

LESSON 10

EZRA'S PEOPLE OBEY GOD'S WORD



OBJECTIVES

1. To help students understand the value of God's word.
2. To encourage students to listen to and obey God's word through reading the Bible and acting upon the truth.

MEMORY VERSE

"Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law."

(Psalm 119:18)

PRAYER

Thank You, God, for gathering us here on this Sabbath day to worship You and learn Your word together. May You open our hearts and help us understand the importance of Your wisdom in our daily lives. May You grant us an eager and willing heart to accept Your truth.

Overview

- 1. Bible Discovery & Spiritual Teaching**
 - The Jews Returned to Jerusalem (Ez 1-2)
 - Worship Restored in Jerusalem (Ez 3:1-7)
 - Rebuilding of the Temple (Ez 3:8-6:22)
 - Ezra Returned to Jerusalem (Ez 7-8)
 - Inter-marriage with Pagans (Ez 9)
 - Confession of Improper Marriages (Ez 10:1-17)
 - Pagan Wives Put Away (Ez 10:18-44)
- 2. Linking to the Ten Basic Beliefs**—The Holy Bible
- 3. Life Application**—The Importance of Reading the Bible
- 4. Activity**
 - a. God's Word Comes First
 - b. Favorite Bible Verses

Background Knowledge for Teachers

626 B.C.	597 B.C.	527 B.C.	445 B.C.	444 B.C.
Jeremiah warned of destruction	Jerusalem destroyed by enemies (Israelites finally taken to Babylon in 587 B.C.)	Captives return to Jerusalem	Jerusalem wall and temple rebuilt	Ezra reads the Law

The Book of Ezra opened in 538 B.C., 48 years after Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, defeated the southern kingdom of Judah, and carried the Jews away to Babylon as captives (2 Kgs 25; 2 Chr 36). Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C., and because his successor was not strong, Babylon was overthrown by Persia in 539 B.C., just prior to the events recorded in this book.

King Cyrus of Persia allowed many groups of exiles, including Jews, to return to their homelands. For the Jews, this was a day of hope, a new beginning. Ezra returned to the land with a second group of exiles, eighty years after Zerubbabel. Ezra found the temple rebuilt, but the lives of the people in shambles. Inter-marriages with foreigners, which was in opposition to God, threatened the spiritual future of the nation. So, Ezra prayed for guidance and then followed through with action by teaching

the people to obey the word of God.

Christians today must also strive to keep their lives pure, and refuse to let the sinful allurements of the world around them compromise their lifestyle.

Facts about Ezra

- He was committed to studying, following, and teaching God's word
- He led the second group of exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem
- He may have been the author of 1 and 2 Chronicles in the Bible
- He was sent by King Artaxerxes to Jerusalem to evaluate the situation there and returned with a firsthand report
- He set up a religious education system in Jerusalem
- He worked alongside Nehemiah during the last spiritual awakening

Ezra achieved great things and made a significant impact because he had the right starting place for his actions and his life: God's word. He studied it seriously and applied it to his life faithfully. He taught others what he learned, and his life is a great model for anyone who wants to live for God.



Reaching Out to Your Students

Your students may have very good language skills by now, in terms of speaking and reading. However, they may still think of Bible stories as ancient tales that are unlikely to occur today. In part, this is due to their limited life experiences. Moreover, it may not be easy for them to understand how they should listen to and obey God's word: after all, most have never physically heard instructions from Him, even while reading the Bible.

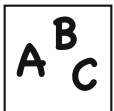
Teach your students the different ways they can listen to God's word through the Bible. They may lack real-life experiences, but they would certainly love to hear about how others have learned and obeyed God's word. Share testimonies with them about how you or someone applied God's word in their lives. Demonstrate that the stories in the Bible are real and very applicable to their lives. Give examples of receiving the Holy Spirit or of the sick being healed. As their teacher, you should constantly remind them to read the Bible, and, of course, set a good example for them to follow. Perhaps you could even ask the students to bring any questions they may have after reading the Bible to class each week.



