.

Ezra Is Determined to Return

Another person who did not return with the Israelites on that first trip was a man called Ezra. He was a priest who loved God very much. He studied God's words and obeyed His commands. Even though he lived in Persia, Ezra was a well-respected teacher of the Law. As the years went on, he thought more and more about the people who had gone back to Jerusalem those many years ago. He wished that he could be there with them to teach them about God. But it was almost impossible. There was a new king now, and he might not let Ezra go back. Also, what about the other Jews who might want to go back with Ezra? Furthermore, it would be a very long journey. Would everyone be able to make it to Jerusalem on foot? But the

more he thought about returning, the more determined Ezra became. So, Ezra prayed to God and asked Him to guide him. Then he went to see the king.

The king at this time was King Artaxerxes. Even though he wasn't Jewish, King Artaxerxes respected Ezra a lot. So, when he heard Ezra's request, he said something very surprising to him: "If God wants you and your people to go back to Jerusalem, then I shall help you do just that."

The King's Letter

The king wrote a letter for Ezra to read to the people. The letter read, "All of God's people who want to go back to Jerusalem with Ezra may go. I will give you money to offer to God. I will also give you enough money to buy anything else that might be needed for God's temple."

After writing all of this, the king signed it and gave it to Ezra. Ezra couldn't have been happier. What the king had done was so unexpected! God had indeed listened to his prayer and had somehow made the king willing to help the Jews. Eventually, around 1,800 people decided to take the trip with Ezra. They knew it would be a long way home, but they trusted God. After getting everything ready, they started on their journey.

Ezra Teaches the People

After four long months, Ezra and the people finally reached Jerusalem. Remember, they did not have cars back then! They were so happy to be home. However, Ezra was disappointed when he met the Jews who had already been back for many years. Even though they had rebuilt the temple, they had not been following God's commands and laws. Many people sinned and even married idol-worshipping foreigners. Ezra knew it was time to teach them about God's laws. This was why he had made the trip in the first place. Since King Artaxerxes had been so generous, Ezra had enough resources to help the people and teach them about God. So, Ezra began his many years of working in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah Prays to God

While Ezra was teaching the people in Jerusalem, another man was thinking about God, too. But he still lived in Persia. His name was Nehemiah, and he was a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. The king trusted him a lot. One day, Nehemiah's brother came to visit him. He had just come from Jerusalem. Nehemiah heard about all the wonderful things Ezra was doing in Jerusalem to help the people turn back to God. But he also heard that the walls of the city were in shambles. It had stayed that way ever since the Babylonian attack. Nehemiah was very sad when he heard about this. How could the Israelites protect themselves if they had no wall? After all, they were still living among other countries that could decide to invade them suddenly. Nehemiah felt so sad that he prayed to God about it. If it was God's will, maybe Nehemiah could go back to repair it.

The King Allows Nehemiah to Return

Nehemiah prayed for many days. When he went to work for the king, even Artaxerxes saw how sad he was.

"Why are you sad, Nehemiah? You are not sick, so it must be something else," said the king.

Nehemiah grew anxious when he heard the king's question, Should he tell the king what was on his mind? What if the king got upset? He had already let Ezra and many Jews leave over a decade ago. Maybe he didn't want to hear about Jerusalem anymore.

"I am worried about the city walls in Jerusalem. They are in ruins," Nehemiah said.

The king then asked, "What would you like?"

After a quick prayer to God, Nehemiah spoke up. "If you would allow me, I want to go back and rebuild it."

When the king heard his request, he asked, "How long will this take you? When will you come back?" At this point, Nehemiah knew that King Artaxerxes was indeed allowing him to go back. The king also gave him wood to rebuild the gates for the city wall, and even sent soldiers along to protect him. God had listened to Nehemiah's prayer.

Nehemiah Repairs the Wall

After a long journey, Nehemiah finally reached the city. He saw how damaged the walls were, with stones scattered here and there. But God had given him strength and help. Nehemiah had all the materials he needed to rebuild the walls. All he needed now was the help of the people. So he called the Jews together and told them about his plan. Ezra

was there, and he heard his plea for help as well. Everyone was glad to join in. Eventually, after fifty-two days of very hard work, the people succeeded in rebuilding the wall that protected the city. God was indeed with them.

