



God Reveals His Goodness to the Jews

Ezra 7–10



LESSON GOAL

Students will repent when they see God's goodness and their sin.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- List ways God revealed His goodness to Ezra.
- Describe the Jews' sin in the Promised Land.
- List God's attributes found in Ezra's prayer.
- Explain why some Jews divorced their wives.

KEY VERSE

"O LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!" (Ezra 9:15).

APPLICATION

- Study God's Word, obey God's Word, and then teach God's Word.
- Praise God for the blessings He gives.
- Admit your guilt before God.
- After confessing your sin, change your actions.

NEXT WEEK

God Uses Esther to Protect the Jews
Read Esther.

Symbol Key



Craft



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



2 Grade Level

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Introduction

Because of God’s grace toward His people Israel, He brought the first wave of exiles back to the Promised Land. He blessed those exiles with the generosity of emperors, protected them in the presence of opposition, and encouraged them by sending His prophets Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 1–6). When the temple was finished, the Israelites were able to worship God joyfully at His temple. God had not finished blessing Israel. Nearly 30 years after the finishing of the temple, another group of exiles returned to Israel. God was again pouring out His goodness upon Israel. But unlike so many times in Israel’s history, the Israelites responded to God’s goodness with repentance. Readers today should have the same response (Rom. 2:4).

God Gives a Teacher of the Law (Ezra 7:1–10)

Although Ezra 7–8 records nearly two chapters of God’s goodness to Israel, Ezra 7:1–10 provides a summary of that goodness through introducing the scribe Ezra. Ezra is first introduced by the genealogy in Ezra 7:1–5. Ezra was in the Aaronic family but was not a high priest. Instead, he was “a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses” (7:6). As a scribe, Ezra had the job of studying, interpreting, and teaching God’s Law to the people of Israel. Ezra described the Law as that “which the LORD God of Israel had given” (7:6). God not only gave the gracious gift of His revelation to the people of Israel, but He also gave scribes such as Ezra to teach them the Law.

Ezra is described as having “the hand of the LORD his God upon him” (7:6, 9). By His power, the Lord has the ability to do anything He wishes. When the Lord’s hand is upon somebody, God sovereignly directs His omnipotence to accomplish what is good for that person. Because God’s hand was upon Ezra, King Artaxerxes (who reigned over the Persian empire from 464–423 B.C.) “granted him all his request” (7:6). Although the text is not specific, Artaxerxes’ letter in 7:11–26 probably is a response to Ezra’s request. God’s hand was also the reason that Ezra and his entourage entered Jerusalem safely (7:7–9). Ezra 7:10 tells the reason for the Lord’s blessing upon Ezra’s endeavors: “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.” Ezra was committed to understanding, implementing, and expositing God’s commands. His faithfulness not only to study, but also to obey and to teach resulted in God blessing his efforts. God’s grace in giving Israel a scribe like Ezra eventually led to the beautification of the temple (Ezra 7:27) and the repentance of the Israelites (Ezra 9–10).

God Gives Blessings from the King (Ezra 7:11–28)

In his letter to “Ezra the priest, a scribe of the Law of the God of heaven,”

Artaxerxes gave Israel an unbelievable list of blessings. The letter most likely was written in response to the requests presented by Ezra (Ezra 7:6) and perhaps was even drafted by Ezra, which would explain the king's knowledge of the Law, the priests, and the sacrifices. In the letter, the king gave permission for any Jews who wanted to return to Jerusalem to do so (7:13). The king and his counselors also sent silver and gold as an offering to the God of Israel (7:15). In addition to this money, the returning exiles could bring with them their own money or money offered by Jews who stayed in Babylon (7:16). The king was concerned that temple worship be done according to God's Law. To that end, he provided money for offerings and articles for temple service (7:17–19). Not only did the king send money with Ezra, but he also instructed his treasurers to give Ezra whatever he needed for either the journey or to fulfill "whatever is commanded by the God of heaven" regarding "the house of the God of heaven" (7:21–23). The king's blank check would allow Ezra up to "one hundred talents of silver" (nearly four tons!) as well as wheat, wine, oil, and salt. The king's favor also included freeing any priests or temple workers from taxation (7:24). Ezra praised God, who had "put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem" (7:27). The king had another purpose for sending Ezra besides advancing temple worship and thus escaping God's wrath (7:23). Artaxerxes also sent Ezra to "inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the Law of your God" (7:14). Ezra was sent to see whether the Jews in Jerusalem were obeying God's Law. The king commanded Ezra to place over Jerusalem officials "who know the laws of your God" and to "teach those who do not know them" (7:25). The king also gave Ezra the right to punish those who disobeyed the Law. In His desire for the obedience of His people, the Lord moved the world's most powerful king to sponsor the teaching and enforcing of God's Law among God's people.

