



UNIT 18 | SESSION 3

## EZRA READ THE LAW

EZRA 7-10; NEHEMIAH 8

### KEY PASSAGE:

2 Corinthians 7:10

### BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

How should we feel when we sin? When we sin, we should feel sorry that we have disobeyed God and want to turn from our sin because we love Him.

### CHRIST CONNECTION:

God's Word is powerful. When Ezra read God's Word, the people loved God more and changed their ways. The Bible says that Jesus is "the Word." Jesus is God who came to live with people on earth. Jesus has the power to change our hearts.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION



## LEADER Bible Study

Find 1 John 1:9 in your Bible and read it slowly two or three times. Many Christians are familiar with these words; perhaps you have them memorized. We agree that God wants us to confess our sins to Him. We believe that God is faithful to forgive His children by the blood of Jesus. But do you find it easy to confess your sin to God? If not, why? Do you believe the lie that keeping quiet about our sin will prevent God from knowing about it?

In Ezra 9, leaders approached Ezra and declared to him the grim reality of the people of Israel who were caught up in devious behavior and lifestyles. Following the second return of exiles to Jerusalem, the men of Israel began to intermarry with foreign women again. It was as if they had completely forgotten God. Ezra's response of honest confession before a holy God ought to teach us something about his character and about our need to do likewise.

First, Ezra stood before God and the faithful of Israel, and he cried out before the Lord. Ezra didn't point fingers as he went before God. He didn't shift the blame or use the chance to gossip about others in his community. Ezra did precisely what we see later recorded in 1 John 1:9: he confessed his sin to God.

Ezra truly believed that it was right to bring his sin and the sin of his community before God, to lay it all out before the Lord and to seek God's forgiveness by faith and repentance. And not only did Ezra see the good of confession, he found reason to celebrate as he did.

Read Ezra 9:13. Ezra recognized the necessity of confession and then celebrated that God's grace was still enough, still active, and still effective toward His people.

Ezra took his sin seriously and confessed it before a holy God. And Ezra confessed with hope that the God he had sinned against, had been gracious and would continue to be so.

When we bring our sin before God, let us do so with humility rooted in our deep need for God and confidence grounded in our understanding of His amazing grace.

### TERMS TO KNOW

**Confession:** admission, declaration, or acknowledgment; a significant element in the worship of God. Most occurrences involve one of two primary responses to God: confession of sin or confession of faith.



## WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

**SAY** “ Have you ever changed your mind about something like a food you used to not like or an activity you didn’t enjoy doing? What caused you to change your mind? ”

### 1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Letter Maze” on the activity page.

**SAY** “ God’s Word is powerful! Through our Bible story today, we will be reminded that God’s Word has the power to change hearts and lives. ”

### 2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

#### OPTION 1: BIBLE STATIONS



Before the session, set out eight Bibles at different places around the room. Write a question on eight different index cards such as Is this book in the Old Testament or New Testament? How many verses are in Romans 5? Is this book one of the four Gospels or a letter? What book comes after Ezra? Open each Bible to the particular book that corresponds to the question on the card.

Form kids into eight groups and provide them with a piece of paper and a pencil. Lead each group to rotate from station to station answering the questions as they go. Review the answers to the questions and invite kids to share how many they answered correctly.

**SAY** “ It’s important to know our Bibles and to read God’s Word. God’s Word is powerful. In today’s Bible story, we will learn that God gave Ezra the desire to study God’s Word, obey it, and teach it to the people. ”

#### OPTION 2: BIBLE BOOK SORT

Before the session, write each book of the Bible on sticky notes. Scatter the notes on a wall. Write Old Testament on a piece of paper and New Testament on another piece of paper. Tape the papers to the wall.

Invite kids to work together to sort all 66 books of the Bible under the Old Testament sign or the New Testament sign. Once all books have been sorted, check to see if the kids sorted them correctly.

Consider playing again, but this time challenge the kids to complete the activity in three minutes.

