


the
Jesus 
Storybook
Bible
Curriculum

Get ready!

God's people return from being slaves, from Nehemiah 8–10; Malachi 1, 3, 4; Ezra 7

☉ Please see the curriculum Introduction .pdf for more guidance on praying with your group and on Scripture memory.

☉ The total allotted time per lesson is 45 minutes. This is the minimum amount of time it would take to complete the whole lesson. The time can easily be extended to increase the lesson to as much as 1.5 hours. If you have more than the allocated 45 minutes, please use the extra time to extend the time for activities, to learn the memory verse, and to pray.

☉ The “Notes for Teachers on the Text” section is intended as explanation of the Bible text and advance preparation for you only; it is not expressed in terms or language the children could understand.

The Jesus Storybook Bible Curriculum
By Sally Lloyd-Jones and Sam Shammas

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The “Notes for Teachers on the Text” were written and developed from material by Timothy Keller and Redeemer Presbyterian Church and are used by special permission.

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Recap of the Previous Story

3 min. 

☉ Welcome the children and ask them to sit in a circle.

☉ Briefly recap the main point of the previous story: “Last time we met Jonah and heard that God sent Jonah to Nineveh because even though the people of Nineveh had run away from God, God still loved them. We also memorized some words that Jonah prayed.”

☉ Ask them to recite together the verse they learned at home about the story. “Jonah 2:9 — ‘Salvation comes from the LORD.’”

☉ To lead into the theme of today’s story, say: “Today we are reading our last story from the Old Testament. So this is a good time to remind ourselves of some things we’ve discovered from the Old Testament.”

Activity Introducing the Story

10 min. 

Aim: To expend energy and practice the names of the books of the Old Testament in order.

Materials: 39 large cards with the name of a book of the Old Testament written/printed on each.

1. Say: “Remember these cards? Each card has the name of a book of the Old Testament on it. But they are not in the correct order.”

2. Put the cards upside down in a pile in the center of the circle, making sure the cards are not in the correct order.

3. Say: “We need to get them in order, starting with Genesis and ending with Malachi. I need a volunteer to go first. Thank you. You will run to the center of the circle, pick up the card at the top of the pile, and read the name aloud. If it is the correct card, everyone will repeat the name aloud and you can take the card back to your place. If it is the wrong card, we will all remain silent, and you will leave the card on the floor in the center and go back to your place.”

4. Say: “Then the next person in the circle goes up. You can collect a card from the top of the pile or one of the ones left behind by the people before you. We must try and find the correct order as fast as possible. Remember, the correct card may already be on the floor. Ready?”

5. Start the game. Make sure that when a “wrong” card gets left in the center of the circle, it is right-side up so others can see what is written on it. You may find that many cards have to be taken off the pile and left on the floor before the correct card is found. This is part of the game. Keep reminding the children that the correct card may already be on the floor.

6. Prompt them as necessary to help them remember the order. When all the cards have been picked up, say: “I’m going to stand in the center of the circle. Please come and hand me the cards in order. Say the name on your card as you run up. Let’s see how fast we can do this.”

7. Put the cards away. If you learned a song about this, now would be a good time to sing it again.

8. At the end of the activity, say: “We’ve come to the end of our stories from those 39 books. Today is our last story from the Old Testament.”

For larger groups: You may want to divide the group into smaller circles, each with a teacher and a set of cards. This way the children are taking turns more often.

Story Time

7 min. 

Join the children in the circle and announce the title of the story. Read aloud pages 170–175 from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* or listen to CD2 track 7.

Notes for Teachers on the Text

Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi ministered to the exiles who had returned to the Promised Land after being captive to the Babylonians. Their books describe how the exiles are trying to rebuild their lives, their city, and their nation. They also encouraged the exiles by revealing to them that their sovereign God was continuing his redemptive work and reestablishing true worship among them.

Israel was brought into their original covenant relationship with God at Mount Sinai in Exodus 19–20. There they were formed as God’s people and called to live in a particular way in the world. However, whenever the people faced a major new chapter in their journey, they were led through a season of covenant renewal: in Joshua 24, before they entered the Promised Land; in 1 Samuel 12, before they took a king; and here in Nehemiah 8–9, as they returned from the Babylonian exile. These times of covenant renewal had three parts to them. First, the people returned to biblical texts in order to remember the things God had called them to do and be. Second, they looked forward to the next chapter, to the new challenges they faced. Third, they rededicated their lives and resources to God for the next stage of the journey.

