


LESSON 1: EZRA: GOD SENDS EZRA TO RESTORE GOD'S PEOPLE

Leader Guide for Ages 3-6

Classroom: Pre-K, K, 1st Grade

 Ezra 3:1-13; 7:1-10; 9:6-10:17

04/19/2020

Teachers Dig In

Dig In to the Bible

- Read: Ezra 3:1-13; 7:1-10; 9:6-10:17
- In This Passage: God preserves some of his people, the Israelites, after they spend years in exile. God lets the Israelites return to Jerusalem, where they find the Temple in ruins and rebuild it. Later, God sends Ezra to rebuild people's *hearts*. God sees our hearts, and he knows when we sin. He also knows when we're really sorry, and he can change our hearts.
- Bible Point: God sees our hearts.
- Summary Verse: "For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

Dig Deeper

- You'll Be Teaching: *God sees our hearts*. For kids, failure often feels final. This lesson is all about how God sees all the bad in our hearts—and loves us anyway. He sees the good in us, too, and he's ready to forgive us and help rebuild our hearts using the good parts.
- Think About: Describe the way you think God sees your heart.

Dig In to Prayer

- Pray that God would open kids' hearts to committing to follow him.

Quick Tip

- Even though God sees *all* the bad in our hearts, he loves us. Do you have those eyes for your kids? It can be easy to just see the bad in some kids. But God sees those kids as redeemable. Look for the good in kids' hearts. Ask God to help you see them through his eyes.

This Lesson at a Glance(**CLICK ON EACH HEADING TO GO TO EACH ACTIVITY**)



OPENING

Preschoolers share about a topic related to the lesson.

Supplies

- Bible (click [here](#))



OBJECT LESSON

Preschoolers try to make a poster using dried-out markers.

Supplies

- dried-out makers
- fresh markers
- bulletin board paper (1 large piece for every 10 kids)

Easy Prep

- Draw a big heart in the middle of a large piece of bulletin board paper.



CORE BIBLE DISCOVERY

Preschoolers build a Lego “temple,” cheer for God, and learn what it means to be close to God.

Supplies

- Bible (click [here](#))
- Legos
- red bulletin board paper
- heart stickers (1 per child)

Easy Prep

- Build a church-like structure out of Legos.
- Cut out a big heart from red bulletin board paper, and tape it to the wall.



DEEPER BIBLE

Preschoolers help make cookie dough.

Supplies

- 2 mixing bowls
- 2 wooden spoons
- small paper plates (1 per child)
- plastic spoons (1 per child)
- 1 stick butter, melted
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ¾ cup flour (see Tip below)
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- several “bad” ingredients, such as coffee grounds, banana peels, egg shells, small rocks
- wet wipes or access to a sink

Easy Prep

- Set out the 2 mixing bowls and wooden spoons. Place the butter, sugar, vanilla, flour, and chocolate chips next to 1 bowl, and place the “bad” ingredients you’ve collected next to the other bowl.



TALK-ABOUT VIDEO

Recommended for elementary kids.

Supplies

- “The Tree House” teaching video (watch or download [here](#))



MUSIC VIDEO

Preschoolers sing songs of praise to God.

Supplies

- “You Forgive Me” (watch or download [here](#))
- “The Lord Is Merciful” (Psalm 145:8) (watch or download [here](#))
- “Watching Over You” (watch or download [here](#))



CRAFT

Preschoolers work together to make a stained-glass heart.

Supplies

- contact paper cut into 18x18-inch squares (1 square for every 4 children)
- sheets of colored tissue paper (several different colors)
- 18x12-inch lengths of wax paper (2 for every 4 children)
- black permanent marker
- painter's tape

Easy Prep

- Before removing the backing paper, use a permanent marker to draw a large heart outline on each square of contact paper. Then remove the backing paper and tape the sheets of contact paper, sticky side facing out, to a table or a wall.
- Make a sample craft to show kids.



LOW-ENERGY GAME

Preschoolers try to see what's inside a cup.