Final Thoughts

Dear students, what did you learn from today's story? What was the challenge that both Ezra and Nehemiah faced? (They were afraid of not being allowed to return to Jerusalem.) Although they both worried and worried, they also did something to lessen their worries. Do you remember what they did? [Call on students to answer.] Yes, they both prayed and asked God to help them. They knew that only God had solutions to their difficulties. We should all remember that! Remember to pray whenever you feel sad, discouraged, or worried. Ask God to help, and you will experience His wondrous power.

[To model how to pray in times of worries, you can say the following concluding prayer together.]

"Dear God, we know that You are almighty and all-powerful, but we still worry about so many things in life. We worry about things like not making friends at school, getting lost or hurt, being teased by other kids, mommy and daddy getting sick, having scary thoughts at night, and many other troubles. Please help us turn to You and give all our worries to You as we remember how much You love us and want to help us. We know that You care for us, and that no worry is too large or too small to bring to You in prayer. Amen."

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. **Why did Ezra want to go back to Jerusalem?** He wanted to teach the people about God.
2. **Where did Ezra and Nehemiah live before they returned to Jerusalem?** Persia.
3. **What did Ezra and Nehemiah do when they encountered difficulties?** They prayed to God for help.
4. **How long did it take Ezra to travel back to Jerusalem?** Four months.
5. **How did Nehemiah feel when he found out that Jerusalem's city walls were in shambles?** He was very, very sad.
6. **What was Nehemiah's job at the palace?** He was a cupbearer.
7. **Which king gave both Ezra and Nehemiah the permission to go back to Jerusalem?** King Artaxerxes.
8. **What else did King Artaxerxes do to help Ezra and Nehemiah other than issuing the order for them to go back to Jerusalem?** He gave them many materials to rebuild the temple and fix the wall.
9. **How long did it take Nehemiah and his peers to rebuild the wall?** Fifty-two days.

MEMORY VERSE PRACTICE

Please reinforce the memory verse every week.
You can practice the memory verse with your students anytime during class.

"With thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." (Philippians 4:6b)

SPIRITUAL TEACHING & LIFE APPLICATION

1. Ezra set his heart to seek the law of God.

After four long months, Ezra and the people finally reached Jerusalem. Remember, they didn't have cars back then! They also had to carry all their possessions with them. Can you imagine walking all day long while carrying everything you have in your bedroom? It was indeed a very tiring trip for them. But, they were so happy to be home. They finally went back to the place where they belonged. However, Ezra wasn't so happy. Do you remember why? [Let students answer.] As soon as Ezra returned to Jerusalem, he met the Jews who had already been back for many years. He realized that even though these Jews had rebuilt the temple, they had not been following God's commands and laws! Many of the people had sinned and even married idol-worshipping foreigners. Ezra was so disappointed, but he didn't give up. He made his trip back to Jerusalem to teach God's laws to the people, and he was determined to do so even though his challenge seemed much bigger now. Not only was he ready to teach the word of God to those who had recently returned to Jerusalem with him, he was also determined to change the ways of the people who had been in Jerusalem for many years. He was not afraid of this immense mission, because his heart was set to seek the law of God!

Today, have we set our hearts to seek the law of God? When we set our hearts, we are very determined and focused. We do not allow any distractions when we want to achieve something badly. This is the attitude we should have when seeking the word of God. Let's hear a scenario!

Since Raymond lives a great distance from school, he has to wake up at 5:30 am every morning during the week. Because of that, Raymond always looks forward to Friday because he gets to go to bed late and wake up late. However, every Saturday, Raymond never wants to get up. He's always too tired from staying up late the night before, and he thinks it's okay to be late to church because he doesn't get any punishment for being late like he would at school. He always sleeps until his mom has to force him to wake up and get ready for church. Oftentimes, his family is late to church because of him. And, because he always sleeps very little on Friday night and wakes up at the last minute, Raymond never feels ready for church. He has fallen asleep many times during RE class. By the time he's ready to learn, the lessons are already halfway over. Raymond misses so much of the lessons that, even though he's awake near the end, he loses focus and starts thinking about other things.

Raymond has a very eager heart to seek God, but his mind is never ready for the Sabbath. Students, if you were a friend of Raymond's, how would you encourage him to **set his heart to seek God**? [Let students share.]