The Word of God became a moving force in the midst of the exiles. The reading of the Law revealed to them that they were perishing and unable to recover themselves. The law made them feel morally helpless. They realized not simply that they were sinners, but prisoners of sin, helpless to free or cure themselves.

This is the purpose of the law: it shows us that we do not just “fall short” of God’s will, but that we are completely under sin’s power. Because we cannot obey the law, it shows us our need for salvation by grace. It even indicates our need to move beyond rewards and punishments into a motivation of gratitude and love toward God as the basis for our obedience.

So the law continually emphasizes that we need a righteousness, a power, a love for God beyond ourselves and beyond the law. In other words, the law leads us toward recognition of our need for salvation by grace.

Understanding the Story

15 min. 

Aim: To understand that the rules do not save us, God saves us.

Materials: Crayons; copies of the handout (the last page of this document).

1. At the end of the story, say: “That is the end of our stories from the Old Testament. Next time we will start the New Testament where, as our story said, ‘The true party will begin.’ But first let’s bring the Old Testament to an end by playing a game of frozen sculptures.”
2. Explain the game (you have played this game before, but it is always good to repeat the rules): You will call out a scene from the story. Then you will all quickly share ideas about what people, actions, or feelings might be shown in the frozen sculpture. You will announce the scene again and everyone will take positions as characters in that scene. You will call out “Freeze.” They will hold that sculpture for 5 seconds. You will say, “Unfreeze,” they will sit down, and you will announce the next scene until the whole story has been told.

STORY	FROZEN SCULPTURE
<p>God’s people had forgotten how God wanted them to live. So Ezra and Nehemiah read them the rules God had given Moses.</p>	<p>Say: “Everyone in the circle, you are God’s people. I need volunteers to be Ezra and Nehemiah. Please stand in the center of the circle.”</p> <p>Ask: “What are Ezra and Nehemiah doing in this scene? Correct, they are reading aloud all the rules God had given the people, including the Ten Commandments.”</p> <p>Say: “The people are listening to Ezra and Nehemiah. Everyone in the circle, are you ready to be frozen listeners?”</p> <p>Announce the scene again; ask everyone to form the sculpture. Ask them to freeze for 5 seconds; then say, “Unfreeze,” and announce the next scene.</p>
<p>The more the people listened as Ezra and Nehemiah read the rules, the sadder they got. The rules showed that they had not been living the way they should. “Now God will punish us!” they cried.</p>	<p>Say: “Everyone in the circle, you are God’s people. I need two new volunteers to be Ezra and Nehemiah. Please stand in the center of the circle.”</p> <p>Say: “Ezra and Nehemiah are doing the same thing; they are reading aloud the rules. But what are the people doing in this scene? How are they different? Yes, they knew they had not obeyed God and that they were sinners, so they are sad and crying. Ready?”</p> <p>Announce the scene again; ask everyone to form the sculpture. Ask them to freeze for 5 seconds; then say, “Unfreeze,” and announce the next scene.</p>

STORY	FROZEN SCULPTURE
<p>But then Ezra started to tell them stories about the wonderful things God had done for his people. The people listened to stories of how God had rescued them over and over again. And they remembered that God had told them that the Rescuer is coming. They remembered that it is not the rules that save them, but God that saves them. So Ezra shouted, "We're having a party." And they did.</p>	<p>Ask: "Who can remember some of the stories of how God rescued his people? Yes, God rescued them from being slaves in Egypt, God made walls in the sea so they could cross and escape Pharaoh's army, and so on. God rescued his people over and over again."</p> <p>Say: "Everyone in the circle, you are God's people. I need a volunteer to be Ezra. Please stand in the center of the circle."</p> <p>Ask: "What are Ezra and God's people doing? Yes, having a party because of all the amazing things God had done for them and because it is not the rules that save them, but God that saves them. I wonder how good you are at looking like you are at a party! Ready?"</p> <p>Announce the scene again; ask everyone to stand up and form the sculpture. Ask them to freeze for 5 seconds; then say "Unfreeze," ask them to sit, and announce "The End."</p>

3. At the end of the activity, give each child a copy of the handout and a crayon. Say: "You can see on your paper a picture of the people looking at all the rules. You can also see two questions and some possible answers. I will read them to you. Circle the correct answer."

4. Read the questions and possible answers aloud, giving time for the children to circle the correct answer. Ask them what they circled, commenting appropriately.

For larger groups: You may want to divide the group into smaller circles, each with a teacher. Each teacher can then facilitate the activity with their circle; then the circles can all perform for one another.

