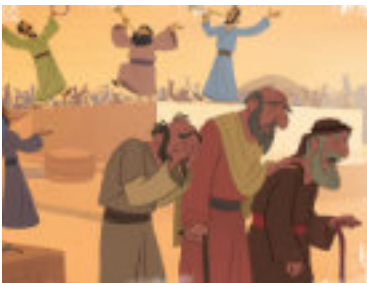


UPPER ELEM Flight Plan

October 25th



Lesson	The Captives Come Home
Bible Passage	Ezra 1-3
Story Point	God kept His promise to bring His people home.
Key Passage	“The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9
Big Picture Q & A	How did God plan to fix what sin broke? God planned to send the Messiah to save sinners.



leader bible study

God's people had been living in Babylon for 70 years. Some of God's people had died in Babylon. Some of their children and grandchildren were born in Babylon and grew up there. But Babylon was not their home.

Before the people of Judah were exiled, God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah. These are the words of the Lord: "These nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years" (Jer. 25:11). Then the Lord said, "When seventy years for Babylon are complete, I will attend to you and will confirm my promise concerning you to restore you to this place" (Jer. 29:10). The time had come for God's people to go back home.

Cyrus, the king of the Persian empire, had overthrown Babylon. Cyrus took over the kingdom, including the lands of Israel and Judah. In the following year, the Lord did something miraculous in Cyrus's heart. He prompted Cyrus to issue a decree: All the Jewish exiles are free to return to their ancestral homes.

The exile was over! God's people were free to return to their own land. They were free to live as God's special people. The first group of Judean exiles returned home under the leadership of Zerubbabel (zuh RUHB uh buhl). Zerubbabel was the grandson of King Jehoiachin, who had been taken to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. (See 2 Kings 24:8-13.)

Ezra 2:64-65 says nearly 50,000 people traveled back to Judah. When they got to Jerusalem, they began working to rebuild the temple that the Chaldeans had destroyed. (See 2 Chron. 36:19.)

Explain to kids that the temple was the place where God met with His people. Jesus came to earth to rescue God's people from sin. When Jesus returns, He will restore the earth and will dwell with His people forever



Gospel—Centered Preparation:

The heart of preparation is rooted in your understanding of the gospel and your personal application of the story.

After your study ask yourself:

- How do the verse and Big Picture Question connect to this story?
- What am I excited to teach from this passage?
- The main point this week is: _____
- Where is the gospel in this story?

October Focus: A Nation Divided



OCT 4th: The Kingdom Divided *1 Kings 11-12*

Story point: God divided Israel into two Kingdoms because Solomon sinned.



OCT 11th: Israel and Judah Taken Captive

2 Kings 17 & 2 Chronicles 36

Story Point: Israel ignored God's prophets and was captured. Judah didn't listen to God's warning.



OCT 18th: Ezekiel Gave Hope *Revelation 4-6*

Story Point: All people and creatures will worship Jesus.



OCT 25th: The Captives Came Home

Ezra 1-3

Story Point: God kept His promise to bring His People home.



Co-Pilot—Included Preparation:

On a Sunday morning, the Pilot is leading everyone in our ongoing journey to Jesus— that includes both flyers and Co-Pilots! The more consistency and continuity we have between Pilots, the better we can prepare our helpers to succeed and grow! With that consistency comes the mentorship aspect for our youth volunteers in particular, and utilizing our adult co-pilots as well: sharing activities, engaging them in the morning, and encouraging their involvement.

As you prepare for the lesson, ask yourself:

- **Does my planning allow for Co-Pilot participation throughout the morning?**
- **How did I prepare my Co-Pilot to help with classroom management?**
- **What specific activities will my Co-Pilot assist with today?**
- **In what ways can I encourage my Co-Pilot?**

Engagement

- Sit with child during the story
- Playing alongside flyers
- Reengage chatty/distracted kids
- Ask to volunteer an example during discussion
- Help play to Co-Pilot's strengths

Activities

- Attendance stickers
- Timeline
- Joining in the verse and BPQ&A
- Assigned to a specific flyer
- Helping find books in the Bible
- Leading crafts & songs

Encouragement

- Thank you for stepping in there!
- You did a great job with _____.
- You really helped me while I was _____.
- Thank you for being _____'s buddy today.
- Your help really made this morning go smoothly.
- _____ was the right thing to do. You handled it well!
- I'm so glad you are here today!