God Gives a Desire to Return (Ezra 8:1–20)

Although the king had given the Jews freedom to return, the majority decided to remain in Babylon. Only about 1,500 males returned to the Promised Land (18:1–14). (Along with their families, maybe as many as 7,000–8,000 Jews returned.) When the Jews had assembled and camped for three days, Ezra discovered that none of the Levites were there (18:15). Ezra collected the Israelite leaders and sent them to Casiphia to bring "servants for the house of our God" (18:16–17). Ezra apparently was concerned that he would go to the temple and not find enough Levites to handle the increased population. Without Levites, the Israelites could not obey God's Law. In response to the call, 38 Levites and 220 temple servants (Nethinim) joined the exiles (18:18–20). Ezra rejoiced that the Levites and servants had been given "by the good hand of God upon us" (18:18).

God Gives Protection to the Entourage (Ezra 8:21–36)

If the Jews were going to arrive safely in Babylon, they would need the Lord's protection. The Israelite entourage was weakened by the presence of helpless children and precious metals (Ezra 8:21). The Jews needed to transport and protect over 25 tons of silver, almost four tons of silver articles, and almost four tons of gold (8:25–27). Although the entourage was large, the possibility of such massive rewards would be tempting to many. Ezra was "ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen" because he had already confessed to the king that "the hand of God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him" (8:22–23). Instead of asking the king for help, the Israelites fasted and humbled themselves before God, looking to Him alone for guidance (8:21) and protection (8:23) along the trip.

The Lord heard the Jews' prayer and brought them safely to Jerusalem. After the short delay caused by sending for the Levites and by fasting, the Jews left on "the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem." Once again Ezra said, "The hand of our God was upon us" (8:31). Because of God's hand, the Jews escaped

enemies and ambushes along the way (8:31) and arrived in Jerusalem “on the first day of the fifth month” (7:9). The Lord had protected not only their lives, but also the gold. Before leaving Babylon, Ezra had divided the treasure into 12 portions and given each portion to a separate priest (8:24–30). When they arrived in Jerusalem, the money was recollected and weighed at the temple (8:31–34). (Apparently every priest had faithfully guarded the wealth entrusted to him.) Having been brought safely by God to the temple, the exiles were able to offer sacrifices again (8:35).

Israel Confesses Sin (Ezra 9)

God had graciously given Ezra to teach the Law to the Jews in Jerusalem. Perhaps it was Ezra’s teaching of the Law that led the leaders to come to him and confess their sins four months after his arrival (Ezra 9:1; 10:9). The leaders told Ezra that instead of separating themselves from the “abominations” (most likely referring to the idolatry) of the surrounding nations, they had chosen to marry women from those nations. All levels of Jewish society had been involved in this sin, including both the priests and Levites, and especially the leaders and rulers (9:1–2). Such intermarriage between the “holy seed”—the descendants of Abraham—and the pagan nations was a direct violation of God’s Law (Ex. 34:10–17; Deut. 7:1–5). Like King Solomon (1 Kings 11), Israel always followed their foreign wives into idolatry. The Israelites had just recently returned from exile, but they already were engaging in the sins that had led to that punishment.

Ezra was devastated when he heard of the wickedness. His inner anguish was visibly expressed by the tearing of his robes and plucking out of some of his hair and beard (Ezra 9:3). The Lord had been gracious to bring Israel back to the Promised Land, but Israel had responded to His grace with blatant disregard of His Law. All those who “trembled at the words of the God of Israel” realized that Israel was facing judgment for this wickedness. They joined Ezra, who sat “astonished until the evening sacrifice” (9:4).