Suggested Answers

- Remind him to sleep early on Friday nights so that he has energy the next day for worship.
- Tell him to wake up early on Saturdays to pray and read the Bible before going to church so that he can prepare his mind for the Sabbath.
- Encourage him to pray and ask God for help to remove distractions that could potentially take away his focus during RE class.

2. Ezra was ready to act upon the word of God.

Once our heart is set to seek the word of God, the next step is to act upon them. The Bible tells us that faith without deeds is dead (Jas 2:26). Being determined to follow the word of God is not enough; we need to live as true followers of God. If we have already taken the first step to set our heart to follow God, here is what we have to do next—take action! Don't let your determination go away, but rather keep it strong and firm by always acting upon the word of God, which you have determined to follow. Ezra "prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). Ezra didn't only prepare his heart to seek God; he also prepared to act upon the word of God. When he found out that the 50,000 people who were already in Jerusalem had not been obeying the laws of God, Ezra immediately took actions to help them. He taught the word of God, restoring worship and leading a spiritual revival in Jerusalem. He devoted himself to bringing God back into the lives of all the Jews in Jerusalem. How incredible was his courage and determination! Today, our task may not be to bring tens of thousands of people back to church, but if our heart is set to seek after God, we must act upon everything that God wants us to do. If you come to church every Saturday and learn the word of God, but do not apply what you have learned to your daily

life, it is not good enough. Let's learn from Ezra's example and pray for one another so that we will have the courage Ezra had to act upon the word of God! I'd like to share a testimony with everyone.

A few months prior to the Spiritual Convocation this summer, our pastors started encouraging everyone to act upon the word of God and send invitations to our friends and family. The church council members noticed that some of the members weren't as zealous as they had been before. For example, Maria used to go to church early every Saturday to pray in the chapel, but recently she hasn't been doing so. Tony used to invite members to his house for fellowship every month, but he hasn't done so for a few months. Therefore, the church council, along with the pastor, decided that they needed to have a revival of their faith. They needed to feel strong and strengthened again spiritually. They wanted their preparation for the Spiritual Convocation to be inspired and moved by God. They knew that praying for the church to have a spiritual revival would please God.

To act upon the word of God, they started meeting at church once a week to pray for thirty minutes. They prayed for all the church members and the revival of their faith. As soon as they started doing this, amazing things happened! On the following Saturdays, both the morning and afternoon prayers felt particularly strong. Everyone felt spiritually uplifted and could sense God's hands working upon them! More and more church members joined the council members in praying for the Spiritual Convocation every week. They were all preparing their hearts for the Spiritual Convocation and preaching to their friends and family. When the evangelical service was held, nearly twenty truth-seekers attended the Spiritual Convocation and the members' faith was revived. Thank God, it was such a spiritually uplifting Spiritual Convocation. Not only did God revive everyone's faith, He also brought new members into His sheepfold. God indeed saw that the church council members acted upon His word and answered their prayers.

3. Ezra was able to teach others.

Another thing we can learn from Ezra today is his eagerness to teach others. Ezra was a priest and he knew the word of God. But he wasn't satisfied with just that. When he found out that so many Jews had been disobeying God, he was heartbroken. He felt dejected upon discovering that they didn't know the word of God. He knew what to do next! He had to share the word of God with them—he wanted to teach the Jews everything he knew! 1 Timothy 2:4 tells us that the Lord “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Ezra knew that God could use his help to bring His people back to the truth, so Ezra did what the Lord desired and taught others. Ezra was eager to teach others the truth in order to restore their faith.

What can we learn from this? Today, we may be too young to be teachers, but we don't only learn from teachers. Who can we also learn from? We can also learn from one another—we can even learn from those who are younger than us, as long as what they do are good examples for us to follow. The Bible encourages us, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12). Being young doesn't mean that we can't be “teachers.” Instead, we can be examples to other people around us in all that we do. If we demonstrate love and kindness in our daily lives, our friends will most certainly see and feel it. And if we always strive to imitate Christ, people will come to experience the love of God through us, and desire to follow our lead—in that way, we are “teachers”! In addition, you can always share the word of God with others. If you see a friend stealing, don't just close your eyes and pretend that didn't see anything. Share the word of God, the truth, with this friend, just like Ezra did with God's people. The Lord wants us to help one another by sharing and demonstrating the word of God. Each one of us is the “Ezra” that God has sent for those around us! Let me share a scenario with you.

