

LESSON 6

EZRA THE SCRIBE

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Persian Kings

In 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, captured the southern kingdom of Judah and destroyed the temple and Jerusalem. He took many of the temple's treasures to Babylon. Later, the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon. In 539 BC., King Cyrus of Persia permitted the first group of exiled Jews, approximately 50,000, to return to Jerusalem. Zerubbabel led this first group of exiles. In 522 BC, King Cyrus' son, Darius, became king (this Darius was not Darius the Mede who ruled during the time of Daniel). Darius was succeeded by King Xerxes (also known as Ahasuerus), whom Esther married. He was succeeded by his son, Artaxerxes I. In 458 BC, Artaxerxes I permitted Ezra and a second group of exiles to return to Jerusalem. This occurred approximately 80 years after Zerubbabel's return. In 445 BC, Artaxerxes I allowed Nehemiah to travel to Jerusalem to repair the city walls.

Ezra

The author of the Book of Ezra, his name means "help." His father was Seraiah. As a descendent of the high priest Aaron, Ezra was from a priestly lineage (Ez 7:1-5). Ezra was also a scribe well-versed in the Law of Moses, commandments of the Lord, and statutes of Israel (7:6, 11). Ezra was born in Babylon. At that time, Babylon had destroyed the kingdom of Judah and had brought its people to Babylon as captives. While in Babylon, God commanded the exiles to "build houses and well in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters." After they stayed in Babylon for seventy years, God would visit them and bring them back to Israel (Jer 29:4-6; 10).

Ezra shows us the importance of preserving our faith, especially when in a foreign land. His determination allowed him to do extraordinary works for God. He led the second group of exiles to Jerusalem in a spiritual revival.

Scribes

In the Old Testament, Scribes held important roles in the Jewish community. The root meaning of the word "scribe" is "one who writes". Scribes could be identified by the inkpots that they placed in their belts. Prior to the invention of printing, scribes copied official documents by hand. They would also write letters and decrees, and keep financial records. In addition to copying the law, the scribes read and explained the law to the Jews.

In the New Testament, scribes were a special group among the Jewish religious leaders. Their primary duties were to study and teach the Law of Moses. They also settled legal disputes. They had leadership and authority in the Jewish community. Together with the Pharisees and high priests, scribes openly opposed the Lord Jesus.

BIBLE TEXT

Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah 8

BIBLE TRUTH

Ezra devoted himself to the study of the Law of Moses.

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To emphasize the importance of learning God's words and living a God-pleasing life.

MEMORY VERSE

"How sweet are Your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

(Psalm 119:103)

PRAYER

In the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray. Thank You, Lord, for bringing us once again to Your holy temple to worship You. Thank You for giving us Your precious Holy Spirit and Your word. Today, we will learn about Ezra, a man who loved Your word and was determined to learn it. Lord Jesus, please give us the same desire to love and learn Your word for Your word is more precious than gold or silver, and it makes our lives good and joyful. Lord, please open our hearts to hear Your word. May all glory be to our Father in heaven. Hallelujah. Amen.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDENTS

Born in Babylon as a Jewish captive, Ezra had never been to Israel. Thus, Ezra grew up in an environment without the temple, worship, or priestly duties. Despite this, Ezra did not assimilate into the Babylonian culture, custom, or religion. Rather, he held firmly to his faith and became a great worker for God.

At this time, your students may not fully realize the importance of knowing God's word and how it may be

applied to their lives. They may wonder why they need to go to church and have R.E. homework while their friends can enjoy themselves on weekends. Ezra's foresight and faith helped him see the importance of God's words in his life and the life of the Israelites. Encourage your students to equip themselves with the word of God to help themselves and others accomplish extraordinary works for God.

VOCABULARY

- foreigner:** a person belonging to another country
- scribe:** a person who studied and taught the laws of God
- confess:** to admit one's sins
- pagan:** a non-believer, idol-worshipper

REVIEW

Last week, we learned young King Josiah who was determined to bring the people back to God. King Josiah's father and grandfather worshipped idols and sinned against God, but Josiah did what was right in the eyes of God.