Opener

5 Minutes

What are some of the things we've learned about the Bible that makes it special? [Let your students express their ideas. You may wish to record what they say on the board.] The one thing that really makes the Bible special to us is that God speaks to us through His word each day.



Vocabulary

intermarriage: marriage between two different races or religions



Bible Discovery & Spiritual Teaching

30-35 Minutes

FOR TEACHERS

Hand out the Bible Discovery Worksheet now and guide your students to complete it as you teach the lesson. Answers have been underlined below, with the question number indicated at the end of the answer.

For more than forty years, Jeremiah the prophet warned the kings of Judah that God was about to punish the people with destruction because of their disobedience (1). Let's read Jeremiah 25:4-7. [Ask your students to read aloud with you.]

"And the Lord has sent to you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear. They said, 'Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord has given to you and your fathers forever and ever. Do not go after other gods to serve them and worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands; and I will not harm you.' Yet you have not listened to Me," says the Lord, "that you might provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt."

Sadly, the evil rulers of Jeremiah's times refused to listen to the Lord's warning. They continued leading God's people to sin and the prophecy finally did come true, just as Jeremiah had predicted. What was the prophecy? Let's continue reading Jeremiah 25:11-12. [Let a student read.]

"And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 'Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the Lord, 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation.'"

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, invaded Judah and destroyed it (2). He took all the people, except the poorest Jews in Israel, and carried them to Babylon. Seventy years later, just as Jeremiah also predicted, King Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon (3). Cyrus freed many of the Jewish captives, and permitted them to return to Jerusalem. In other words, after seventy years of Babylonian captivity, the Jews were finally free to go home! Returning to Jerusalem was something that many of the Jews had hoped for every day while living in a foreign country. The Bible records three groups of people who returned to Jerusalem over the span of ninety years. The first group was led by Zerubbabel; their mission was to go back to

Jerusalem, rebuild the temple there, and restore their worship.

Many years went by, and the Jews finished the temple. Then, Ezra the scribe came from Babylon with the second group of people. Ezra was a teacher; as soon as he went back to Jerusalem, he began teaching God's laws to the people (4). Let me ask you a question: what do you think makes our pastors, RE teachers, and other holy workers at the church qualified to teach the word of God? [Pause for students to think and let them share their answers.] Of course, they must be knowledgeable about the Bible, eager to serve God, and good Christians themselves. Likewise, Ezra was a well-qualified teacher for the people at that time. He set his heart to study God's word. He was filled with godly wisdom. What is more, Ezra also determined to obey God's word and teach it to His people. When Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, he found that some of the leaders had broken God's laws by marrying women who were not Jews and who worshipped idols (5). Ezra was heartbroken that so many people had disobeyed God's laws, and immediately began to pray and confess the sins of God's people. Students, why do you think Ezra was so upset about this? [Pause for students to think and let them share their answers.] Ezra was upset because he genuinely cared about God's people and their relationship with God. He knew that they had time and time again angered God and brought destruction upon themselves. Ezra didn't want the people to make the same mistake and disappoint God all over again. He was in great distress and sorrow because the people didn't know the word of God.

In the end, Ezra's prayers and tears moved the people of Jerusalem. He showed them what they did wrong, and they were convicted of their sins. Soon, everyone was weeping and praying with Ezra. Most importantly, the people were all determined to obey God's word. Those who had wives who worshipped idols put away all their wives so that the people would no longer be corrupted by idol worship (6).

Ezra's commitment to study, obey, and teach God's word turned many people back to the Lord. He convinced the people that only God could give them hope and peace as a nation, and that they must obey God's word in order for Him to stand on their side again. Today, God also is the only God who can give us hope and peace. He has promised us that if we obey Him, He will always be on our side, watching over us in this life and welcoming us to the next, where we will enjoy eternal joy and peace. Ezra understood the importance of obeying God's word, and he didn't want other people to miss out on it.