When the evening sacrifice arrived, Ezra represented the people in confession before God. Ezra began his prayer by humbling himself before God by falling on his knees and spreading out his hands to the Lord (Ezra 9:5). Ezra identified with the people in their wickedness as he confessed to God, “Our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens” (9:6). Although God had left Israel a remnant and had shown grace to the exiles (9:8–9), they were as guilty as their ancestors who had been exiled for their wickedness (9:7). In his confession, Ezra named the specific way in which Israel had offended God’s holiness (9:10–12). As he reflected on God’s mercy in not treating the Israelites as they deserved but bringing them back from exile, Ezra asked in shock, “Should we again break Your commandments, and join in marriage with the people committing these abominations?” (9:13–14). Ezra did not even ask for mercy, realizing that Israel deserved to be completely wiped out (9:14). Instead, he proclaimed that God is righteous and that guilty Israel was unworthy of standing before such a God (9:15). If the Lord had mercy on Israel, it would be only because of who He is and not because of who they were.

Israel Changes Actions (Ezra 10)

Ezra was joined in his confession, weeping, and bowing down by an assembly of Israelite men, women, and children who wept bitterly (Ezra 10:1). Although they did not know how God would punish their wickedness, the people knew that God is gracious to those who repent (10:2). This hope encouraged the Israelites to make a covenant with God to obey His Law by divorcing their wives and sending away the children who came from these marriages (10:3). Because of their sinful choices, Israel had to choose what least offended God’s holiness, either being

married to pagan women or divorcing their wives, both of which God hates. The people followed the advice of Ezra to put away these wives and vowed to follow through with this commitment (10:5). Ezra still felt the weight of the people's wickedness and continued to fast and mourn. Although the people were committed to repentance, the fact of their sin would leave painful scars. Three days later, the people of Israel assembled to fulfill their covenant (Ezra 10:7–11). Ezra commanded them "to make confession to the LORD God of your fathers, and do His will" by separating themselves from their pagan wives (10:11). Because it was raining and there were so many people, the people asked to meet back in their cities and be judged by the elders of the cities "until the fierce wrath of our God is turned away" (10:14). For three months (from the first of the tenth month to the first of the next year), disobedient Israelites were judged in their cities by the elders, who decided how best to proceed in each situation (10:16–17). (Ezra 10:18–44 lists 113 Jews who had taken pagan wives.)

Conclusion

God's kindness to Israel is shocking. At the same time that the first group of exiles was engaging in intermarriage with pagans, God's hand was leading a second wave back. God blessed Israel by moving Artaxerxes to grant Ezra's request to provide gold and silver for the temple and to enable Ezra to go back and teach the Law to the people. While the Israelites were dishonoring God, God was blessing them with opportunities to worship Him just as He desired. The people responded rightly to God's grace by confessing their sins and repenting of their wickedness. God's goodness led them to repentance. As saints today contemplate how God's hand has been upon them, they should join the Israelites in repenting of unconfessed sin. Ezra's prayer and attitude and the people's action are an example to believers of how they should repent of their sin.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth"
(Psalm 78:1).

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

How did God keep His promise to Israel?

In Jeremiah, the Lord promised Israel that He would return them to their home, the Promised Land.

How did God achieve the rebuilding of the temple?

God stirred the hearts of the exiles to return and rebuild and the hearts of pagan kings to give materials and money in order that the temple might be built.

How did the people show their right heart before the Lord?

The people desired to worship God the right way. Once they were in their cities, they gathered and worshiped God as He required. Then they began to rebuild the temple.

What did the people do when the foundation of the temple was built?
When the foundation was built, the people joyfully worshiped the Lord.

Who discouraged the Israelites from rebuilding the temple?
The Samaritans.

Whom did God send to the people to encourage them to continue building?
God sent Haggai and Zechariah to tell the people that they needed to continue construction of the temple.

How did God have mercy on Israel?
God allowed the people to worship at the temple again.



Read, Obey, and Teach

As the students arrive, pull small groups aside and show them three cards: one should say, “Read God’s Word,” another should say, “Do God’s Word,” and the third should say, “Teach God’s Word.” Have the students take turns guessing what order the three cards should go in. Then read them Ezra 7:10, which gives the order as: read, obey, and teach. Explain that we cannot teach God’s Word until we obey it, and we cannot obey it until we know what it says. Explain that there is another step as well: we must prepare our hearts before we read God’s Word. We will never want to read it, or be able to obey it or teach it, if our hearts are not prepared. Our hearts must be prepared by humbly repenting of our sins and trusting Jesus as Savior.



Walk with the Wise

Tell the students a story about a boy who desired to obey his parents but found obedience increasingly difficult as he spent more time with friends who did not care about obedience. Add as many details as you think will make the story interesting. (You may even want to tell a story from your own childhood.) Ask the students why the boy found it hard to obey. Read and explain Proverbs 13:20: “Whoever walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.” Tell the students that in today’s lesson, the Israelites have chosen for their closest friends—their wives—people who worshiped idols. Ask the students how they think that affected the Israelites’ obedience to God.



