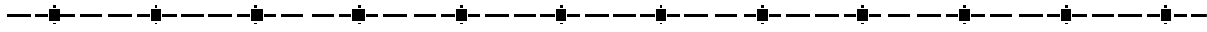


# GOD'S BIG PLAN

## Time to Rebuild Ezra-Nehemiah

**Supporting Scriptures:** 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Psalm 66, 84, 85, 107; Proverbs 21:1; Isaiah 44:20, 45:1-13; Haggai; Zechariah; Acts 7:43



**Lesson Goals:**  
To see that God keeps His promises.  
To see that God can even change the thoughts and plans of kings.  
To see that God wants us to do what He tells us to.

**Scripture Memory** Admit to the Lord that you have sinned. Tell the God of your people what you have done. Then do what he wants you to do. Ezra 10:11a (NIV)

**NOTE:** Familiarize yourself with this story. Tell it as a STORY, not as "He said. . . She said" or read. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

**The Lesson:** Let's review what we have learned so far about God's Big Plan. (Review the previous stories, encouraging more and more students to share.)

Although God had promised His people a new land, a place of their very own, His people were not willing to follow His rules. They disobeyed God by worshipping other gods. And because God is perfect and loving, He must punish disobedience. So God's people, who could have stayed in the promised land forever, were removed from that wonderful place and carried off as captives to faraway lands. There were some, like Daniel, who even in captivity were faithful to God. When captivity ended, some of the captives stayed in the lands where they had been living, like Queen Esther and her cousin Mordecai. Others returned home to begin rebuilding.

**READ: Ezra 1:1-3 and Nehemiah 1:1-3 (Hold your Bible open throughout the story.)**

The same God who raised up evil kings and countries to punish the Israelites and remove them from their precious, promised land, is the same God who raised up another king to free them to go back. God's Story tells us that God can change the thoughts and plans of kings. He makes them want to do certain things to accomplish His plans. And God was ready for His people to return to Jerusalem. It was time to rebuild. So God made the king want to let the captives go back. But not just that. The king wanted them to rebuild the temple of God and he helped them to do it.

But what needed to be done and why? Well, when the evil king came in to carry off the people of God to another place, he destroyed and burned the temple and the wall that surrounded the city. Without the temple, sacrifices for sin couldn't be offered the way they had been before. And without a wall, Jerusalem couldn't be lived in safely. Back then, and even now in some places, a city without walls was a very dangerous place. But, the people were excited. They began the temple first. They made it according to King David's command years before. When they had completed the foundation, or support, they thanked God and made music. There were some, though, who began to cry. They were the ones who had seen the beautiful temple King Solomon made for God. They cried because they knew it would never be the same. Their sinning, their disobedience, had done this.

Construction on the temple stopped for a while and the people began building houses for themselves.

God said to them through a prophet named Haggai, “Think about how you are living.” By living in their nice houses, and leaving God’s house incomplete, their actions showed that God wasn’t very important to them. Sure, they were “God’s people,” but they were being unfaithful to Him. They shouldn’t have left the temple unfinished. Through Haggai’s message from God, the people knew what they needed to do. They got back to work on the temple of God and they completed it! Then they had a special service and dedicated it to God singing praises to God.

God again spoke to His people. He warned them about other things they were doing that were disobedient to Him. Ezra, a teacher of God’s law, prayed for himself and the people. He told God, “We’ve been bad. We’ve been sinning against you for a long time. We’ve sinned so much that if you could stack them all up, our sins would reach up to heaven. We deserve everything that has happened to us, but you, O God, are faithful. You are with us. You are holy and you always do what is right.” The people began to join Ezra in front of the temple. They cried about their sin, but what else could they do? Ezra told them, “Admit to the Lord that you have sinned. Tell the God of your people what you have done. Then do what he wants you to do.” They confessed, or agreed with God about their sins. And then they made things right. They quit doing the bad things they had done before.

What a wonderful thing, the temple had finally been rebuilt and the people were obeying God! But the city wall was still just a pile of rocks. God was ready to use another of His prophets, Nehemiah. Nehemiah’s family had stayed in Persia instead of returning to Jerusalem. Nehemiah worked for the king, but he cared about Jerusalem and received reports. When he heard that Jerusalem was still in danger without a wall, he was very sad. God helped the king to trust Nehemiah, who sent him to Jerusalem to help his people rebuild the wall. Nehemiah inspected the walls secretly one night. Then he spoke with the people, “Come on. Let’s rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. God is helping us.” So they began to work. It wasn’t easy, but the people rebuilt the wall in just fifty-two days! That’s amazing. And because the walls were finished so quickly, all the other nations around Jerusalem realized that God had helped them finish the work. God had completed what He promised the prophet Jeremiah so many years before.

