

## Lesson 115

# Ezra Teaches the Law

Ezra and the Jews wept over their sin and repented.

# Studying God's Word

## Lesson Time

Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

Have the students assemble in a circle away from the tables—either on the floor or in their chairs.

Bring your stuffed animal, Bible, Flip Chart, and any items you prepared for this lesson.

## Prayer

This prayer time is designed to help the students begin to understand some simple concepts about prayer and to encourage them to pray.

We start our Bible lesson with prayer. Turn to the Flip Chart Prayer Page. Briefly review the different types of prayer presented there.

Today let's say prayers of thanksgiving and tell God "thank you" for something.

I'll start. Dear God, thank you for . . . (insert personal prayer here).

Pass a special stuffed animal—prayer bear—around the circle, giving all the students an opportunity to pray, or choose a volunteer to stand beside you and pray.

Very good! Now let's put our stuffed animal away, and we'll answer our Bible Truth questions.

I love you prayers—Adoration  
I'm sorry prayers—Confession  
I'm thankful prayers—Thanksgiving  
Please prayers—Supplication

## Bible Truths

These four questions will be repeated each week to help the students learn foundational truths.

All of God's words in the Bible are what? True!  
What word means God will always keep his promises? Faithful.  
When can we trust God? All the time.  
Is forgiveness of sins a gift from God? Yes. We are saved by grace.

## Bible Treasure Hunt

Before Bible Treasure Hunt, place a sticky note in your Bible to mark the first passage to be read.

Each week before class, hide your Bible somewhere in the room. Use different methods each week to keep the students excited about finding the Bible. For example, you might set a timer, play music while the students search, tell students when they are getting warmer and colder, or choose a student to hide the Bible and let you or classmates find it.

We are going to start out today by looking into God's Word, the Bible. God's Word is true, and we can always trust what it says. It's like a great treasure that tells us about who God is and what he has done for us. But where is this treasure? You will have to help me with that. We're going to go on a Bible Treasure Hunt. Somewhere in this room, I've hidden the Bible. When I say "Go," you will need to look for it. Whoever finds the Bible must bring it back to their seat and hold it very carefully until it is time to look in it. When it is time to read, you can bring it to me, and we'll open it to see what we are going to talk about today! Explain the method you chose for today. Ready? Set! Go!

K-1st Lesson continues next.

### **Pre-K Lesson**

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### **Introduction**

Have supplies for the object lesson ready.

We have learned that sin has consequences. Do you remember what a consequence is? When something bad happens because of a poor choice we made.

Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. We've seen many times in the Bible where people faced consequences because they chose to sin. Mention the following: Jonah trying to run from God, #26; God sending enemies against the Israelites when they worshipped idols, #27; God sending the Babylonians against Judah because they worshipped idols, #28; etc.

When we choose to sin, it doesn't just hurt us. Many times, it will hurt others, too. Let's do an experiment to help us see how sin can spread. Bring out the object lesson supplies. You may have the students gather around to see and help. Pour milk onto the plate until it's about halfway full.

God gave his people, the Jews, special laws for how they were to worship him and treat each other. Let's use this food coloring for the Jewish people. Drip food coloring into the milk to create several patches of colors on the surface. Do not stir the food coloring in. It may take a few drops in each spot to create a good patch of color.

God said his people must not worship false gods or marry anyone who worshipped idols. When some of the Jews disobeyed, others also decided to do the same wrong things. Direct several students to take a cotton swab

and dip the tip into the dish soap. One by one, have them touch the tip of their swab into a colored patch in the milk. Pause to watch the color spread with each cotton swab.

See how the colors spread? The Jews' sinful actions spread, too. It affected their families and neighbors. And this is what we'll see happening with the Jewish people in our lesson today. Have helpers throw away the cotton swabs and all the students return to their seats.

Refer to Lesson 114 Flip Chart. We talked about Queen Esther in our last lesson.

Was it luck, or was God in control of everything that happened to her and to the Jews? God was in control.

Refer to Lesson 113 Flip Chart. While Esther and many Jews were living in Persia, others were making their way back to Judah. We talked about the first group who went back with Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

Today we will read about a second group of Jews returning home. This time a priest named Ezra led them back. Let's see what happened when Ezra made it home to Jerusalem.