During his time as king, Josiah removed idol worship and repaired the temple that Solomon had built. One day, the high priest Hilkiah found the Book of the Law in the temple and showed it to Shaphan, the king's scribe. Shaphan read the Book of the Law to King Josiah, who tore his clothes upon hearing the words. He realized that the people had been neglecting God's laws for all these years. After consulting Huldah the prophetess, Josiah gathered all the people at the temple and read from the Book of the Law. At that moment, the people made a covenant to follow God's laws.

We learned that even though Josiah was only eight years old when he became king, he tried very hard to serve God and obey His words. We should follow Josiah's example, because God can do amazing things through children.

BIBLE STORY

Ezra the Scribe

The people of Judah disobeyed God and did many evil acts, such as worshipping idols. God sent many prophets to warn them and encourage them to repent, but they continued in their sins. Consequently, God punished them by sending the Babylonians to destroy their country and the temple. The Babylonians took the Israelites captives and brought them to Babylon. While they were in Babylon, God still watched over them. He told them to make Babylon their home by building houses and planting gardens and vineyards. They were to marry and have families. God promised that after seventy years, He would bring His people back home to Judah again.

In Babylon, there lived a priest named Seraiah who had

a son named Ezra, which means "help." Ezra indeed became a great help to the people of God. Let's turn to Ezra 7:10 to find out how Ezra prepared himself to help the people [have students read aloud]. Ezra sought to understand God's laws and teach them to the Jews.

Ezra, like his father, was a priest. In addition, he was a scribe. A scribe was a person who copied, studied, and taught the laws of God. Although Ezra had been born in a foreign land, without a temple in which to worship God and around people who neglected God, Ezra did not forget about God or His word. He was determined to study and obey God's laws and to teach those laws to the people of Israel.

The King Helps Ezra

As time passed, God put it into Ezra's heart to return to Jerusalem. In fact, eighty years before, a group of people had already returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. But things were not going well for them and many of them did not live according to God's teachings. Ezra wanted to return to Jerusalem to teach the people God's laws, so they could turn back to God.

First, Ezra had to ask the king for permission to return to Jerusalem. When King Artaxerxes learned of Ezra's request he did a very surprising thing. He not only allowed Ezra to go help his own country, but he also wrote a very important letter to Ezra.

The letter read, "Any of God's people who want to return to Jerusalem with Ezra may go. I will help by offering much gold and silver. Take the money to Jerusalem and use it to buy animals and grain as offerings to God. I will return the articles of the temple reserved for God so that you can put them where they belong. If you run out of money or anything else, you may ask for more funds from my royal treasury. I have also commanded the treasurers in other countries to supply you with wheat, wine, salt, and whatever God wants for His temple."

Ezra was overjoyed when he read the letter. He praised God for the king's generosity and kindness. God had listened to his prayer and moved the heart of the king.

Ezra Prepares for the Journey

Next, Ezra asked the Israelites to come with him. Some were very happy to join Ezra. They knew God wanted them to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. However, others did not want to leave. Their homes, jobs, families and friends were in Persia. Jerusalem was so distant and foreign. It was a destroyed and desolate city. Eventually, about two thousand people traveled with Ezra, determined to rebuild Jerusalem.

Ezra prepared the materials and equipment he needed for his journey. Here are some of the important things that Ezra took with him. [Prepare and post pictures of these items on the board.]

- Gold and silver
- Temple articles
- Food,
- Clothes
- Water
- Camels, donkeys, and other animals for transportation

There were a lot of things Ezra had to prepare for the journey. He made sure there was enough food to feed the 2,000 people traveling with him. He counted all the gold, silver, and temple articles. He appointed people to carry them and keep them safe from robbers and bandits. Ezra instructed the people to fast and pray to ask God to bless and protect their journey. Soon, Ezra and the 2,000 people

bid farewell to their friends and family. They spent four months traveling to Jerusalem.

Ezra Prays for the People

It was not long before Ezra found out just how badly the people in Jerusalem needed to hear the word of God. Ezra found that many of the Jewish people, including priests, Levites, and Jewish leaders, had married the pagan women who worshipped idols! God had commanded His people not to marry these types of women because they would lead them to worship idols.