Sunday Morning Flight Plan



Take Off

- Open in Prayer
- Hook
- BPO and A & Key Passage
- Timeline & Introduce Story

10 Min

Journey

- Attendance & Bible Sticker
- Bible Story
- God's Attributes

15 Min

Flight Lab

- Experience of the Bible Story
(Make connections through an activity & motion)

15 Min

Pilot's Log

- Pray
- Calm activity during pick-up
- Give activity sheets to parents as they pick up students

5 Min

PICK UP:

First Service:
Around 9:45

Second Service:
Around 11:45



10 min Take Off

Celebrate being here! Introduce the morning.

Open in Prayer

Hook

As kids arrive, ask them what is the farthest they have traveled from home. Where did they go? What was it like being so far away?

Big Picture Question

As we get into our story, we need to set up a big picture question. This question will help us focus on a specific lesson we can learn from the various stories we will study over the next few weeks. **How did God plan to fix what sin broke?** *These next few weeks we will see how sin breaks apart the Nation of Israel—the nation God built up from Abraham’s one son and talk through the answer: **God planned to send the Messiah to save sinners.***

Key Passage

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together **2 Peter 3:9**. At times, it may feel like the whole world is only getting worse and worse. Israel may have wondered; when will the Messiah come? We may wonder, when will Jesus come back? Our key passage is a beautiful reminder that God is faithful. He isn’t wasting time, He is patiently waiting so more people have opportunities to turn from sin and trust in Jesus!

Timeline/Introduce Bible Story:

The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah told God’s people that because they repeatedly disobeyed God they would be sent into exile. Exile is when someone is forced to leave his or her country and move somewhere else. God’s people were sent into exile to Babylon. Jeremiah also prophesied that the exile would only last for 70 years. At the end of those 70 years, it was finally time for God’s people to return to their homeland.

Transition to Bible Story: (OPTIONAL) Show the Bible Story Video.



15 Min Journey

Where we travel into God's word

Bible Story

Open your Bible to **Ezra 1-3** Read from the Bible or use the story example to help you tell the story. Wrap up with the insights below.

Have you ever felt disappointed when something didn't turn out like you thought it should? There were so many feelings and emotions in this story! Some people were excited because they were getting to go home and celebrate God's keeping His promises. Some people were nervous because they were traveling to a place they had never seen but had heard stories about for years and years. God's people had started to rebuild the temple. When the people finished the foundation, they celebrated. But some of the older people, who had seen the temple that Solomon had built, cried. Why do you think they cried? [Allow kids to respond.] I'm sure it was sad to think about the beautiful temple that had been torn down. They had memories of how their home used to be, but it no longer looked the same. Sin has consequences. The Israelites had endured 70 years of consequences for their sin. God kept His promise to bring His people home.



Zerubbabel led God's people back to the temple to rebuild it. The temple was the place where God met with His people on earth. Jesus came to earth to rescue God's people. One day Jesus will return to restore a greater home for all of God's people, and we will spend eternity with Him.

Age Appropriate Story

STORY POINT: GOD KEPT HIS PROMISE TO BRING HIS PEOPLE HOME.

Cyrus, king of Persia, had taken over Babylon. Cyrus said, "Let all of God's people go back to Jerusalem so they can rebuild the Lord's temple." The exile was over! God's people were free to go back to their homes.

Zerubbabel and the high priest led God's people back to Judah. They settled in their hometowns and set up their houses. Then the people met together in Jerusalem to rebuild the Lord's temple.

First, the priests rebuilt the altar. When the altar was finished, they offered burnt offerings to God.

Then God's people gave money to stonecutters and carpenters who would work on God's temple. They paid people to bring cedar logs to Jerusalem. They laid the foundation of the temple.

When the foundation was finished, the priests put on special clothes, and the people praised God.

Not everyone was happy though. Some of the older people remembered what the temple had looked like 70 years ago, before it had been destroyed. They cried. The noise of the crying and shouting was so loud that the people could be heard far away.