Rachael is very honest and she always tells the truth. Ever since she was young, her mom has always taught her that God doesn't like dishonest children. If Rachael has done something wrong, even if she knows that she might get punished, she will always admit the truth. One day, Rachael's little sister accidentally spilled her snacks all over the floor in her bedroom. She panicked and immediately started hiding all the crumbs under her bed. Rachael saw her and asked her what had happened. Her little sister answered in a trembling voice, “I spilled all the snacks on the floor... If mom finds out, she will get so mad! Please don't let her know and just let me hide them.” Rachael answered, “Do you remember what we learned in RE class? God doesn't like dishonest children. We shouldn't lie to Mom! Also, if you hide all the food under your bed, soon you'll see mice running around in your bedroom! Mom may get mad if she needs to clean up for you, but if we clean up ourselves, she will have no reason to be angry. Don't worry, let me help you clean up, and I'll go with you

to the kitchen and ask Mom for some new snacks." So, Rachael took a broom and cleaned up with her little sister. When they were done and ready to go to the kitchen, they saw their mom standing at the bedroom door with snacks in her hand. She had overheard what had happened from the kitchen and was so proud that Rachael taught her little sister to be honest and offered to help her clean up. Not only was she not mad at all, she also brought new snacks for Rachael's little sister! Rachael's little sister couldn't be more thankful to Rachael. She promised Rachael that she would never lie again and shared her new snacks with Rachael.

4. We need to be faithful like Ezra and Nehemiah were.

Boys and girls, Ezra and Nehemiah were two very faithful workers for the Lord. Even though they lived in a foreign land, they remained faithful and only worshipped our God. Even after they returned to Jerusalem, other Jews who disobeyed God didn't influence them. Both of them didn't choose to follow the majority. Not only that, Ezra and Nehemiah knew how God could use them and served God accordingly with great faith. They were leaders among the Jews, restoring Jerusalem and reviving the faith of the entire nation. 1 Samuel 12:24 says, "Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you." This verses explain to us what being faithful means. A faithful person fears the Lord and serves Him with all his heart. Ezra and Nehemiah knew that God wanted His people to turn back to Him. Therefore, they poured out their heart to help the Jews, in order to fulfill the plans that God had for His people. They didn't do it for a reward, but for God and for everything that God had blessed them with. Today, we can also be faithful like Ezra and Nehemiah. Do we fear the Lord? Do we know what God wants to use us for, and desire to serve Him with all our heart? Are we doing our best to pay back all the blessings God has bestowed on us?

Karen and Janet haven't been talking to one another for weeks because of an argument they had. They used to be together all the time when at church, but now they have been ignoring each other because of the argument. When Hannah sees them, she feels very sad. Even though she doesn't know Karen or Janet very well, she knows that God doesn't like to see conflict among members of the church. Hannah remembers that the church is the body of Christ and that its members should love one another and serve God in one accord. One Saturday, she saw Hannah and Janet ignoring each other again. She thought to herself, "This is not what God wants to see in the church. I cannot choose to ignore this every time I see it happen. Maybe I should do something to help." That day, Hannah talked to her mom about inviting all her friends from church to their house for a fellowship. The following week, Hannah called all her friends, including Janet and Karen, and told them about the fellowship. She prayed every day that God would help Janet and Karen rekindle their friendship through spending time together. Sure enough, everyone had a great time at the fellowship. Janet and Karen, too, enjoyed their time together and finally became best friends again.

Students, there are many ways to be faithful. What can you learn from Hannah's example? [Let students share.] When Hannah saw that Janet and Karen were ignoring each other, she felt sad because she knew that God wasn't happy to see the conflict between them. Hannah didn't have an obligation to help Janet and Karen, but she did because she was faithful to God—she did it for God! Instead of ignoring it, Hannah chose to do what God desired. Of course, God wanted to see His children in harmony! Even though it was not Hannah's responsibility to help, she did it for God. She was faithful to God and served Him with all her heart.

Conclusion

Today, we learned about the story of Ezra and Nehemiah. They sought after the word of God, acted upon His word, and served God with a faithful heart. Every Saturday, we gain some new insights from the Bible through RE class. Have you been applying what you have learned into your daily lives? Have you thought about in what ways you can serve God and His church? If you haven't, let's start today!