Repentance

Repentance is a concept that is easier to understand than to carry out! Repentance is turning away from sin and to God. It is putting off sin and putting on righteousness. It is a change of mind that results in a change of behavior. Repentance involves realizing your sin, confessing it, and replacing it. The term can refer to turning from individual sins or initially turning from sin as a whole (which occurs at salvation; Acts 11:18). A U-turn sign could be a good visual representation of this concept. You also could let the students pretend to be soldiers marching in one direction when you suddenly give the command for an “about face.” In today’s lesson, Israel gives us a good picture of true repentance. Ask the students if they can name some sins they have repented of.



God Is Good

“Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4). This week’s lesson undoubtedly provides the perfect example of this truth. While Israel



remained unfaithful, God remained good, and the result was Israel's repentance. God's goodness flows out of His own unchanging nature and is therefore not dependent on the worthiness of the recipients. Have some children hold up a variety of textured and colored boards and direct a flashlight onto each one individually. The flashlight lights up each one, irrespective of shape, color or size. In the same way, once God has directed His goodness toward someone, he will enjoy its light, irrespective of his own deficiencies. God's goodness is uniquely displayed in the sacrifice of His son and is uniquely directed toward those who are in His Son (Rom. 5:8–10). Do not miss this opportunity to challenge the children to respond to God's goodness in repentance and faith in Christ.

Guilty as Charged

Israel had been exiled for breaking God's covenant laws. They were guilty, they were charged, and they were disciplined accordingly. It is important for the children to realize that guilt before the law does not require one to feel "guilty." There are also necessary penalties and consequences for breaking God's law. Although a convicted criminal may be sorry for what he has done, he must still pay the necessary penalty. This week's lesson finds Israel again guilty of the same crimes they committed before the exile. Even though they were repentant, they still had to deal with the difficult consequences of their sin. You could reinforce this concept with the children by assigning specific "laws" for the class for the morning. The class could then be divided into groups (e.g., boys vs. girls), to see which team is most guilty. Appropriate penalties can be allocated to each law (e.g., talking = -5 points; shouting out = -7 points, etc.). At the end of class, you can explain that both groups are still guilty of breaking the law, even though one group did better than the other.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done" (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Introduction

God is perfectly just, and He disciplines man for sin, but He also is merciful and gives men time to repent of their sins and be restored to a right relationship with Him again. In today's lesson the Jews realized that they had sinned before God. They realized this when they heard God's Word and what His holy standards are. God's kindness and grace are amazing. Let's see in what ways God was merciful to the Jews and even blessed them.



Leadoff Questions

LOQ: Whom did God give to the Israelites to teach them the Law?

Answer: God gave them scribes such as Ezra to teach and interpret the Law.

LOQ: Who helped Ezra to arrive in Jerusalem safely?

Answer: King Artaxerxes helped Ezra by granting his requests because the hand of the Lord was on him. Because God can do anything He wishes, He has the power to direct every man's steps.

LOQ: Why did the Lord bless what Ezra was doing?

Answer: Ezra was committed to understanding God's commands and teaching them to Israel. He was faithful not only to study God's Word, but also to obey and to teach it. God blessed Ezra for obeying Him.

LOQ: What did the king give to Ezra and the Jews?

Answer: The king gave permission to any Jew who wanted to return to Jerusalem. He also gave silver and gold as an offering to God, money for offerings, and articles for temple service. He instructed the treasurers to give Ezra whatever he needed for the journey or to supply whatever was needed.

LOQ: Why did the king give all these things to Israel?

Answer: The king gave gold and silver to Israel because God put it into his heart to do so.

LOQ: What else did the king give to Ezra?

Answer: The king sent Ezra to Jerusalem to make sure that the Jews were obeying God's Law. The king even gave Ezra the power to discipline those who did not obey God's Law.

LOQ: How did God bring the Jews back to the Promised Land?

Answer: The Jews were given freedom to return to the Promised Land, and a small number (7,000–8,000) returned.

LOQ: Who was missing from the group, and why were they important?

Answer: Once Ezra and the Jews assembled, Ezra realized that there were no Levites in the group. Without the Levites, the Jews would not be able to worship as God had instructed them.