Supplies

- opaque cup (1 for every 10 kids)
- medium-size box or container (1 for every 10 kids)
- wax paper (1 piece for every 10 kids)
- rubber band (1 for every 10 kids)
- various small objects

Easy Prep

- Cut a piece of wax paper that's big enough to fold in half and cover the top of the cup.
- Place the small objects in the box. Ideas include pompoms, small balls, puzzle pieces, plastic bugs, and so on.



HIGH-ENERGY GAME

Preschoolers build and knock down towers.

Supplies

Easy Prep

- hula hoops (2 for every 10 kids)
- classroom blocks
- Place hula hoops on opposite sides of the room, and put blocks inside 1 hula hoop. If you have a large class, set up 2 additional hoops for every 10 kids.



LIFE APPLICATION WRAP-UP

Preschoolers lie on their bellies like Ezra and pray for their hearts.

Supplies

- big red heart from Core Bible Discovery*
- *Friends With God Story Bible* (optional) (order [here](#))



TAKE HOME

Preschoolers receive a take-home page about the lesson.

Supplies

- this week's "Dig In @ Home" handout (1 per child) (download [here](#))

Easy Prep

- Add your church announcements to the "Dig In @ Home" handout.

**Marked supplies can be reused from Core Bible Discovery*

Let's keep kids safe! You can help by using supplies as instructed for only ages 3+, purchasing child-safe items, and being aware of allergy concerns.



OPENING

Welcome

[5 min]

Supplies

- Bible (click [here](#))

Welcome

Thank kids for coming.

Just for fun, have preschoolers give an “elbow-five” to three friends.

Make announcements.

Introduce new kids.

Celebrate birthdays by having preschoolers say “happy birthday” three times while hopping up and down.

Collect the offering.

Introduce the Lesson

Say: **Today we’ll learn that God sees our hearts. That means God knows what we’re thinking and feeling. He can tell when we’re sad, mad, or happy. And he knows all about us, like the things we love to do. Let’s start our lesson by looking around our room for things we love to play with.**

Share

Make a heart shape with your hands.



Point out that you made a heart with your hands. Then look through the heart by placing it over your eyes. Look around the room for something you like to play with, and then say: **Through this heart, I see something I love to play with.** Invite kids to guess what you're looking at, and then share what it is.

In leader-led small groups, show preschoolers how to make hearts with their hands and look through their hearts for things they love to play with. Have children guess what each child is looking at through his or her heart, and then have kids each tell what they love to play with.

After small groups have discussed, have adult or teen helpers share with the whole group what they talked about in their small groups.

Summarize

Open a Bible, and say: **God already knew what you were going to share about because God sees our hearts. Not just these hearts we made with our**

hands, but the hearts that are inside us—what make us think and feel and do. He knows everything we think, everything we do, and everything we feel. God saw the people's hearts in the Bible, too. The Bible is one way God talks to us. Let's listen to God as we hear from the Bible today.

Pray, thanking God for seeing our hearts.



OBJECT LESSON

[10 min]

The Inside

Supplies

- dried-out markers
- fresh markers
- bulletin board paper (1 large piece for every 10 kids)

Easy Prep

- Draw a big heart in the middle of a large piece of bulletin board paper.

Tip

- If you have a large class, prepare several big hearts and divide into as many small groups as you have adult or teen helpers.

Draw With Dry Markers

Say: **Let's work together to color this big heart. The heart reminds us that God sees our hearts. We want our hearts to be filled with beautiful and good things for God to see. So let's make the inside of this heart beautiful!** Place the paper and dried-out markers in the middle of a table, and encourage kids to work together to color the picture. As kids try to color, they'll notice that the markers aren't working. Welcome their reactions, and keep encouraging them to try a different marker.

Say: **None of these markers work. We couldn't tell by looking at them on the outside, but they must be dried out inside.**

Draw With Fresh Markers

Collect all the "bad" markers, and then hand out fresh ones. As kids color and draw, comment on the new markers' bright and pretty colors.

When finished, have kids put away the markers and gather around the heart poster.