**Review:**

Let’s review what you have learned. Who would like to retell the story? (Ask your group if anything was left out or told inaccurately.) Would anyone else like to retell the story?

Does God keep His promises? (Yes!) Can God be trusted? (Yes!) Is there ever a time when we should wonder if something is too big for God to handle? (No.) Why is that? (God can change what kings think and plan.) Well, if God can change the thoughts and plans of kings, do you think He can do the same for us? I think so, too.

So anytime we feel like we want to know more about God, where does that thought come from? It comes from God wanting us to know more about Him. He pulls us closer to Him by making us think about Him and wonder what He’s like. All of that comes from Him. Have you been thinking about God lately? If you have, it’s because God wants you to know Him. If you already know Him and are following Him, He wants you to know Him better.

Does God like it when we do bad things? (No.) Have you done bad things? (Yes. Me, too. Everybody has.) So how do we get to be okay with God if we do the things He tells us not to? The first step is to come to Him believing that He sent His Only Son to die for you, for the punishment of your sins. Accept Him. And if you already know and follow Him, you can follow the advice of Ezra. “Admit to the Lord that you have sinned. Tell the God of your people what you have done. Then do what he wants you to do.”

**Planning for Next Week**  
**Lesson 26 • The Silence is Broken**  
**Luke 1:26-38**

# PRESCHOOL LESSON

**SING:** “O, How I Love Jesus”

**SHARE:** God was ready to send His people back home after being carried away to faraway places. It was time to rebuild. So God made the king want to let them go.

A long time ago, when the evil king came in to carry off the people of God to another place, he burned down the temple and the wall that surrounded the city. But they were important and needed to be rebuilt. They needed a place to worship God. Without a wall, they wouldn't be safe. The people were excited. They started the temple first.

They stopped building for a while. The people began building houses for themselves. God told them they shouldn't have left the temple unfinished. The people knew what they needed to do. They got back to work on the temple of God and they completed it! Then they had a special service and dedicated it to God. They sang songs to God, too.

God spoke to them again. He warned them about other things they were doing that were disobedient to Him. Ezra, a teacher, prayed for them. He told God, “We've been bad. We've been sinning against you for a long time. We've sinned so much that if you could stack them all up, our sins would reach up to heaven. We deserve everything that has happened to us, but you, O God, are faithful. You are with us. You are holy and you always do what is right.” The people agreed and Ezra told them, “Admit to the Lord that you have sinned. Tell the God of your people what you have done. Then do what he wants you to do.” So they did. They told God about their sins. And then they made things right. They quit doing the bad things they had done before.

What a wonderful thing, the temple had finally been rebuilt and the people were obeying God! But the city wall was still just a pile of rocks. God was ready to use another of His prophets, Nehemiah. Nehemiah's family had stayed in Persia instead of returning to Jerusalem. Nehemiah worked for the king, but he cared about Jerusalem. He heard that Jerusalem was in danger without a wall, he was very sad. God helped the king to trust Nehemiah. The king sent him to Jerusalem to help his people rebuild the wall. Nehemiah inspected the walls secretly one night. Then he spoke with the people, “Come on. Let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. God is helping us.” So they began to work. It wasn't easy, but the people rebuilt the wall in just fifty-two days! That's amazing. And because the walls were finished so quickly, all the other people around Jerusalem realized that God had helped them finish the work. God had completed what He promised so many years before.

**PRAY:** Thank you, God, for doing what you say you will do.

# LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Memory Verse Activity - Cut stone shapes out of various colors of construction paper. Cut them in a way that they will fit together as a wall. Print the verse, in order, across your stone wall. Jumble the stones together and encourage your students to rebuild the Memory Verse Wall, as Nehemiah and the others rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem.
- Make play dough. Encourage your students to form walls and stones from it.
- Provide blocks. Encourage your students to build with them.
- Make a spinner craft. Draw the temple on one circle and workers on another. Attach them, blank sides together, with one picture upside down, doubling string through the circles. Twist the string round and round. Let it go and watch the workers rebuild the temple.
- Encourage your students to clean up and make small repairs in your Bible study place.
- Encourage older students to write articles or journals chronicling the progress of workers as they rebuild the temple and wall.