LOQ: How did Ezra find Levites?

Answer: Ezra spoke to Israel's leaders and sent them to find Levites to join them. Thirty-eight Levites and 220 temple servants joined the exile.

LOQ: Was it dangerous for this group of Israelites to travel to Jerusalem?

Answer: Yes, and they would need to be protected by the Lord as they traveled. They were vulnerable to attack because of the weakness of the children and the value of the silver and gold they were carrying.

LOQ: How did the Jews find protection for the journey?

Answer: Ezra did not want to ask the king for help because he had told him that the hand of the Lord was on them. Instead, the Jews fasted and prayed to God for protection.

LOQ: Did the Jews arrive safely in Jerusalem?

Answer: Yes. Because of God's hand, the Jews escaped their enemies and ambushes along the way (8:31) and arrived in Jerusalem safely.

LOQ: What did the people do after Ezra read to them and taught them the Law?

Answer: The people realized their sin, confessed it, and repented of it.

LOQ: What had the people done that they knew was against God's Law?

Answer: They had married women from the surrounding nations. This was a direct violation of God's Law. Because of the marriage with foreign wives, many Jewish men and women had followed the gods of the surrounding nations.

LOQ: What did Ezra do when he heard what the people had done?

Answer: Ezra was very upset, and he tore his clothes and pulled out some of his hair and beard. The people knew that there would be judgment for their wickedness.

LOQ: What did Ezra do at the evening sacrifice?

Answer: Ezra confessed the sins of the people before the Lord. He knew that God had been gracious to the people, but they had sinned against God in return. Ezra confessed the sins of the people before the Lord.

LOQ: What did Israel do because of their sin?

Answer: The people confessed their sins and wept bitterly before the Lord. They showed their repentance by divorcing their foreign wives.

LOQ: How did God respond to the people's sin?

Answer: God was merciful to the people for their sin. He even blessed them by sending a second wave of exiles and gold and silver for the temple. He also blessed them with the opportunity to worship Him as He desired.

Summary

God blessed Israel by giving them Ezra to teach and explain the Law. After arriving in Jerusalem, Ezra began to read the Law to the people. In time, the people realized that they had sinned. They had transgressed the Lord's instructions and were devastated by their sin. They repented of their sins and committed to obey the Lord. They would begin this through correcting what they had done. In Exodus and Deuteronomy the people were forbidden to intermarry with other nations. But Israel had disobeyed this command. They had married wives of the surrounding nations. They put away their pagan wives by divorcing them. God was gracious to them and did not punish them as their sins deserved.

Application

God's graciousness to Israel is amazing. He brought a group of Jews back to the Promised Land and blessed them with all that they needed. They had been given a gift from God and then had sinned against Him. Ezra began to read and explain the Law to the people. The people realized their sins and confessed them before the Lord. Believers today should study God's Word and should check that their lives are obedient to what God commands.



Presentation Ideas

A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



Act It Out

Teachers and students can act out today's lesson. The first scene is the conversation between Ezra and King Artaxerxes. The king "writes" a letter, which Ezra reads to the class. Ezra explains all the things that the king is giving to Israel. In the second scene, some students can be recruited as Jews to return to Israel. Ezra and the Jews walk around the classroom as they journey to Jerusalem. In the third scene, Israel has arrived in Jerusalem, and Ezra teaches them the Law. The people realize that they have sinned against God's Word. Ezra is very sad to hear of their sin. The people confess their sin before God and repent of it. Ezra can close the story by explaining that the people learned of their sin through God's Word. They wanted to be obedient to God, so they repented of the sin that they had done. God showed His lovingkindness to Ezra and Israel as He provided a way for them to return to Jerusalem and to worship Him.



How Was God Good?

As you teach the lesson, highlight the ways in which God was good to Ezra and the Israelites. Note these events on the board. Discuss with the students how God moved people to desire to do particular things so that His plan was accomplished.



Is It Right to Do Wrong to Do Right?

This lesson may raise a question: Why were the people of Israel told to divorce their wives, since divorce is wrong? Divorce is wrong, and God hates divorce. It should be avoided at all costs. But the Israelites' marriages to foreign women were causing them to commit adultery with foreign gods. So in this specific situation, God told them to separate themselves by divorcing their foreign wives.