Talk About It

Hold up two markers—one that works and one that doesn't work.

Say: **These markers look the same on the outside.** Draw a small heart with both. **But on the inside, one is fresh and the other is dried up.**

Ask: • **Which marker would you rather use? Why?**

Say: **Just like we can't see inside the markers, we can't see inside people's hearts, either. But God can! God sees our hearts. God knows when our hearts are**

bright and love him, and he sees when our hearts are dried up and forget about him.

Ask: • Why do you think God likes to see good things in our hearts?

Even though God sees the good and the bad in us, God loves us no matter what.



Supplies

- Bible (click [here](#))
- Legos
- red bulletin board paper
- heart stickers (1 per child)

Easy Prep

- Build a church-like structure out of Legos.
- Cut out a big heart from red bulletin board paper, and tape it to the wall.

Rebuild a Temple

Have the children sit far away from the big red heart on the wall. Show the Bible, and say: **The Bible says that God sees our hearts. God knows what we're thinking and feeling no matter what. Even when we feel angry or mean, God sees what we do, and God sees how we're feeling inside. Let's look in the Bible to learn more about that.**

There's a book in the Bible named after a man called Ezra. In the time Ezra was living, God's friends made a special place for God called a *temple*. Hold up the Lego "temple." It was kind of like a church. It was God's house. But God's friends didn't treat the temple very well. Throw the temple on the floor to destroy it.

Point to the big red heart across the room. Say: **Let's pretend that's God's big heart. For a while, God's friends, the Israelites, didn't want to talk to God or listen to him. And they didn't take care of his special house (point to the destroyed temple). But even though they walked away from doing things God's way, God could still see their hearts.**

Finally, they decided they wanted to be friends with God again. Lead kids to pick up the pieces of the destroyed temple and carry them to the heart.

Have kids sit near the heart. Say: **The Bible says the Israelites wanted to be close friends with God again, so they brought presents to God. God saw their hearts and knew the Israelites wanted to be close to him.**

Give each child a heart sticker. **Let's give God a gift, too.** Have kids stick their heart stickers to the big red heart. **God loves it when we are his friends. And God sees our hearts, so he knows when our hearts are close to him.**

Point out the broken pieces of the temple. Say: **The Bible says the Israelites didn't just give gifts to God; they also rebuilt his house, the temple.** Lead children in working together to build another temple with the Legos.

Cheer and Rejoice

Say: **After God's friends rebuilt part of God's house, they celebrated! They blew trumpets.** Show children how to make a "trumpet" by making a fist and turning your fist to the side as you put it up to your mouth. Lead the children in making a trumpet sound.

Say: **They also cheered.** Lead children in a big "yay, God!" **God could see their hearts, and he knew they were his good friends. They listened to him and they talked to him.**

Move Away and Come Back

Have the children follow you as you walk away from the big red heart, and say: **But as time went by, the Israelites walked away from God again.**

The Israelites weren't close to God anymore, but God could still see their hearts. God could see that they didn't want to talk to him or listen to him. God knew they were doing wrong things. God sees our hearts, too. God wants to be good friends with us, and he knows when we don't want to talk to him, listen to him, or make good choices. It makes God sad when he sees our hearts like that.

But there was one man who loved God. Lead the children back to the big heart. **His name was Ezra. Ezra went to God's house, and he cried. He was so sad that the Israelites had walked away from God. He lay on the ground outside God's house, shouting out to God.** Have the children lie on their stomachs near the big heart. Invite them to shout "I love you, God" while on their stomachs.

Say: **Ezra told God he was sorry for the wrong things the people had done. Soon, many of the people saw Ezra and gathered around him. Ezra helped them remember God's love for them. The Israelites decided to be God's friends again. They said sorry to God, and they promised to listen to him and make good choices. God saw their hearts, and he forgave them.**

Talk About It

Say: **God sees our hearts**, too. God knows when we're sorry, and he forgives us and loves us always. Have everyone stand near the big heart.