Ezra was so upset to hear the news. He tore his clothes and pulled the hair from his head and beard. He sat and did not speak until evening. Bowing before the Lord with tears, Ezra prayed and confessed to God for their great sins. He knew that if the people continued to sin and disobey God, God would punish them instead of bless them. God might even hand them over to their enemies once again. As Ezra prayed, a large group of men, women, and children gathered around him. Ezra then rose up to remind them of God's teachings. He told them to repent and follow God's words. When the people heard Ezra's words, they promised to separate themselves from the foreigners and their pagan wives and return to God.

Ezra Reads the Law

The people in Jerusalem had not heard God's laws for a long time. Without God's word, they often did things that were wrong in God's sight. One day, all the people gathered together by the Water Gate and asked Ezra to read the Book of the Law to them. The people listened attentively as Ezra read it from early morning until noontime. When they heard God's word, they began to cry. But Ezra and the Levites told the people, "Do not cry, for this is a day to celebrate and rejoice." So for seven days, the people gathered together to hear Ezra read the word of God. There was great joy, because they heard and understood God's words.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. **Ezra was a fisherman whose name meant "forgiveness."** False; he was a scribe whose name meant "help."
2. **Ezra went back to Jerusalem to teach the people about God.** True.
3. **Ezra and the people traveled for six months to Jerusalem.** False; they traveled for four months.
4. **King Artaxerxes didn't help with Ezra's journey.** False; he provided money and supplies.
5. **When Ezra arrived at Jerusalem, he found that many of the people had married pagan wives.** True.
6. **What was Ezra determined to do?** To study, follow, and teach God's word to the people.
7. **How did Ezra help his people?** He led the people back to Jerusalem and taught them God's word so that they could turn back to God.
8. **What did Ezra do when he heard that the people in Jerusalem had married pagan wives?** He tore his clothes and pulled out hair from his head and beard. Then, he prayed and repented to God for their sins.
9. **How were the people when they heard Ezra read from the Book of the Law?** They were attentive and joyful.

MEMORY VERSE PRACTICE

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

"How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103)

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

1. C
2. A
3. B
4. False; he gave them money and supplies.
5. False; they traveled for four months.
6. True
7. He was determined to study, follow, and teach God's word.
8. They were attentive and joyful.
9. God's word is like honey, a lamp, a mirror, milk, a sword, and bread.
10. "How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103)

SPIRITUAL TEACHING & LIFE APPLICATION

Sweeter Than Honey

Materials

- Bread
- Lamp
- Sword (toy/picture)
- Mirror
- Glass of milk
- Small bowl of honey
- Plastic spoons

The Bible uses many different objects to describe the word of God. As you introduce each item, ask the students to read the relevant Bible verses. Next, divide the students into pairs and assign one scenario to each pair. Ask each pair to read the scenario and discuss the questions. After they are done, ask them to share their answers.

1. God's word is the bread of life (Jn 6:35). When we are hungry, we eat food, such as bread. Similarly, our soul becomes hungry, too. Hearing and understanding God's word gives our soul nourishment and satisfaction, so our spirituality may be strengthened.

Ben loved to watch television. Each day, Ben would sit for many hours watching his favorite shows. One day, Ben's parents decided that the family would read the Bible and pray together before bedtime every night. Ben hated this idea. He complained constantly to his parents. However, as time passed, Ben found that he looked forward to prayer and Bible reading each evening. He liked listening to the Bible stories and sharing his thoughts with his family. It made him feel content and happy. Ben realized that he no longer wanted to keep watching the television.



How did Ben show that he was hungry in spirit? How can we tell if we are hungry in spirit? Think of ways that we can eat of God's words.



2. God's word is like a lamp to our feet (Ps 119:105). A lamp provides light so that we can see the path. Without a lamp, we will get lost in the darkness and stray from the right path.