**SAY** “ God’s Word has two major divisions: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Today, our Bible story comes from the Old Testament Book of Ezra. Let’s read our Bible story to understand the importance of reading God’s Word. ”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

# INTRODUCE the Bible Story

### 1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

**SAY** “ Welcome kids! My name is [your name], and I am so glad you are joining us today. Every time we are together, we study a story from the Bible. If you have your Bible with you today, will you take it out? [Distribute Bibles to any kid who does not have one.]

When we meet together, we read God’s Word and seek to understand it. We should rejoice that God has been so kind to give His Word and to help us understand how His Word leads us to know Jesus. We should read God’s Word every day. Today, we will learn about a man named Ezra who read God’s Word to the people in Jerusalem. As Ezra read God’s Word, the people came to understand how great their sin was against a holy God. ”

### 2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

**SAY** “ Let’s say our big picture question and answer together. **How should we feel about sin? When we sin, we should feel sorry that we have disobeyed God and want to turn from our sin because we love Him.**

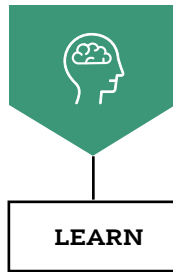
God is kind to show us our sin. If we were really sick, we would want a doctor to give us the right diagnosis so we could then get the right treatment. God has told us that we sin so that we can turn to Jesus and be saved. In our story today, we will see how God’s Word showed God’s people their sin and how the people responded. God’s Word is powerful. God uses His Word to show us our sinfulness, but He also uses His Word to change our hearts and allow us to experience forgiveness of our sin through Jesus. ”

### 3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

**SAY** “ Throughout the last few weeks, we have seen how God remained faithful to His people. God placed Esther in a position of power to protect His people from destruction. God also protected Nehemiah and the others as they rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem. Through it all, though, the people of God continued to battle with sin.

God’s protection and faithfulness was shown to Israel, not because they deserved it, but because of God’s covenant faithfulness. God was working to remind His people of their need of Him. He had promised that by faith in His future promise of a Messiah, they would find forgiveness. Today, we will see how God used His Word to show the people their sin and draw them back to Him. ”



## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### LEARN the Bible Story

#### 1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Ezra 7–10; Nehemiah 8. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Ezra Read the Law.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

#### EZRA READ THE LAW

“**The walls around Jerusalem were finished—at last!** With God’s help, the people finished rebuilding the walls and the city gates in just 52 days. **Ezra (EZ ruh), a priest and scribe,** had traveled from Babylon to Jerusalem with a group of God’s people. God was with Ezra, and Ezra **wanted to study God’s law, obey it, and teach it to God’s people.**”

Ezra met with some of the people of Israel. **He learned that some of the people and their leaders had disobeyed God, ignoring His Word.** Ezra tore his clothes and pulled out some of his hair. He sat down and was very upset. **Ezra got on his knees and prayed to God, confessing the people’s sin.** As he did this, **God’s people began to gather around him. They cried too and offered sacrifices, promising to be faithful to God.**

**Several years later, the people in Jerusalem gathered together early in the morning at one of Jerusalem’s gates. Men, women, and children—anyone who could understand—came to listen to the reading of God’s Word.** As the sun was just coming up, **Ezra brought out the book of the law of Moses that God had given to His people.** God’s words were written on a scroll. **Ezra stood on a high wooden platform and began to read.**

**Ezra read the law for hours, and all the people listened carefully.** The people stood up; **they had respect for God’s Word. Ezra praised God,** and the people lifted up their hands.

“Amen! Amen!” they said. **The people in the crowd bowed down** with their faces to the ground, **and they worshiped God.**

Some of the leaders there—**the Levites (LEE vights)—explained the law to the people and helped them understand the words Ezra read.** **As the people heard the words of the law, they began to cry.** The law was God’s rules for living, and the people had disobeyed God. **They realized they had sinned.**

**Ezra, the Levites, and Nehemiah (NEE huh MIGH uh) the governor said, “This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not be sad or cry.”** Even though the people’s sin made them sad, this was a happy day.