Say: **God sees our hearts** when we don't listen to him and we make wrong choices. Lead kids away from the heart. **But when we come back to God to say we're sorry, it makes God happy. God sees our hearts, and he forgives us.** Lead kids back to the heart.

Say: **God sees our hearts** when we choose not to share. Lead kids away from the heart. **But when we come back to God to say we're sorry, it makes God happy. God sees our hearts, and he forgives us.** Lead kids back to the heart.

Say: **God sees our hearts** when we say mean things. Lead kids away from the heart. **But when we come back to God to say we're sorry, it makes God happy. God sees our hearts, and he forgives us.** Lead kids back to the heart.

Say: **God sees our hearts** when we love and follow him. Lead kids to gather close to the big heart and touch it. **God loves us no matter what, and he wants our hearts to be close to him always.** Close in prayer, asking God to help everyone love him more and follow him. Thank God for forgiving and loving each child.



Cookie Dough Choices

Supplies

- 2 mixing bowls
- 2 wooden spoons
- small paper plates (1 per child)
- plastic spoons (1 per child)
- 1 stick butter, melted
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ¾ cup flour (see Tip below)
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- several “bad” ingredients, such as coffee grounds, banana peels, egg shells, small rocks
- wet wipes or access to a sink

Easy Prep

- Set out the 2 mixing bowls and wooden spoons. Place the butter, sugar, vanilla, flour, and chocolate chips next to 1 bowl, and place the “bad” ingredients you’ve collected next to the other bowl.

Tip

- The cookie dough recipe will make enough for about 16 preschoolers to each have a tablespoon of dough. Adjust the ingredient amounts for the number of preschoolers in your group. To ensure food safety, toast flour on a baking sheet for 5 minutes at 350 degrees, and then use it as directed.

Make Two Kinds of Dough

Say: **God saw Ezra’s heart and knew that Ezra loved God. Ezra was a good friend of God and made good choices. God sees our hearts, too. God sees the good choices we make, but also the wrong choices we make. Let’s make a snack that will remind us of the types of choices we can make.**

Have preschoolers clean their hands and then gather around the mixing bowls and ingredients. Ask children for examples of good choices (such as praying, being kind, helping a friend, obeying parents) and wrong choices (such as lying, taking something that doesn’t belong to us, hitting). For every good choice mentioned, have a

preschooler help you put a good ingredient (butter, sugar, vanilla, flour, chocolate chips—in that order) into the “good” mixing bowl.

For every wrong choice mentioned, have a preschooler help you put a bad ingredient (coffee grounds, banana peels, egg shells, rocks) into the second mixing bowl. Stir the ingredients together as you add them into each bowl. Once all of the ingredients have been added to their separate bowls, let preschoolers see the difference in the contents of each bowl and ask them which snack they’d rather eat.

Give each preschooler a spoonful of cookie dough on a paper plate, and let kids enjoy the snack.

Say: **We put yummy ingredients like sugar and chocolate chips in our cookie dough. They’re good things to add because they make cookies sweet!**

Ask: • **When you make a good choice like being kind to someone, how does that make you feel on the inside?**

Say: **When we make good choices, those good choices are like the sugar and chocolate chips in our cookie dough because they make us feel warm and happy inside.**

Ask: • **What do you think would happen to the cookie dough if we put one of the bad ingredients into it?**

Say: **Even though we make wrong choices sometimes, God still loves us. God sees our hearts and always forgives us when we say we’re sorry. God can take away the wrong things we do so that our hearts are full of only good things! God loves us so much and wants us to always stay close to him.**



Supplies

- “The Tree House” teaching video (watch or download [here](#))

Tips

- Talk-About Videos may work for preschoolers, but they’re geared more toward elementary kids. If you find that the videos aren’t hitting the mark for your preschoolers, try using the Preschool Puppet Skit activity block instead.
- Don’t have internet in your classroom? That’s okay! You can download the videos before class using the “download” button at the link provided, or just purchase this quarter’s DVD [here](#).

