

THE PEOPLE WORSHIPED GOD

Nehemiah 7-13



After Ezra read the law, the people gathered together. They fasted, wore sackcloth, and put dust on their heads. They confessed their sins, read from the book of the law of the Lord, and worshiped all day. The Levites led the people in a prayer, saying:

“Blessed be your name, God. You are the only God. You created the heavens with all their stars, the earth and all that is in it, the seas and all that is in them.”

As they prayed, the people remembered how God chose Abram and changed his name to Abraham. God made a covenant with Abraham and gave the Promised Land to his descendants. God kept His promise because He is righteous.

The people also praised God for rescuing His people from slavery in Egypt. God parted the Red Sea and led His people by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God came down to His people at Mount Sinai and gave them His good commands. All through their wilderness journey, God provided for His people and told them to go to the Promised Land. In the people’s prayer, they remembered how their ancestors did not obey God. Their ancestors made idols and forgot God’s works. But God did not leave them. He is forgiving, gracious, slow to

anger, and abounding in faithful love.

God’s people prayed: “You gave our ancestors the land, giving them victory over the people who lived there. But they were disobedient and ignored your prophets. So, you handed them over to your enemies, who oppressed them. But in your compassion, you did not destroy or abandon your people.”

Then the people said, “Here we are today, slaves in the land you gave our ancestors. We are in trouble.” The people recognized they needed God, and so they promised to follow the law of God and to obey all His commands. Then the leaders and some of the people stayed in Jerusalem, and everyone else went to live in the nearby cities. Later, the people gathered to dedicate the wall around Jerusalem. They celebrated with music and gave thanks to God. Then God’s law was read to the people, and they were reminded to keep His commands.

Christ Connection: God’s people remembered all He had done, and they promised to be faithful. God is gracious and compassionate. All along, God has been faithful to people who are unfaithful. We experience God’s grace and compassion in Jesus, who gave His life so we can receive mercy and life forever.



1 WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen 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.

- **How do you respond when someone shows you something you are doing wrong?**
- **Do you feel upset, offended, sad? How do you usually respond?**

2 SESSION STARTER

OPTION 1: DON'T FORGET



Lead kids to form a circle. Prompt kids to think about a word that describes them that also corresponds to the first letter of their name. For example, “Matthew” and “marvelous” or “Jessica” and “joyous.” Choose one kid to share his name and the descriptive word by saying, “I’m [name], and I’m [descriptive word].” Challenge the next kid to say the kid’s name before her and his descriptive word along with her name and her descriptive word. This process will repeat for each additional kid, until the last kid in the circle repeats all the names and words before him as well as his own. Offer hints as needed.

SAY “Was it challenging to remember everyone’s names and descriptive words? [Allow responses.] Today, we will see how God’s people were called to remember all God had done for them. Remembering God’s faithfulness encouraged them to trust Him and depend on Him. We’ll see that **GOD’S PEOPLE CONFESSED THEIR SIN AND PROMISED TO FAITHFULLY OBEY HIM.**”

OPTION 2: FAITHFUL ALWAYS

Form kids into groups of three or four and provide each group with a Bible, pen, and paper. Write the following events on one side of a dry erase board: God called Abraham, God parted the Red Sea, God gave His people the law, God provided manna in the wilderness, God gave His people the Promised Land, God dwelt among His people in the temple. Then on the other side of the dry erase board, write the following Bible references: Judges 2:1; Genesis 12:1; 1 Kings 8:11; Deuteronomy 8:3; Exodus 31:18; Exodus 14:15-16.

Challenge groups to look up the references and match them to the correct description. Then review the answers. (God called Abraham, Genesis 12:1; God parted the Red Sea, Exodus 14:15-16; God gave His people the law, Exodus 31:18; God provided manna in the wilderness, Deuteronomy 8:3; God gave His people the Promised Land, Judges 2:1; God dwelt among His people in the temple, 1 Kings 8:11)

SAY “God is faithful. All throughout the Bible, God kept His promises—even though His people were unfaithful and disobedient. Today, we’ll see how God’s people remembered His faithfulness and worshiped Him.”



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about how the people worshiped God after Ezra read the law to them. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read from Nehemiah 7–13.

•What does this story teach us about God?

What did the people remember about God's character? Look at Nehemiah 9:17. God is forgiving, compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in faithful love. His people did not earn or deserve His faithfulness. But God will remain true to His promises, and He always acts for His glory. God's faithful character is unchanging.

•What did the people do after they listened to God's law?

God's people confessed their sin and promised to faithfully obey Him. They experienced His mercy and faithfulness, and it motivated them to obey God. If we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful to forgive us and make us clean. Even while we were lost in our sin, God sent Jesus as our Savior. Through Jesus, we can experience God's mercy and find the grace we need to obey Him.

Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

God's people remembered all He had done, and they promised to be faithful. God is gracious and compassionate. All along, God has been faithful to people who are unfaithful. We experience God's grace and compassion in Jesus, who gave His life so we can receive mercy and life forever.

2 MISSIONS MOMENT

Remind kids that Brian Bowman is the pastor of Valley Life Church in Phoenix, Arizona. Share how he and his wife, Brooke, desire Valley Life to be a church that reaches people with the hope of the gospel by starting more churches. Tell kids that Valley Life Church has faced some difficulties over the years, including a few robberies and damage to the church building. Despite these challenges, Pastor Brian Bowman and the church members continue their mission of starting new churches. Valley Life Church wants to start many small neighborhood churches across the Phoenix area. Valley Life Church trains every person who is interested in being a church leader so they can be ready to start new churches and disciple new members. Valley Life Church wants everyone to use their gifts—whether it be hospitality, music, teaching kids, providing acts of service, and so forth—to help more people know about Jesus. Pray, thanking God for Valley Life Church and leaders who are starting new churches to help more people know about God's love through His Son, Jesus.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

GOSPEL DISCUSSION

All along, God has been faithful to people who are unfaithful. God loves us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to be our Savior. God is full of mercy and grace and is ready to forgive our sins. When we trust in Jesus, we experience God’s grace and receive forgiveness. Have you confessed your sins and trusted in Jesus?

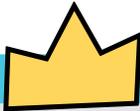
4 PRAY

Lord, we confess our sin, knowing we have fallen short of Your perfection. We ask You for forgiveness because of Your mercy and grace shown to us through Jesus. Help us obey You and worship You with all we say and do. Amen.

THE GOSPEL

GOD’S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news—the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.

				
GOD RULES	WE SINNED	GOD PROVIDED	JESUS GIVES	WE RESPOND
Ask: “Who is in charge at home?” Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.	Ask: “Have you ever done something wrong?” Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.	Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.	Ask: “What is the best gift you’ve ever received?” Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.	Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: “Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus.” Read Romans 10:9-10.



THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

1 THINK ABOUT THE STORY

- **How do we know we love God? How do we know we're going to heaven?**
- **God loved us before we ever loved Him. How has God proved His love for you?**

2 GROUP DISCUSSION

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Nehemiah 9. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 9:33.

Remind preteens that the people recognized that God was right to judge them and their ancestors for their sinful disobedience. God's people did not deserve His mercy and forgiveness. Yet, because He is faithful to His promises, He did not abandon them. Even when His people sinned, God remained faithful because He had chosen them to be the family through whom the Messiah would come. And God kept His promise! Like Israel, we sin and need a Savior. God sent Jesus to save us from our sin. Choose another volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 9:33 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. Why is it important to learn and remember what God has done?

Tell kids that as we read about God's character and actions in the Bible, we begin to learn more about who He is and how He loves, cares, and provides for His people. Not only does this lead us to praise Him and look at our lives with thankfulness, but it also helps us when we face hard times. Knowing God is always faithful gives us courage, hope, and endurance as we live for Him.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Deut. 31:7-8.)

2. Why is it important for us to confess our sins to God?

Remind kids that before we can respond to Jesus as Savior we must first see our need for Jesus. Explain that when we confess our sins, we are recognizing how we have sinned against God and need Him to save us from our sin. We repent of sin and trust in Jesus to be saved. Share how we continue to confess sin because we are admitting our continual need of Jesus and asking Him to help us grow in holiness.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 John 1:10.)

3. The people promised to obey God's commands after remembering all He had done for them. What is one way you can show obedience to God this week?

Answers will vary. Discuss how we don't obey God to earn forgiveness. Our obedience shows that we love God and have been saved. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 John 5:2.)

BIG PICTURE QUESTION

What is the Bible about?
The Bible is the story of God's plan
to save people through Jesus.



THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

1 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to John 20:31. Lead them in reading the key passage aloud together. Tell preteens that the whole Bible reminds us that God planned to send Jesus into the world to save sinful people. When we trust in Jesus, we receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Say the key passage aloud but replace a word with an incorrect word, such as “life” with “strife.” Challenge kids to raise their hand and share the correct word. Repeat as time allows.

2 PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking God for His faithfulness to care for His people and for sending Jesus as our Savior.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Provide each kid with a piece of paper and markers. Prompt kids to think about God’s faithfulness to His people, even when they disobeyed Him. Guide kids to think about ways God has been faithful to them. Then direct kids to draw a picture of how God has shown His faithfulness to them, such as through answered prayer, salvation, meeting a specific need, or helping them with a certain situation. Invite kids to share their pictures and express gratitude for all God has done for them.

Remind kids that God is always faithful. He was faithful to His people in the Bible, and He is faithful to His people today. Over and over again, the Bible tells us to remember God’s faithfulness because it encourages us to keep trusting Him and remain thankful for all He has done. Most of all, we can thank God for how He was faithful to send Jesus into the world to save people from sin.