Linking to the Ten Basic Beliefs

2-5 Minutes

The Holy Bible

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

True Jesus Church believes that the Bible was inspired by God and that everything in it is His word, which we must obey. God speaks to us today through the Bible, and we must not add or take away anything from it (Rev 22:18-19). As followers of God, we should treat the Bible as a guide.



Check for Understanding

5 Minutes

- 1. What was Jeremiah's prophecy about Judah? Did it come true?** Judah would be captured by Babylon. Yes, it came true.
- 2. Who was the king that allowed the Jews to go back to Jerusalem?** King Cyrus of Persia.
- 3. Who led the first and second group of Jews back to Jerusalem?** Zerubbabel and Ezra, respectively.
- 4. What did the people do when they returned to Jerusalem?** They rebuilt the temple and restored their faith and worship of God.
- 5. What was Ezra praying about as soon as he got back to Jerusalem?** He prayed and repented on behalf of the Israelites for their sins; they had left their faith, married foreigners, and followed their spouses to worship foreign gods.



Life Application

10 Minutes

THE IMPORTANCE OF READING THE BIBLE

"Your word is a lamp to our feet and a light to my path." (Ps 119:105)

Why is it so important for us to know God's word and to obey Him?

1. The word of God is like a sword (Heb 4:12)

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

The word of God is called a sword because it has a piercing ability. It is universally effective, striking deep within all of us: those who are baptized, those who aren't, believers, and non-believers; it even works on Satan. The word of God cuts to the heart of the matter. When Satan is trying to tempt us or discourage us, it's the word of God we use to defeat him. Jesus Christ Himself used the word of God as a sword to deflect the temptations of the enemy (Matthew 4:1-11).

2. The word of God is like a mirror (Jas 1:23)

"For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror."

James calls God's word a mirror. A mirror helps us evaluate ourselves. How many times have we opened the Bible, only to see ourselves there. James told us to be doers of the word, not just hearers only. Once you look at a mirror, you can decide if you need to make any changes to your appearance before you leave your house. Likewise, we can make the necessary changes in the power of the Holy Spirit by reading the word of God. We become what God wants us to be instead of what we have decided to be. The word of God is a mirror because it reflects God's image onto us.

3. The word of God is like a burning fire (Jer 20:9)*"His word was in my heart like a burning fire."*

The word of God is like a burning fire; it burns the "filth" out of our lives. It purifies and consumes people's hearts because it has a consuming capacity. When the word of God penetrates our hearts and grip our minds, it is like going through the fire of God's word; it burns off the "filth" of our lives, leaving only what is good. The fire can engage our will to move toward transformation.

4. The word of God is like a hammer (Jer 23:29)*"Is not My word like a fire?" says the Lord, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"*

How many of you have been hammered by the word of God? You were comfortable and complacent in your faith, but when you read the word of God, the word just jumped off the page and hit you straight between the eyes, hammering you with the truth of God's word. The word of God has the capacity to break. Think of a time when your heart was very hard and God had to break it. As painful as it may seem, God has to break our hearts so that we feel the conviction and desire to change.

5. The word of God is like water (Eph 5:26)*"That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word."*

God's word is a cleansing agent; it's like water that renews. Paul said that Jesus Christ sanctified and cleansed the church with the washing of the water by the word. God's word has this refreshing and washing effect in our lives. It is like a spiritual cleansing; it washes out the bad thoughts and replaces them with the good thoughts of God's truth.

6. The word of God is like a seed (1 Pet 1:23)*"Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever."*

God's word is like an incorruptible seed that is planted within us. A seed starts small and takes time to grow. When it is grown, it brings forth life, growth, and fruit. Just as a seed needs repeated watering and time to grow, once we have planted God's word in us and hear it several times, it really starts to connect with us. When we put God's word right into our hearts, it doesn't stay dormant; it spreads out and grow.