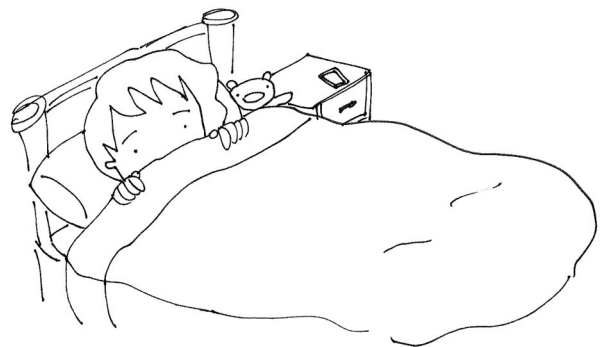
Josh liked to attend R.E. classes, but he didn't like to memorize the weekly memory verses. His teacher reminded him that it was important to store up God's word in his heart, because they would guide him in his daily life. One day, Josh saw his friends at the school playground. He noticed that they were trying to put bugs into people's backpacks. They would laugh when the people screamed upon discovering the bugs. Josh wanted to join in but suddenly he remembered a memory verse

that he learned in R.E. class, which said, "As I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Jn 13:34b). Josh knew that scaring others was not loving nor pleasing to God.

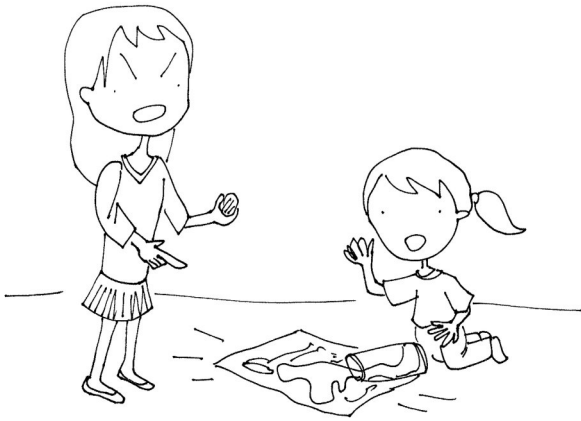
The word of God leads us to God. How was God's word a lamp to Josh? Share a time when God's word was a lamp to your feet.

3. God's word is like a sharp sword (Heb 4:12). A sword is used in battle to fight our enemies. We use the word of God, the sword, to defeat our enemy, Satan.

Cassie usually slept alone in her own room. One night, Cassie woke up from a bad dream. She felt very afraid but she didn't dare to get out from under her covers to go to her parents' room. Cassie gathered some courage to switch on her bedside light. She noticed a picture next to her. There was a Bible verse below it that read, "I will not leave you nor forsake you" (Josh 1:5b). Cassie repeated the verse many times in her mind. Soon, she no longer felt afraid and quickly fell asleep again.



Satan uses many different ways to frighten us or weaken our faith. He finds ways to tempt us and make us fall. But God has given us His word, which is a powerful, sharp sword, to fight against Satan. When we use God's word, Satan will flee from us. How did Cassie use God's word to fight against Satan?



4. God's word is like a mirror (Jas 1:23-25). A mirror shows our reflection, so we can see our physical appearance. When we listen to God's word, we can see our spiritual reflection, which shows us when we are righteous or sinful and in need of correction.

Lauren was very angry. Her little sister had accidentally spilled milk over the painting she had to do for homework. Lauren was so furious that she shouted at her sister and made her cry. Lauren threw her ruined picture into the trashcan and ran to her room. Later, Lauren's mother comforted her about the picture and explained that it was an accident. She then asked Lauren to read from James 1:19: "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." Lauren realized that it was wrong to be so angry with her sister and hurt her with mean words, so Lauren apologized to her sister.

How was God's word like a mirror to Lauren? Have you used God's spiritual mirror to look at yourself each day? What do you see?

5. God's word is like spiritual milk (1 Pet 2:2). Milk is nutritious and allows us to grow healthily. It makes our bones and teeth strong. God's word also helps us to grow and become strong.

Jill came to R.E. class only because her mother brought her each week. She wasn't interested in listening to the Bible stories or praying. Jill was more interested in being with her friends and doing fun things. Gradually, as Jill learned more about the Bible and prayed more, she believed that God loved her very much. She wanted to show her love for God by obeying His word and being kind to others.



How did Jill grow in faith? What made her faith grow?