Christ Connection: Zerubbabel led God's people back to the temple to rebuild it. The temple was the place where God met with His people on earth. Jesus came to earth to rescue God's people. One day Jesus will return to restore a greater home for all of God's people, and we will spend eternity with Him.



Discussion & Bible Skills

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Ezra 1–3. Explain that the Book of Ezra is in the Old Testament. No one knows for certain who wrote it, but some believe it was the scholar and scribe named Ezra. The events in this book happened between 450 and 500 years before Jesus was born. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ezra 3:11. Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What promise did God keep for His people?

Prompt kids to recall that God kept His promise to bring His people home. God spoke this promise to the prophet Jeremiah more than 70 years before the exile. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Jer. 29:10.) God also used the prophet Isaiah to tell of King Cyrus coming to help His people. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Isaiah 45:4-5)

What movement-based activity can I use?



2. How do we know we can trust God to keep His promises?

Point out that over and over again, God not only makes promises, but He keeps them. Many of us make promises but are guilty of not keeping our promises. God isn't like us. He is always faithful. We can put our trust in Him. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 10:23.)

3. Will you trust God when things don't make sense? Why?

Emphasize that there will be times in kids' lives when things just don't make sense. They may not know why something happened or didn't happen. Remind kids that God's Word tells us to trust Him and not lean on our own understanding. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Prov. 3:5-6.)

God's attributes- helping the children understand what God is like, shown to us in the Bible. In today's story we see that God is:

- HOLY - PROVIDER

Travel Guide:

Use the travel guide for maps, charts, etc... as useful with helping the children learn and understand today's story.



15 min Flight Lab

Instill Wonder as you experience the Bible
CHOOSE ONE ACTIVITY

Ongoing Object Lesson for the Temple

Not necessary, but could be a powerful way to make the connections of the lessons this month: Have the children work together to build a temple out of sugar cubes. Keep this temple for the next few weeks and incorporate it into future lessons as you find helpful:

Oct 4th: Solomon Built the Temple

Give each child a cotton ball and have them stretch it out without breaking it. Have them add their cotton to the temple to show how God's glory filled the temple when it was dedicated.

Have the kids draw on little pieces of paper, or cover very small objects with gold paper. Tuck these treasures in the temple.

Oct 11th: The Kingdom Divided

When the kingdom split, the temple in Jerusalem was part of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Ask the kids to consider where the Northern Kingdom would go to worship.

Oct 18th: Israel & Judah Taken Captive

Take the treasures out of the temple then destroy it by knocking it down, pouring hot water over it, etc.

Oct 25th: The Captives Come Home

Have the kids rebuild the temple, but do not provide as many or as nice of resources. Highlight how rebuilding was a bittersweet thing for the people of Israel.

Build a Tower

Provide a variety of building materials and invite the kids to form groups of two or three kids to work together to build a tower. Help them experiment with different foundations for their towers. Give the groups a chance to present their towers to the rest of the class.

- For any building to stand tall and strong, it must have a solid foundation. Today our story is about God's people's return to the land God had given them. Not only did they return, but they also set out to rebuild the destroyed temple. Today we'll hear that they began by building a strong foundation.

Roll Lumber

Form two teams of kids and instruct them to line up on one side of the room. On the opposite side, place two piles of pool noodles, one per team. When you say go, the first kid from each team will race to the pile of noodles, grab a noodle, and roll it back to her team. Then the second kid on each team will do the same. The first team to get all their noodles to their side wins

- The Israelites paid the people in Lebanon for lumber to rebuild God's temple. The people had to work hard to get all the necessary building materials, but they knew that the work was worth it. They were desperate to have a place to worship God. Thankfully, we no longer need to go to a temple to worship God. Because Jesus died on the cross for our sins, we can worship God anywhere. The Holy Spirit lives inside of believers, so in a way, our bodies are the temples!

Treasure Hunt

Prior to the session hide play money or gold-colored plastic coins around the room. During the session, encourage the kids to search the room to find the treasures. Once kids find all the objects, invite them to return to the center of the room.

- We heard a special story today about how God's people returned home from living in a foreign country for 70 years! We will hear that the people of Babylon gave God's people gold and silver coins, as well as other gifts, when they went home.



5 min Pilot's log

Where we prepare to depart.