7. The word of God is like a silver (Ps 12:6)*"The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."*

God's word is like pure silver tried in a furnace of earth. Why does God choose this precious metal to describe God's word? It is called silver because it is precious, it is desirable, it is beautiful, and it has value. God definitely requires purity in us.

8. The word of God is like a lamp and a light (Ps 119:105)*"Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path."*

God's word is like a lamp; it shines the light upon where you are now and where you need to be next, and it keeps you from stumbling in the dark. It shows you the way to go. When you're confused about an important decision, you need to go back to the word of God and understand what God wants you to do. That's the value of having God's word light your path.

Life is a journey. No matter where we start this journey, we will all end up in either one of two destinations—heaven or hell. Raise your hand if you want to enter the kingdom of heaven. [Pause for students to raise their hands.] Of course, we all want to be part of God's heavenly kingdom. This is exactly the reason why it is so important for us to know God's word—because His word can lead us there!

The Bible says that God's word is like a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps 119:105). His word lights up the correct path for us so that we can safely reach our destination. Without this light, we could easily go onto the wrong path and get lost somewhere far, far away from God. When we meet a crossroad—an important decision to make—His

word will show us which way to turn. When we meet a winding road—a hardship that is very difficult to endure—God's word will provide all the comfort and encouragement to lead us through. When we meet an obstacle—a problem that makes us stumble—His word will give us hope. No matter what comes along, God's wisdom will keep us on the right path. Without His word, we would be left with no guidance and no light on our journey. Can you imagine living in a world with no maps or directions, and worse yet, with no light? What would it be like walking on the streets? What would it be like driving in traffic? It'd be chaotic! That being said, it is very important for us to know God's word and obey Him. His word is the only map that leads us to the kingdom of God!

Today, God speaks to us through the Bible. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). As God's believers, we should treat the Bible as a guide and take every word in it seriously. In other words, this book is essential for every Christian who wants to enter the kingdom of God. Nothing should be added or taken away from it, as every word in it is the precious word of God—His wisdom and the truth!

So, let us remember to do these four important actions every day:

- Read your Bible. "Whoever looks intently..."
- Review the Bible. "...and continues in it..."
- Remember the Bible. "...not forgetting what they have heard..."
- Respond to the Bible. "...but doing it."

[Hand out the Life Application worksheet to your students. Go over the worksheet with your students and ask them to bring it back next week to share with the class.]



Activity

1. God's Word Comes First / 2. Favorite Bible Verses

10-15 Minutes

1. God's Word Comes First

[Hand out the Activity worksheet and ask students to complete it on their own. Then come together as a class to review the answer.]

The Israelites heard what Ezra told them regarding the word of God. They confessed their sins and made changes in their lives accordingly. God has spoken to people through His written word for thousands of years. And, He still speaks to us today through the Bible.

Read Deuteronomy 11:18-19 to find out how God told the Israelites and us to honor His word. Crack the code to complete His instructions the way we would say them today.

Study the Bible and (memorize) it. (Talk) about it (wherever) you go. (Think) about it before you go to (sleep) and as soon as you (wake) up.

We honor the Bible because it is God's word. What is the most important wonderful thing about God's word?

2. Favorite Bible Verses

In pairs, have the students interview each other about their favorite Bible verses. Each student should ask his partner, "Why is this verse special to you?" When the interviews have been completed, ask each pair of students to report their findings. Point out that one of the reasons we value God's word is because God speaks to us individually, giving each person specific help and encouragement that apply to their needs.!

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

1. A
2. A
3. C
4. Only God's laws could guide them to do the right thing. Without it, they would not be aware that they were doing wrong.
5. When they heard God's law, they wept, knowing that they had sinned. Then they determined to follow His law. Likewise, we must acknowledge when we have strayed from God. We can do this by reading the Bible and making a commitment to follow His word.
6. Answers may vary.