Discuss and Watch “The Tree House”

Say: **Today we’re learning that God sees our hearts. In the Bible, God saw the Israelites’ hearts. He saw their hearts when they made wrong choices. But he also saw how sorry they were and how much they wanted to love God.**

Let’s watch a video where a friend can see that his friends have kindness in their hearts by what they do.

Watch “The Tree House.”

Share about a time *you* did something nice for someone. Maybe you prayed with a friend, took a meal to a sick neighbor, or gave someone a ride.

Ask: • **Tell about a time you did something nice for someone, like making a gift for a friend or parent.** Kids might share about helping someone up from a fall, sharing a special treat, or inviting a friend to play when he or she was sad.

Say: **God sees our hearts when we help others out, like the boys in the video did. God loves to see when we have kindness in our hearts.**



MUSIC VIDEO

[10 min]

You Forgive Me

Supplies

- “You Forgive Me” (watch or download [here](#))
- “The Lord Is Merciful” (Psalm 145:8) (watch or download [here](#))
- “Watching Over You” (watch or download [here](#))

Sing Songs to God

Sing the three songs in any order.



CRAFT

[20 min]

Stained-Glass Heart

Supplies

- contact paper cut into 18x18-inch squares (1 square for every 4 children)
- sheets of colored tissue paper (several different colors)
- 18x12-inch lengths of wax paper (2 for every 4 children)
- black permanent marker
- painter's tape

Easy Prep

- Before removing the backing paper, use a permanent marker to draw a large heart outline on each square of contact paper. Then remove the backing paper and tape the sheets of contact paper, sticky side facing out, to a table or a wall.
- Make a sample craft to show kids.



Make Stained-Glass Hearts

Say: **God sees the good things and the not-so-good things in our hearts that no one else can see. Let's make a see-through heart craft today to help us remember that God sees our hearts.** Show preschoolers the sample craft. Explain that preschoolers will work together in groups of about four for today's craft and that the crafts will get to stay in your room as decorations.

Form groups, and have each group gather around one of the contact-paper hearts. Give groups each of few sheets of colored tissue paper, and have preschoolers rip small pieces of tissue paper to stick onto the contact paper inside the heart outline.

While preschoolers are working, talk about how the tissue paper can remind us of what's in our hearts.

Say: The pretty colors of the paper can remind us of all the good things in our hearts and the good choices we make—like helping a friend or saying sorry when we've been mean to someone. But sometimes we make wrong choices and have mean thoughts about people. The tissue-paper pieces on the hearts are jagged and not perfect. That can remind us that we don't do everything perfectly right, either. God sees our hearts—the good things in us, the not-so-good choices we make, and even thoughts we have, too.



Once preschoolers have completely filled in the heart outlines with tissue paper pieces, help each group cover the entire sheet of contact paper with two pieces of wax paper so that the sticky surface and tissue-paper hearts are completely covered. Turn the hearts over so the contact paper rather than the wax paper is in front, and hang the hearts over a window in your room, if possible.

Say: **We can see everything inside these see-through hearts. That can remind us that God sees our hearts, too.**



LOW-ENERGY GAME

[10 min]

What's Inside?

Supplies

- opaque cup (1 for every 10 kids)
- medium-size box or container (1 for every 10 kids)
- wax paper (1 piece for every 10 kids)
- rubber band (1 for every 10 kids)
- various small objects

Easy Prep

- Cut a piece of wax paper that's big enough to fold in half and cover the top of the cup.
- Place the small objects in the box. Ideas include pompoms, small balls, puzzle pieces, plastic bugs, and so on.

Gather and Build

Have kids gather around the boxes in groups of 10.

In these groups, have adult or teen helpers lead kids through the game:

Say: **Let's play a game where we'll guess what's inside this cup.** Show kids what's inside the box, and tell them those items are what they'll be looking for. With kids gathered at least 3 feet away from you, place the cup into the box, and discreetly choose three objects to place inside. You can select more than one of the same thing.

Place the wax paper over the top of the cup and secure it with a rubber band so kids can't look down into the cup. Then hold up or pass around the cup and have kids guess what's inside.