Pray:

If time, share prayer requests and allow kids to record in the **prayer journal section of their Travel Guide.**

ALWAYS CLOSE THE MORNING WITH PRAYER.

This is how we model incorporating prayer into their lives.

Waiting for parents/Activity Page:

Tie back into the lesson, remind them of the Big Picture Question/verse, etc...

Be sure to **re-set expectations on what their choices are while waiting for mom and dad:**

- Activity page
- Key Passage Activity (See next page for list of options)
- Coloring page
- Gospel Kit Activities
- Anything quiet at the tables you are ok with (*origami, free draw on blank paper, hangman game at white board, putting Book of the Bible cards in order, etc....*)

Be sure that the Co-Pilots hand out the Activity sheet to each child or to parents so they can go home with families.

Key Passage Review Extra Ideas:

Invite kids to sit around tables. Give each kid a pencil. Show the key passage poster and lead them to read it aloud.

Give a piece of paper to one kid at each table. Instruct him to write down the first word of the key passage and pass the paper to the person on his right. That person will write down the second word, pass the paper to her right, and so on. Kids will pass the paper around the table, writing one word at a time until they finish the key passage. When kids finish, invite groups one at a time to say the key passage together.

Display the key passage poster. Lead the kids to read it aloud. Then challenge them to read it in various ways: whispering, shouting, quickly, slowly, and so on.

Form two groups of kids. Call on the first group to say the key passage together. Then call on the second group to say it.

Prompt the first group to say the passage a few phrases at a time, pausing for the second group to echo. When kids finish saying the key passage, lead the second group to begin and the first group to echo.

Instruct kids to sit or stand in a circle. Choose one kid to begin by saying the first word of the key passage. Guide kids to say the key passage, one word at a time, moving around the circle.

Allow kids to look at the key passage poster if they need help remembering the words. Continue around the circle a few times. Consider shouting, "Switch!" and letting kids move to another place in the circle before playing again. *Or toss the ball to different kids rather than go in order.*

Before the session, write out the key passage on a chalkboard or dry erase board in eight separate phrases. Display the phrases where kids can see them. Give each kid a marker and eight craft sticks. Instruct kids to copy from the board, writing each phrase on a separate stick. Then instruct kids to mix up their sticks and then quickly rearrange the phrases in the correct order. Kids may work individually or in pairs. Provide rubber bands for kids to bundle their sticks and keep them as a method of practicing the key passage during the week.

Prayer Extra Ideas:

Prayer Chain—In small groups, ask children/co-pilot to write prayer requests on a few paper strips. Connect paper strips into a chain and display our growing conversation to the Lord. Feel free to revisit older requests as well.

Painted Rocks—Have each child choose a painted rock to write on. Write a word of encouragement, a word about Jesus, a name, etc. The goal is to take it with them and place it somewhere near their typical living space—a neighbor's house, a store, a playground, etc. Then pray over the place or the people who are there.

Pointing to a Map—Choose one or two kiddos to spin/close their eyes/find a certain color (you can be creative and have fun) and point to a country on the map. Place a pin in the place(s) and pray over it as a group. Even if you don't know anything about the country, we can lift up the people, pray for Jesus' light to shine there, the Gospel to be active there, and churches to grow, etc.

Looking out the Window—Grab a dry erase marker, have the kids gather at the windows, and look outside. Ask the children to look for 3 things they can see out of the window to pray over. Using the dry erase marker, write those things on the window (Pre-K & K may draw things) and then pray over those things. Feel free to leave them on the window, so whenever we look through, those things are brought to our mind to pray for again.

Head Shoulders Knees and Toes—Pray through the song.

- Head (mind, imagination, thoughts, creativity)
- Shoulders (physical strength, things we might be dealing with)
- Knees (dancing, playing, jumping, etc.)
- Toes (walking and following after Jesus, standing strong in our faith)
- Eyes, ears, mouth & nose (seeing goodness, listening to Him, speaking truthful words, our senses, etc.)

Preschool Carpet Bag Prayers— Choose an item(s) out of the carpet bag. Discuss the item and different people/things the item could represent (car—driving safely, mechanics, trips, first responders, etc) Encourage kids to “think outside the bag” and help them make connections. Pray over the people, places, and things that were discussed.

You're
ready
for
Sunday!