Drawing the Story to a Close

1 min. 

Say: “When the people heard God’s rules, they realized they could not keep them; that is why they were so sad and afraid. But then they remembered that it is not the rules that save them, but God that saves them. They remembered that God had told them that the Rescuer is coming.”

Say: “We all know who that Rescuer is, right? Every story told us something about that Rescuer and soon we are going to actually meet him.”

Jesus in the Story

2 min. 

Ask: “What did we discover about Jesus from today’s story?”

Get a few children to share their answers aloud, commenting appropriately; then ask everyone to write an answer in the space on their handout.

Praying about the Story

5 min. 

Pray aloud, asking God to help you and the children to remember what you have learned from the Old Testament and thanking him that Jesus, the Rescuer, has come and he is the one who saves.

Ask the children to think of one thing they have learned about Jesus from the Old Testament and to thank God for it in prayer.

To Learn at Home

2 min. 

☉ Say: “You can see at the bottom of your paper a list of the books of the New Testament.”

☉ Recite the list together. Say: “Instead of a verse to learn at home, please learn the names of the books of the New Testament in order.”

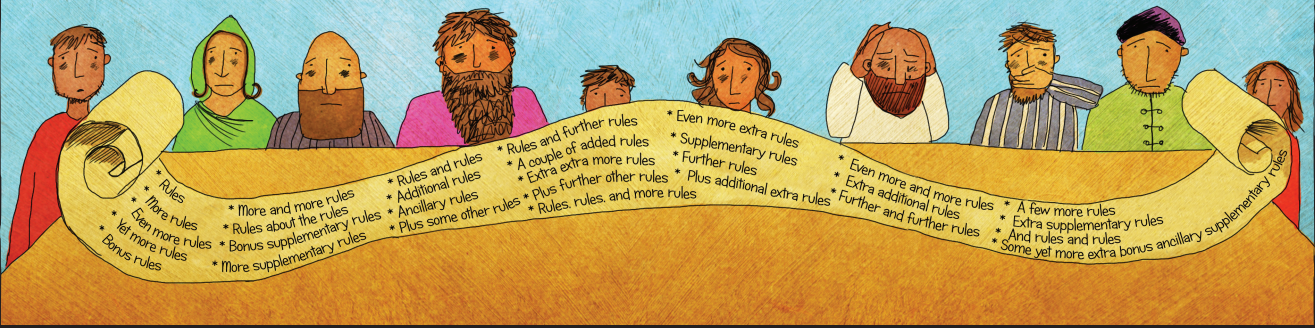
☉ Remind the children to give the handout to their parents.

God's people were ...

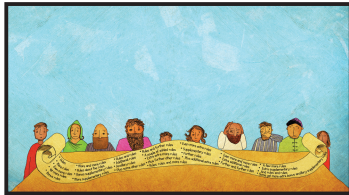
- a) ... able to keep God's rules.
- b) ... not able to keep God's rules.

God's people are saved by ...

- a) ... keeping God's rules.
- b) ... a Rescuer.



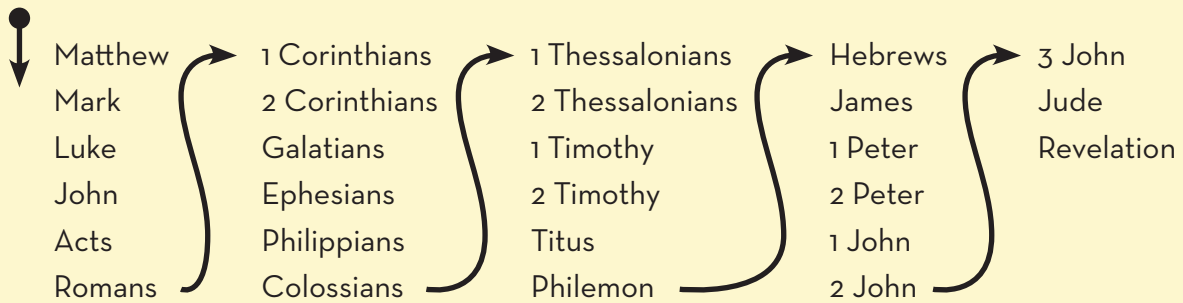
Jesus in the Story



What did you discover about Jesus from this story?

→ **Jesus**

To Learn at Home



Notes for parents: As we finished the Old Testament, we remembered how it points to God's great plan to rescue his people. God will provide a Rescuer — Jesus.

Please help your child to memorize the names and order of the books of the New Testament.