## **The Return of Ezra**

Ezra was a priest and a scribe, who read and wrote copies of the books of the law. Ezra knew God's laws very well. He wanted to study the Law of the Lord, to do what it said, and to teach it to the Jewish people. Ezra got permission from the king to lead a group of Jews back to Judah. God had promised that the people would one day return to Jerusalem. And he was keeping his promise.

What word means God will always keep his promises? Faithful.

God was faithful to his people. Some of them had gone home with Zerubbabel. And now it was time for Ezra's group to go. God protected them and brought them safely to Jerusalem.

When Ezra arrived, it didn't take him long to see that the people who had come back earlier with Zerubbabel were not following the Law of the Lord. They had forgotten God's laws and were disobeying God.

Ezra saw that the Jewish people were marrying women and men from the foreign nations around them. But God had commanded them NOT to do this very thing because these people did not worship the true God. They worshipped false gods and idols.

Did God want his people to worship false gods? No!

God wanted his people to marry only those who loved and worshipped him. But now, they were doing exactly what he said NOT to do.

Ezra 9:3

Listen to Ezra 9:3 to find out what Ezra did when he heard what the people were doing. Have the student with the Bible bring it up and turn to the sticky note. Read the verse.

What did Ezra do to his clothes, his garment and cloak? He tore them. What did Ezra do to his hair and his beard? He pulled out some of the hair on his head and beard.

This may seem like a strange thing to do. But in those days, this was a way the priest showed how upset he was—by tearing his clothes and pulling his hair out. Ouch!

Show the Lesson Flip Chart. Ezra was shocked to hear that the Jews were disobeying God by marrying these foreign people. Husbands and wives started worshipping idols together, and they were also teaching their children to worship false gods. Their sin was spreading like the colors in our experiment.

## **The Response of the People**

Ezra had come to Jerusalem ready to teach the people what God's Law commanded. Now that he had found out the Jews were marrying people who worshipped idols, what would he do? First, Ezra went to the temple and began to pray. He cried as he confessed the sins of the people to the Lord.

Soon, a group of men, women, and children gathered around. They heard what Ezra was saying to God and understood that he was praying about them. The people felt bad and began to weep and cry. They promised to do the right thing and gathered in Jerusalem to deal with this problem.

Refer to the Flip Chart. On the day they met outside of the temple, it was pouring rain. The people were trembling because of the rain—and because of their sin. Ezra reminded them of God's commands. When the Jews married foreign wives, they were disobeying God's Law. These wives did not love and worship God, and they were leading their husbands and children to worship false gods. The people knew they had sinned and asked God to forgive them.

Remember how the colors got all mixed up in our experiment? Would it be easy to put the colors back again? No.

This problem was mixed up, too. It took a long time to fix it. The foreign wives and children had to be sent away; this was the consequence for the people's sin. But the people did the right thing by turning back to God and showing that they were truly sorry.

Continue with the Lesson Review Game below.

## **K-1st Lesson**

### **Introduction**

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We have learned that sin has consequences. Do you remember what a consequence is? When something bad happens because of a poor choice we made.

Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. We've seen many times in the Bible where people faced consequences because they chose to sin. Mention the following: Jonah trying to run from God, #26; God sending enemies against the Israelites when they worshipped idols, #27; God sending the Babylonians against Judah because they worshipped idols, #28.

When we choose to sin, it doesn't just hurt us. Many times, it will hurt others, too. Let's do an experiment to help us see how sin can spread. Bring out the object lesson supplies. You may have the students gather around to see and help. Pour milk onto the plate until it's about halfway full.

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God said his people must not worship false gods or marry anyone who worshipped idols. When some of the Jews disobeyed, others decided to do the same wrong things. Direct several students to take a cotton swab and dip the tip into the dish soap. One by one, have them touch the tip of their swab into a colored patch in the milk. Pause to watch the color spread with each cotton swab.

See how the colors spread? The Jews' sinful actions spread, too. It affected their families and neighbors. And this is what we'll see happening with the Jewish people in our lesson today. Have helpers throw away the cotton swabs and all the students return to their seats.

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Today we will read about a second group of Jews returning home. This time a priest named Ezra led them back. Let's see what happened when Ezra made it home to Jerusalem.

## **The Return of Ezra**

Ezra was a priest and a scribe, which was a person who read and wrote copies of the books of the law. So, Ezra knew God's laws very well.