Say: **Guess what's inside the cup. What do you see?**

After kids shout out their guesses, open the cup to reveal what's inside. Be sure to count and comment on the items, pointing out beautiful colors, cool toys, or yucky bugs. Then choose a child to add three different things to the cup, and repeat the game. Continue until all kids have had a turn to add objects to the cup.

Talk About It

Say: **Seeing inside the cup wasn't easy. We didn't always know what was inside. This cup is like our hearts. People may not see inside, but God does! God sees our hearts. He sees good and bad, and he loves us so much.**



HIGH-ENERGY GAME

[10 min]

Run and Build

Supplies

- hula hoops (2 for every 10 kids)
- classroom blocks

Easy Prep

- Place hula hoops on opposite sides of the room, and put blocks inside 1 hula hoop. If you have a large class, set up 2 additional hoops for every 10 kids.

Gather and Build

Gather kids by the empty hula hoop.

Say: **In our Bible story, Ezra and God's friends built a temple for God. A temple is like a church or a house for God. It was destroyed, but God helped the people build another one. Let's play a game where we'll build a new temple, too.**

When you say "go," kids will run to get a block from the hula hoop, bring it back to the empty hoop, and work together to build a tower "temple." Kids can freely run back and forth, but they can each carry only one block at a time. Play until all the blocks are used to build a temple. Celebrate with the kids when they're done.

Say: **Ezra and the Israelites built a temple for God. They were close friends with God, and God saw how much their hearts loved him. But then they turned away from doing things God's way.**

Have kids knock over the temple, and then have them run across the room to the now-empty hula hoop. Say: **Even though the people turned away, God still saw their hearts. He wanted them to be close friends with him. Let's play again and build another temple for God!** Repeat the game, and celebrate when kids build another tower temple.

Talk About It

Say: **God's friends didn't really knock down the temple they built, but they did walk away from having God in their hearts. That means they didn't want to talk to God or listen to him. And they didn't want to be close friends with him. God saw that their hearts weren't close to him.**

Tell about a time *you* were sad because someone didn't want to be friends with you.

Ask: • **When has a friend made you sad?**

Say: **We're sad when people choose to stay away from us. But even when they make mistakes, they're still our friends. We're happy when they come close again. God sees our hearts. He knows that we love him, even when we make wrong choices. But like he loved Ezra and his friends, God loves us no matter what!**



LIFE APPLICATION WRAP-UP

[5 min]

Heart Prayers

Supplies

- big red heart from Core Bible Discovery*
- *Friends With God Story Bible* (optional) (order [here](#))

Lie Around God's Big Heart

Place the big red heart on the floor, and have the children sit around it. Say: **Today we learned that God sees our hearts. We learned about what takes us away from God's heart and what brings us close to his heart. God is our friend, and he loves us so much; so we want to be close to God's heart like Ezra was. Let's lie on our bellies like Ezra prayed on his belly and called out to God.** Lead the children to lie on their bellies with their heads near the heart. Encourage them to prop up on their elbows so they can see and touch the heart.

Pray

Say: **In the Bible, when people wanted to show God how sad or sorry they were, they would pray on their bellies like Ezra did. Let's talk to God while we're lying on our bellies, too.**

Pray: **God, thank you for loving us so much. We know you see our hearts. We're sorry for choices we make that don't show our love or trust for you. Help our hearts love you and obey you. Thank you for keeping our hearts close to you. In Jesus' name, amen.**

If you have extra time, spend some time reading today's Bible story, "Home at Last—by Ezra," from the *Friends With God Story Bible*.

Thank the kids for coming to church, and let them know how much you'd like to see them back next week.



TAKE-HOME

Dig In @ Home

[0 min]

Supplies

- this week's "Dig In @ Home" handout (1 per child) (download [here](#))

Easy Prep

- Add your church announcements to the "Dig In @ Home" handout.

Distribute a copy of the "Dig In @ Home" handout to kids as they leave, or email it to parents during the week.

The Bible in One Year, Lesson 1: Ezra: God Sends Ezra to Restore God's People, Design and base content

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