Praise and Worship

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Give Thanks

God Is So Good

I Will Delight (In the Law of the Lord)

Lord, I Lift Your Name on High

Praise Him, All Ye Little Children

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

The B-I-B-L-E

Trust and Obey

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



"God's Good Hand"

Materials: copies of the "God's Good Hand" craft pages, scissors, glue, crayons

Directions: Give each student a copy of the craft pages. Have the students cut out the hands and glue them together, back to back. Then they should cut out the tabs under the "On Ezra" heading and glue one tab to each finger on the side that says "God's Good Hand to Ezra." Next, they should cut out the tabs under the "On Me" heading and glue them to the other side. Help the students to think of a specific, personal way in which God has blessed them and then write it in the space provided.



"Ezra's Example"

Materials: copies of the "Ezra's Example" craft page, scissors, crayons

Directions: Give each student a copy of the craft page, and instruct him to cut along the solid line to detach the bottom portion and then cut out the Ten Commandments strip. Direct the students to cut along the two slits underneath the words "God's Law." Then they can insert the Ten Commandments strip through the slits, pulling it up or down to read the commandments.



"God's Goodness"

Materials: copies of "God's Goodness" craft pages, scissors, crayons, tape

Directions: Have the students cut out the square and then cut it into four triangles. Help them tape the triangles over the words "Rejoice! Give Thanks, Repent," reforming the square and creating four flaps that, when lifted up, will reveal the words.



"God's Goodness to the Jews"

Use this work sheet to reinforce the key truths of today's lesson. The work sheet is located at the back of the lesson.



Journal Page: "Confessing Sin"

Give each student a copy of the journal page at the back of this lesson. The students can complete the page individually, in small groups, or at home.

Coloring Pages

Give each student the coloring sheets from the back of the lesson. Students can color the pages in class or at home.



MEMORY VERSE

"For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10).

God's Good Hand



**God's Good
Hand on Ezra
and Israel**
Ezra 7-8

God's Good Hand



**God's Good
Hand on Me**

God's Good Hand

On Ezra



God gives a teacher.

God gives Israel freedom to go.



God gives money from a king.



God gives heads of families to lead.



God gives protection.

On Me



Sunday school teachers



Parents to teach me



Freedom to worship in America



My own Bible

God has shown His good hand to me by...

God's Goodness

In Ezra 7–10, we learned that God gave many gifts to Israel as they returned from captivity to rebuild the temple.

How should we respond to
God's goodness?

As the Israelites did, we should...

Rejoice!

Give Thanks

Repent

God's Goodness

God gave provision (Ezra 7:15-18; 8:26-27).

God gave fathers to lead the families (Ezra 8:1).

God gave teachers (Ezra 7:6-10).

God gave the Israelites protection (Ezra 8:21-23).

Ezra's Example

of what we should do with...

God's Law

1

Study

2

Obey

3

Teach

Ten Commandments
One God
No Idols
Do Not Swear
Keep the Sabbath
Obey Parents
Do Not Murder
Reject Immorality
Do Not Steal
Do Not Lie
Do Not Covet

God's Goodness to the Jews



Ezra 7-10

Name _____

1. Ezra 7:6 says that Ezra was skilled in the Law of _____.
2. Ezra had prepared his heart to _____. (Circle the correct answer[s].)
seek God's Law do God's Law
teach God's Law
3. Who gave the people guidance on their trip from Babylon to Jerusalem? _____
4. True or False: The people sinned by marrying pagan women. _____
5. True or False: The people tried to hide their sin from God. _____
6. Ezra told the people to _____ their sin and to _____ themselves from pagan wives (10:11).
7. Did the people choose to honor God by obeying Ezra? _____

Confessing Sin

“O LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!”
(Ezra 9:15).

If you are a Christian, do you know why it is important for you to choose Christian friends? Christians encourage one another to do what pleases God. Friends who do not fear God will not obey Him, and they will encourage you to disobey Him, too. That’s why God told the Israelites not to marry those who worshiped false gods. He knew they would turn the hearts of the Israelites after their false gods.

In today’s lesson, Ezra, who worships God, helps the Israelites realize that they have sinned by ignoring God’s goodness and marrying those who worship idols. In the following word search, find the words **praying**, **confessing**, **weeping**, and **bowing**, which explain how the Israelites feel when they realize they have sinned.

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

Is that how you feel when you realize that you have sinned?

Confessing Sin

“O LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!”
—Ezra 9:15

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J G H E I M S Y G U
N G N I W O B I C B
Q G J I V S V N N M
Y Y U R J E A G S G

Is that how you feel when you realize that you have sinned?