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Which books in the Old Testament are books of the law? Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Ezra wanted to study the Law of the Lord, to do what it said, and to teach it to the people. He got permission from the king to take a group of Jews back to Judah. They would have to travel over 1,000 miles, but Ezra was ready. God had promised that the people would one day return to Jerusalem. And he was keeping his promise.

What word means God will always keep his promises? Faithful.

God was showing his faithfulness to his people. Some of them had gone home with Zerubbabel. And now it was time for another group to go. They prayed for safety on the journey from enemy attack and ambushes.

What is an ambush? Allow answers.

An ambush is a surprise attack by enemies, like thieves, who would hide along the road then jump out and attack. Ezra's group was bringing treasures with them, such as silver and gold. Thieves would probably love to steal all those nice things. But God protected them and brought them safely to Jerusalem.

## The Reaction of Ezra

When Ezra arrived, it didn't take him long to see that the people who had returned with Zerubbabel earlier were not following the Law of the Lord. It had been several years since they had come home, and they had forgotten God's laws and were disobeying God.

Ezra saw that the Jewish people were marrying women and men from the foreign nations around them. But God had commanded them NOT to do this very thing. The people from these other nations did not worship the true God. They were pagans, which means they worshipped false gods and idols.

Did God want his people to worship false gods? No!

God wanted his people to marry only those who loved and worshipped him. But now, they were doing exactly what he said NOT to do.

Ezra 9:3

Listen to Ezra 9:3 to find out what Ezra did when he heard what the people were doing. Have the student with the Bible bring it up and turn to the sticky note. Read the verse.

What did Ezra do to his clothes? He tore his garment and cloak.  
What did Ezra do to his hair? He pulled out some of the hair on his head and beard.

This may seem like a strange thing to do. But in those days, this was a way the priest could show how upset he was—by tearing his clothes and pulling

his hair out. Ouch!

What do you think it means that Ezra sat appalled? Allow discussion.

Appalled means shocked. Ezra couldn't believe what he was hearing! How could the Jews disobey God this way so soon after coming home? Did they forget that their sins were the reason God had sent them to Babylon in the first place? Ezra was very sad.

Show the Lesson Flip Chart. The Jews were disobeying God by marrying these foreign people. Husbands and wives started worshipping idols together, and they were also teaching their children to worship false gods. Their sin was spreading like the colors in our experiment.

God had commanded his people to marry only those who believed that he was the one true God—so that this kind of thing wouldn't happen.

## The Response of the People

So how did Ezra know that God had commanded them not to marry people of other nations? Allow answers. It was in the laws God gave to Moses.

Remember, Ezra studied the Law of God, the first five books of the Bible. He had come to Jerusalem ready to teach the people what God's Law commanded. Now that he had found out the Jews were marrying idol worshippers, what would he do? Let's read some more to find out.

Ezra 10:1–2

Listen to verse 1. Read the verse.

What was Ezra doing in this verse? Reread the first part of the verse, if necessary. Praying, confessing, weeping, casting himself down before God. Who gathered around where Ezra was praying? Men, women, and children. What were these people doing? They were weeping bitterly.

Listen to verse 2 now. Read the verse.

Why were the people weeping? They had broken what with God? They had broken faith with God.

The people were sorry for their sin but knew there was still hope for them if they turned from their sin and made things right with God. They promised to do the right thing and gathered in Jerusalem to deal with this problem.

Refer to the Flip Chart. On the day they met outside of the temple, it was pouring rain. The people were trembling because of the rain—and because of their sin. Ezra reminded the people of God's commands. When the Jews married foreign wives, they were disobeying God's Law. These wives did not love and worship God, and they were leading their husbands and children to worship false gods. When Ezra explained how they were disobeying God, the people realized they had sinned. They were very sorry for their sins and asked God for forgiveness.



Remember how the colors got all mixed up in our experiment? Would it be easy to put the colors back again? No.

This problem was mixed up, too. It took about three months to fix it. The foreign wives and children had to be sent away; this was the consequence for the people's sin. But the people did the right thing by turning back to God and showing that they truly were sorry.

Continue with the Lesson Review Game.

## **Lesson Review**

We all learn best with review and repetition! We encourage you to play a lesson review game.

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