Turning Wrong into Right

Instructions: Cross out the wrong words and write down the right words in their place.

1. Isaiah the prophet warned the kings of Judah that God was about to punish the people with destruction.

2. The prophesy came true, just as the prophet had predicted. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Judah, invaded the city and destroyed Jerusalem.

3. Then forty years later, Babylon was conquered by King Jeremiah.

4. Many years went by, and the Jews finished the temple. Then, Ezra the governor came from Babylon with another group of people.

5. After Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, he found that some of the leaders had married Jewish women who worshipped God.

6. The people showed their determination to obey God's word by staying with their foreign wives who worshipped idols.

The Importance of Reading the Bible

The Bible is just as true for you today as it was for people 3,000 years ago. Likewise, it will be just as true 3,000 years from now. It is God’s word, and God’s word lasts forever.

God wants to speak to you through His written word. Here's how you can listen to Him this week.



























1. Take this page home. Choose a different Scripture passage each day. Read it carefully.
2. Think about what you've read. Write about what God is saying to you in these verses.
3. Ask the Lord to speak to your heart through these verses.
4. Did you receive a message from God through your reading? If you did, create a picture of the new message.

	Verse	Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/>	When you need help. (Psalm 121) <hr/> <hr/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	When you are happy (Psalm 100) <hr/> <hr/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	When you have a need (Philippians 4:6-7, 19) <hr/> <hr/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	When you feel hatred (Ephesians 4:26-27, 29, 31, 32) <hr/> <hr/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	When you are discouraged (Psalm 27:1; 25:1-2, 4-6) <hr/> <hr/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	When you are tempted (James 4:7-8, 10) <hr/> <hr/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	When you have done wrong (Psalm 51:1-3, 10, 17) <hr/> <hr/>	

God's Word Comes First

The Israelites heard what Ezra told them regarding the word of God. They confessed their sins and made changes in their lives accordingly. God has spoken to people through His written word for thousands of years. And, He still speaks to us today through the Bible.

Read Deuteronomy 11:18-19 to find out how God told the Israelites and us to honor His word. Crack the code to complete His instructions the way we would say them today.

												
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
												
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

Study the Bible and

○ * ○ □ □ * ▮ *

▽ * ● *

it. _____ about it

◐ * * □ * ◆ * *

_____ you go.

▽ * * ■ *

_____ about it before you go to

▲ ● * * □

_____ and as soon as you

◐ * * *

_____ up.

Love the Lord
Your God with all
Your heart and with
all Your soul and
with all Your
Strength...



We honor the Bible because it is God's word.

What is the most important wonderful thing about God's word?

E2 Year 3 Book 2 Lesson 10—Ezra's People Obey God's Word

Homework Assignment

Name: _____ Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Weekly Bible Reading: _____

Bible Reading: Check each box when you complete that day's reading.

Prayer: Check each box after you pray to God that day.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Read							
Pray							

What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. _____

2. _____

Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse. (Psalm 119:18)

Multiple Choice

1. _____: The Jews were able to go back to Jerusalem because _____.
 - a. King Cyrus of Persia freed them.
 - b. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon allowed them to go home.
 - c. God helped them escape from Babylon.
2. _____: The mission of the people who went back to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel was to _____.
 - a. Restore their worship and rebuild the temple
 - b. Find their family members who were left there seventy years ago
 - c. Rebuild the wall of Jerusalem
3. _____: As soon as Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, he found out that _____.
 - a. The people had not begun rebuilding the temple.
 - b. Many people had left Jerusalem to go back to Babylon.
 - c. Some of the people had sinned against God by marrying pagan women.

Short Answer

4. Why was it necessary for the people to know that they needed to read God's laws?
5. How do you suppose the people of Ezra's day set an example for us today?
6. What did you learn from Ezra?