What does the Bible mean when it tells you to confess your sins and repent?

In Romans 2:4, we are told that the goodness of God leads us to repentance. Do you think it is wise to respond to God's goodness by asking Him for forgiveness?

PRAYER

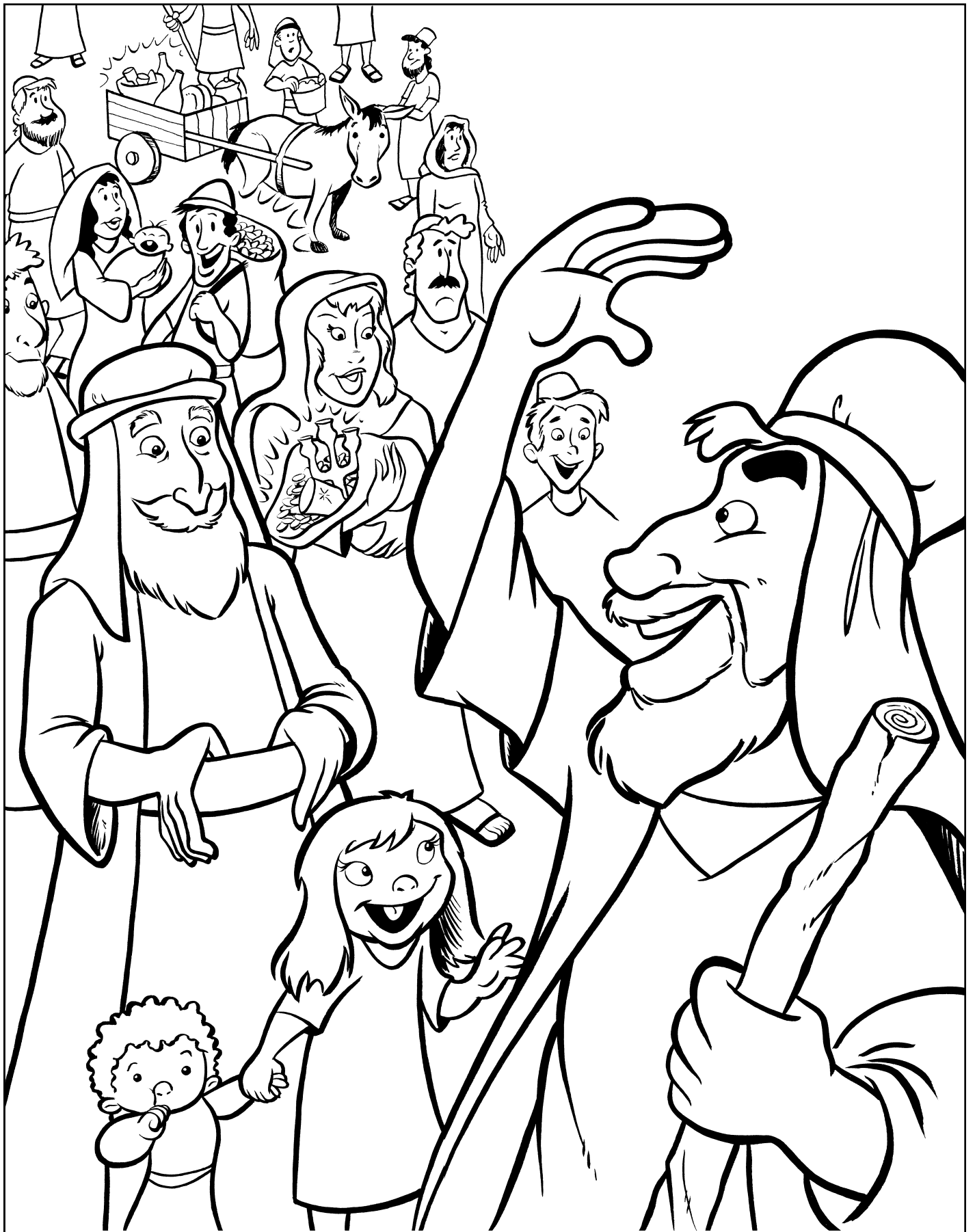
In the space below, write a prayer asking God to forgive you and thanking Him for his loving kindness, which leads you to repentance:

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Ezra and the Jews returned to Jerusalem with gifts from King Artaxerxes (Ezra 7–8).



The leaders of Israel gathered to confess their sin (Ezra 9:1-2).