Then **Ezra said to them, “Go home and prepare a feast!** Eat rich food and drink sweet drinks. Share what you have prepared with those who have nothing prepared.”

**The people obeyed Ezra.** They prepared a feast. **They were glad because they**

#### STORYTELLING TIPS

**Make a scroll:** Create a scroll by cutting a paper grocery bag or using brown craft paper and rolling it up like a scroll. Use the scroll as a prop as you tell the story.

**Act it out:** Act out the different movements of Ezra as you tell the story such as pulling on your clothes, getting on your knees, and standing on a platform.



## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

**understood the words of the law that were explained to them.**

Christ Connection: God's Word is powerful. When Ezra read God's Word, the people loved God more and changed their ways. The Bible says that Jesus is "the Word." Jesus is God who came to live with people on earth. Jesus has the power to change our hearts. ”

### 2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

**SAY** “ God's Word is powerful. Our story showed us how God used His Word to change the hearts of His people as Ezra taught the Scriptures. What made Ezra a good communicator of God's Word? Look at Ezra 7:10. [Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ezra 7:10.] The Bible tells us that Ezra didn't simply read God's law to the people, but that Ezra spent time studying God's Word and letting it change his heart. Ezra did not just tell the people what they should be doing, but he himself followed God's law, then he taught God's Word to the people.

After the people heard the law, what did Ezra tell them to do? Look at Ezra 10:11. [Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ezra 10:11.] God had convicted His people of their sin through the His Word. The people responded by being sorry for their sin, but Ezra encouraged them to go one step further by confessing their sins to the Lord and turning from their sinful ways.

When we sin against the Lord, we should be sorry for our sin and want to turn from our sin. Let's say our big picture question and answer. **How should we feel about sin? When we sin, we should feel sorry that we have disobeyed God and want to turn from our sin because we love Him.** Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we can experience freedom from sin and from the punishment sin requires. ”

### 3 CHRIST CONNECTION

**SAY** “ God's Word is powerful. When Ezra read God's Word, the people loved God more and changed their ways. The Bible says that Jesus is 'the Word.' Jesus is God who came to live with people on earth. Jesus has the power to change our hearts. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.)

### 4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 18, Session 3” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. Does it matter if we read all of the Bible? Why?
2. How can we make reading God's Word a habit in our lives?

### 5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

| **SAY** “ When Stephen and Erin Spencer visit the elderly lady in one of the Southeast Asia villages,



## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

they say to her, 'So, tell us what God did this week.' The missionaries say that one miracle after another is happening in the village.

Once, a woman in the lady's village became paralyzed and was in severe pain for four months. People in the village did not believe she would live much longer. The elderly lady asked the woman's husband if she could pray for God to heal her. The husband agreed to let her pray for healing. The elderly woman told the man's wife about Jesus and prayed for her. In 10 minutes, the woman who had been paralyzed and in pain was able to sit upright in a chair. The next day, the woman walked out of her house and met Stephen and Erin. The healed lady believed in Jesus and became a Christian. ”

Play the missions video. Then, close in prayer, asking God that more people in the village will believe in Jesus. Pray for the Spencers and other missionaries in Southeast Asia as they minister to the people during a time of unrest.

### 6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 2 Corinthians 7:10 together.

**SAY** “ What does repentance mean? [Allow kids to respond.] Repentance is turning from sin and turning toward Jesus. When we turn to Jesus, He helps us live in obedience to His Word. ”

Direct kids to listen closely as you say the key passage aloud while replacing one word in the passage with an incorrect word. When kids hear an incorrect word, direct them to make a buzzing sound. When they make a buzzing sound, stop saying the key passage, and challenge them to say correct word. Repeat as time allows.

Lead kids to sing “Lead Us To Salvation (2 Corinthians 7:10).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

### 7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

**SAY** “ Thank You, Lord, for Your Word and the way You help us know You through it. Help us feel sorry for our sin and to turn to Jesus. Thank You for Jesus and how He can change our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen. ”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**