"Make Me A Servant"

*Make me a servant, humble and meek
Lord, let me lift up, those who are weak
And may the prayer of my heart always be
Make me a servant, make me a servant
Make me a servant today*

ACTIVITIES

1 Difficult Journey Relay Game

Objective: To remind students that, despite how difficult Ezra and Nehemiah's journeys to Jerusalem were, God helped them both get to their destination safe and sound.

Materials

- 2 paper cups
- Cotton balls
- Hard candies (such as jelly beans)
- Pretzel sticks

Instructions

1. Have a cup relay. Divide the students into two lines for a relay.
2. Fill each cup with candies, cotton balls, and pretzels.
3. The students must quickly run or walk to the other side of the classroom and return. Upon returning, they hand their cup to the next person. (You can make the task harder by having them walk with their eyes closed, or by asking them to hold the cup on their head, etc.) If the classroom size is not adequate for this activity, the teacher may choose to find a suitable area outside the classroom to do the activity.
4. The student with the cup must not drop anything. If so, the student must stop and pick up what he has dropped before continuing.
5. Whichever team finishes the relay first should cheer for the other team. Wait until everyone is done to enjoy the treats together.

Remind the students that God is watching over us at all times. Also, remind them that when we try to accomplish a task as a group, we help and encourage one another along the way and enjoy a successful outcome together.

2 Faith Wall Poster

Objective: To help students visualize what "faith" is. Remind them that "faith" means to believe and trust in our God before He actually solves our problem(s).

Materials

- Long roll of butcher paper
- Markers
- Crayons and/or colored pencils

Instructions

1. Lay a long roll of butcher paper on the middle of the table for the students to draw on.
2. Have the students write today's memory verse along all the edges of the paper.
3. Then, have them draw pictures of things and situations in which they can put their faith in God!
4. After all the drawings have been completed, tape the poster on the inside or outside of the classroom wall with the students' help!

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

1. C
2. A
3. B
4. four
5. fifty-two
6. False; he allowed others to go back with Ezra.
7. True
8. Answers may vary.
9. Answers may vary.

E1 Year 2 Book 3 Lesson 8—Ezra and Nehemiah

Homework Assignment

Name: _____ Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Bible Truth: God answered the prayers of Ezra and Nehemiah and helped them return to Jerusalem to do great things.

Lesson Objectives: 1. To learn to bring our burdens and worries to God.
 2. To have faith in God, for He will lead and guide us.

Bible Reading: Please put a check mark in the space when you complete the reading each day.

Prayer: Please put a check mark in the space provided on the days you prayed to God.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Bible Reading							
Prayer							

Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse.

(Philippians 4:6b)

What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Homework Assignment

Understanding What You Have Learned

Multiple Choice

- ____ : Why did Ezra want to go back to Jerusalem?
 - He wanted to see his family.
 - He was forced to go back.
 - He wanted to teach the Israelites about God.
- ____ : Why did Nehemiah want to go back to Jerusalem?
 - He wanted to fix the damaged walls.
 - He wanted to rebuild the temple.
 - He wanted to see his family.
- ____ : How did King Artaxerxes respond to Ezra and Nehemiah's requests to return to Jerusalem?
 - He didn't give them permission to go back.
 - He allowed them to go back and gave them materials to rebuild the temple and repair the walls.
 - He put them in jail.

Fill In the Blank

- It took Ezra _____ months to reach Jerusalem.
- It took Nehemiah _____ days to repair the walls.

True or False

- The king was mean and did not let anyone else return with Ezra. _____
- Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer. He was in charge of serving drinks to the king. _____

Short Answer

- Why do you think King Artaxerxes helped Ezra and Nehemiah even though he didn't worship God?

Life Application: Compile Prayer Requests

- We have learned in Ezra and Nehemiah's stories about how to bring our worries to God. The best way is to pray to our all-knowing and all-powerful God and share with Him all that troubles us! Now, let's take a step further to help others pray about their troubles and worries.

Find three friends, family members, or other adults, and have them each tell you one thing that worries them. Write them down on the prayer request sheet and pray about them throughout the week.

Prayer Requests

<p style="text-align: center;">Person #1</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Relationship to you:</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Prayer Request...</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Person #2</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Relationship to you:</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Prayer Request...</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Person #3</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Relationship to you:</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Prayer Request...</p>