

Dayton Women in the Word  
Summer Study Children's Lessons

**EZRA & NEHEMIAH WEEK 5**

**Ezra 7-10**

Scripture: Ezra 8:23

*"So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer." (NIV)*

**MAIN TRUTH: God hears and answers our prayers.**

LESSON CONTENT:

- Last week, you learned that God talks to his people.
  - How does God talk to his people?
    - Through prophets, through the Bible, etc
    - **This week we'll talk about how we can talk back to God- that's called prayer.**
- What do you remember about what we've learned so far in Ezra?
  - The Israelites came back to Jerusalem from exile, God told them to rebuild the temple, they started rebuilding and then stopped because they were scared, then God sent prophets to encourage them to start the building again and they finished the temple!
- Today, we're going to finish the book of Ezra.
  - **Ezra was a priest who knew all about God's Word.** The Bible says that God's hand was on him (Ezra 7:6)- that means God helped things to go well in Ezra's life.
  - **Ezra devoted himself to studying the Bible, doing what it says and teaching other people about it.** That was his job as a priest and a leader of God's people.
    - *Why do we need people to teach us God's rules?*
      - *Knowing God's rules helps us to live in a way that honors him. On our own, we cannot and will not follow God's rules. We forget them and we like to make our own rules instead. So God gives us people in our lives to teach us and remind us how to live- like your moms and dads!*
  - **Ezra led a second group of people back to Jerusalem.** The king gave him everything they needed to finish up the temple and worship God there. Ezra praised God for providing for them and loving them. (Ezra 7:27-28)
  - **It was a long trip back to Jerusalem-** it took them almost four months! Before they left, Ezra realized there were not enough priests to do the temple work, so he gathered more helpers before they got back to Jerusalem. He also called for a fast before they started their journey.
    - *Do you know what a fast is?*
      - *A fast is a specific length of time when you decide not to eat so you can spend time praying, talking to God. Ezra called a fast to ask God for protection and safety on their journey, and so that the people would stay humble before God. (Staying humble means remembering that God is big and we are small.)*
  - **The Bible tells us that after Ezra and the people fasted and prayed to God,**

**God listened to their prayers!** Isn't that amazing? God hears us when we talk to him. He hears every prayer we say. He always has time to listen to us and loves to talk to us.

- God heard the prayers of his people and protected them on their trip. He kept their enemies away from them and they made it back to Jerusalem. The priests delivered the special supplies needed for the temple servants to do their work.
- **God used Ezra and his people to bring restoration and order and peace in Jerusalem.** He kept his promise of giving them everything they needed to finish the temple.
- Now remember when I said that Ezra was a priest and a leader of God's people? When God's people had problems, they came to the priests to help them solve problems (just like you might go to mom and dad when you see something wrong).
- **God's people had a big problem.** Some of the men were marrying women who worshipped idols instead of God. (*An idol is anything that we worship that is not God.*) God commanded his people not to do this because he didn't want them to be tempted to worship idols, too.
  - This news made Ezra very sad. Other people were sad about it, too. The Bible says he cried, he pulled out his hair and beard and he ripped his clothes. Other people started to join him. Just like Ezra talked to God and asked him for help on their journey, Ezra talked to God again on behalf of all his people. **Ezra led them in a prayer of confession to God.**
    - *Do you know what confession means?*
      - *Confession is admitting that you did something wrong. When we confess to God, we are telling him that we know we broke his rules. The Bible says that if we confess our sins to God, he will forgive us, because of Jesus! Jesus paid the penalty for our sins when he died on the cross.*
      - *In our lives, we will make lots of mistakes. God wants us to confess those mistakes to him and to each other. God loves us despite our mistakes and he will keep loving us forever. We don't deserve second chances from God, but because of Jesus, we get second chances every day.*
- **Ezra continued to pray and fast with his people.** God heard every single one of those prayers. Then the people ask Ezra to help them to make a new promise to God to stop marrying people who worship other gods. Ezra led them in that promise, but he was still very sad about many other people who hadn't made the promise with them.
- **So Ezra asked everyone in the whole nation of Israel to come to Jerusalem.** That's a lot of people, but they all listened to Ezra and came. They talked to God together and promised to separate themselves from idol worshippers. And the Bible says that they did what they promised to do.
- What does the story of Ezra teach us about talking to God?
  - **God hears us and answers us!**
    - He might not always give us what we want, but he always answers with what is best for us. God loves us more than anyone in the world and he loves to talk with his kids and give them what they need.

- **Praying helps our hearts to change.**
  - Our hearts are sick and when we follow our sick hearts, we don't make choices that honor God. We need new hearts that want to obey God. We can't change our own hearts, but God says he will give us new hearts that want to obey!
  - Prayer is one way that God uses to change our hearts. When the people came together to pray and ask God's forgiveness, their hearts changed. They didn't want to disobey God anymore. Prayer is a conversation with God! He talks to our hearts and helps us to change.

## **PRAYER**

- God, thank you for reminding us in the story of Ezra that you hear our prayers. We know you hear us right now! Help us to love talking to you in prayer. Thank you for sending Jesus, who made a way for us to talk directly to you! We are so grateful.

## **ACTIVITIES**

- Coloring Page
- Sponge Illustration
  - Supplies: Two dry sponges, cup of water, plate or bowl
  - Begin by showing the children one of the dry sponges. Talk about how the Israelites who were disobeying God had hard, rigid hearts like the dry sponge. Bring out the second sponge and cup of water. Explain how the water is like God, filling us up and softening our hard hearts. Talk about how praying and staying close to God through his Word fill up our sponge, and the closer we are to God, the more our sponge overflows. Explain how Ezra was like this and how his "overflowing sponge" (his example of prayer and fasting and calling the people to repentance) touched their dry sponges and influenced their relationship with God. We can do this, too! Encourage them to soak up time with God in prayer and by reading the bible.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS:**

*What is prayer?*

*A conversation between us and God.*

*What does prayer do to our hearts?*

*It changes them, makes them soft, makes them new, etc*

*Does God always give us what we want?*

*No, but he always answers and gives us what is best.*