6. God's word is like honey (Ps 119:103). [Have students taste the honey using the plastic spoons.] Honey is very sweet and gives us energy. However, God's word is even sweeter than honey! The sweetness of God's word is not tasted with our tongues, but experienced in our lives. Sometimes in life, we face troubles or difficulties, but God's word makes our life sweeter and more joyful.



Dora had switched to a new school. She really missed all her friends and teachers at her old school. Dora often felt very lonely. One day, Dora told her mom about this. Dora's mom comforted her, saying that she did not need to be lonely or scared because Jesus would always be with her. Jesus said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20). Whenever Dora felt sad or lonely at school, she could speak to the Lord Jesus. Dora felt much better hearing those words. Soon, Dora made some new friends at her school.

How did God's word make Dora's life sweeter? Share how God has made your life more joyful and sweet.

Conclusion

We can see that there are many blessings that come from knowing God's words. Ezra was determined to study, do and teach God's words. The Psalmist also understood how important God's words were. In Psalms 119:11, he writes, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." He understood the importance of knowing God's word, and storing and hiding them in our hearts.

How do we store God's word in our heart? Do we write it on our hearts with a marker or pen? [Allow student to respond.] We store and hide God's word in our hearts by memorizing it. Through memorization, the Holy Spirit writes the word of God upon our hearts. And, when we think of it or talk and share about it with others, the word of God becomes deeply ingrained in our hearts. It will guide us to walk in the right way.

Let us work hard to learn, memorize, and practice God's word in our daily lives.

ACTIVITY

1

Store the Word of God in Our Hearts

Objective: To help the students memorize Bible verses through games.

Write out the suggested Bible verses on the board. Have the students recite them a few times. Then, use the following games to help students memorize the verses.

Suggested Bible Verses

- "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Ps 119:105)
- "How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Ps 119:103)
- "The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." (Heb 4:12)

A. Memory Verse Scramble

1. Print the verse on index cards, writing one word per card. (If the Bible verse is long, write two or more words per card.) Make one set for each team.
2. Divide class into teams of 3 and give each team a set of cards.
3. Have the teams race to put the cards in the proper order.

B. Memory Verse Hopscotch

1. If your classroom space permits, use masking tape or painter's tape to outline a hopscotch grid on the floor.
2. Print the verse on index cards, writing one word per card. (If the Bible verse is long, write two or more words per card.) Make one set for each team.
3. Tape one card in each box.
4. Have the students take turns jumping through the hopscotch in the proper order while saying the verse.
5. In the second round, remove some of the cards and repeat step 4.

E1 Year 3 Book 4 Lesson 6—Ezra the Scribe

Homework Assignment

Name: _____ Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Bible Truth: Ezra devoted himself to the study of the Law of Moses.

Lesson Objective: To emphasize the importance of learning God’s words and living a God-pleasing life.

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

Prayer: Please put a checkmark in the space 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.

(Psalm 119:103)

What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Homework Assignment

Understanding What You Have Learned

Multiple Choice

1. _____ : Ezra's name means " _____."
 - a. Forgive
 - b. Save
 - c. Help
2. _____ : Ezra was a _____.
 - a. Scribe
 - b. Tax collector
 - c. Fisherman
3. _____ : What did Ezra do when he heard that the people living in Jerusalem had married pagan wives?
 - a. He became angry and began to beat them.
 - b. He tore his clothes and pulled out hair from his head and beard. Then he prayed and repented to God.
 - c. He decided to go back to Persia.

True or False

4. King Artaxerxes allowed the people to return to Jerusalem but refused to help them any other way. _____
5. It took Ezra and the people six months to reach Jerusalem. _____
6. Ezra decided to travel to Jerusalem because he wanted to teach God's word to the people. _____

Short Answer

7. What was Ezra determined to do?

8. How did the people react when they heard Ezra read from the Book of the Law?

9. List down four things that the word of God is like. An example has been done for you.
 - a. God's word is like honey.
 - b. God's word is like _____
 - c. God's word is like _____
 - d. God's word is like _____
 - e. God's word is like _____
10. Write out this week's memory verse.
