

## The BIBLE STORY

### Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope

*Ezekiel 37*

God gave Ezekiel another vision. In this vision, God took Ezekiel to a valley. It was filled with bones. The Lord led Ezekiel through the valley. Old, dry bones covered the floor of the valley. They were scattered all over the ground. Then God asked Ezekiel, “Son of man, can these bones come to life?”

Ezekiel replied, “Lord God, only You know the answer to that question.”

God gave Ezekiel some instructions. He said, “Speak to these bones for Me. Say, ‘Dry bones, hear the Lord’s words! This is what God says to these bones: I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. I will put tendons on you, make flesh grow on you, and I will cover you with skin. I will give you breath so that you will come to life. Then you will know that I am God.’”

So Ezekiel did what God said. He began to speak to the bones. Suddenly, there was a noise—a rattling sound. Ezekiel looked around. The bones were coming together: bones to bones, tendons to bones, flesh over bones, and skin over flesh. But there was no breath in the bones.

God said, “Speak to the breath for Me. Say, ‘This is what God says: Breath, come into these bones so that they may live!’”

Ezekiel did what God said. He spoke to the breath, and the breath entered the bones. They came to life, and a vast army stood on their feet before Ezekiel.

Then God said to Ezekiel, “These bones are like My people of Israel. The people say that their bones are dry, that they have no hope. I want you to speak to them for Me.”

The people of Israel had been taken from their homes. They were living in another country and serving another king. God’s people were sad. God told Ezekiel what to say to the people of Israel. He told him to say, “This is what God says: I am going to open your graves and bring My people out of them and into the land of Israel. You will know that I am God when I bring you up out of your graves.”

God continued, “I will put My Spirit in you, and you will live. I will make your homes in your own land, and you will know that I am God.”

Another message from God came to Ezekiel. God told Ezekiel to take a stick and write on it: This stick belongs to Judah and his friends, the people of Israel. Then God told Ezekiel to take a second stick. Ezekiel wrote on the second stick: This stick belongs to Joseph and his friends, the people of Israel. The first stick represented the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and the second stick represented the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

God told Ezekiel to hold the sticks together in one hand so that they would become one single stick. Ezekiel would explain to the people what these sticks meant. God gave Ezekiel these words to say: “This is what God says: I am going to take My people out of the nations where they are living, and I will bring them into their own land. I will make them into one nation—no longer divided into two kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom.”

Then God said, “My people will not worship idols anymore and make themselves unholy. I will save them from the things that have caused them to sin, and I will make them clean. They will be My people, and I will be their God.”

God planned to give His people a new king—someone who would both rule over the people and act as their shepherd, guiding them in the ways they should go. Then the people would obey God’s laws.

“My people will live in the land I gave to their ancestors. They will live there forever. Their children will live there forever. Their children’s children will live there forever. Never again will they be taken away from their land. The prince I am sending will be their prince forever.”

God said He would make a covenant of peace with His people, and this covenant would last forever. “I will be with them,” God said. “I will be their God, and they will be My people. Then everyone will know that I am the Lord.”

*Christ Connection: God showed Ezekiel a valley of dry bones. The dry bones remind us what we are like when we sin. God had a plan for people who sin. Because Jesus came to earth, died, and was raised to life, He has the power to give us eternal life.*

## Small Group OPENING

**Session Title:** Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope

**Bible Passage:** Ezekiel 37

**Big Picture Question:** What plan did God show Ezekiel? God planned to bring His people back together in their own land and give them new life.

**Key Passage:** Ezekiel 37:27

**Unit Christ Connection:** Though it appeared that sin prevailed, the covenant God promised would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

### Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Invite kids to share about their week. Encourage every kid to share something to help the group connect with each other.

### Activity page (5 minutes)

Guide kids to find the correct path from start to finish on the activity page “Bone Match.”

**Say** • In our Bible story today, Ezekiel had another vision. This time Ezekiel saw bones, lots and lots and lots of bones. God had a special message for Ezekiel!

### Session starter (10 minutes)

#### Option 1: Puzzle challenge

Challenge kids to complete the puzzle in the next few minutes. Invite all of the kids to work together. Give the kids a set amount of time to work. At the end of the time, all work must stop.

**Say** • Did you have enough time to complete the puzzle? How many pieces did you put together? Do you have

a guess? Have you ever worked a puzzle that you could not put together without help from an adult or older family member? Sometimes we struggle to put together all of the pieces.

- Have you ever broken something that couldn't be put back together?
- In our Bible story today, God explained to Ezekiel that one day He would put the pieces of Israel and Judah back together. God loves His people, and His plan of redemption cannot be stopped.

• cotton swabs

Option: Allow kids to hide the cotton swabs.

#### Option 2: Coming back together game

Scatter cotton swabs around the room. Hide some well and make others more obvious. Keep track of the number of swabs you hide. When you give the signal, instruct kids to search the room, gathering all of the cotton swabs back together into one pile.

**Say** • In our Bible story today, Ezekiel saw some items that were scattered throughout a valley. God gave Ezekiel a special vision about those items coming back together. Can anyone guess what items Ezekiel saw? The cotton swabs might remind you of some of these items. Ezekiel saw a valley full of bones. Listen to discover what message God told Ezekiel and the Israelites through the vision of dry bones.

### Transition to large group

- “Bone Match” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils



- 500- or 1000-piece puzzle

## Large Group LEADER

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### Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

### Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• beach ball

*[Large Group Leader enters carrying a beach ball.]*

**Leader** • Hello! You came back to our wonderful island for another visit. I was getting ready to play a game of beach volleyball before you showed up. Would you like to play a game of beach volleyball? Great.

Toss the beach ball back and forth to the kids for a minute.

Hold onto the ball to end the game.

**Leader** • OK. Now I am ready to tackle today's Bible story and the timeline map and key passage and ... our big picture question.

### Big picture question (1 minute)

**Leader** • Our big picture question is, *What plan did God show Ezekiel?* God's plans are always perfect. What about our plans? Are our plans perfect? No. Sometimes we really mess things up. And other times we listen to God and follow His plan. Let's review our timeline map.

### Timeline map (1 minute)

• Timeline Map

**Leader** • I need some volunteers. When I call on you, I want you to come up and point out someone on the timeline map. Tell us a little about that person and whether or not he or she followed God's plan.

Select four or five kids. If you have extra time, select more kids to participate. Allow kids to choose whomever they want to talk about. If a kid can't decide whom to discuss, give them a couple of suggestions.

**Leader** • A lot of people have had a part in God's plan. The Bible is full of stories about God's plan of redemption. And Ezekiel is another piece of that story. Remember our big picture question is, *What plan did God show Ezekiel?*

### Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- "Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope" video
- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Bible Story Picture Slide or Poster
- Big Picture Question Slide or Poster

Tip: A Bible story script is provided at the beginning of every session. You may use it to guide you as you prepare to teach the Bible story in your own words. For a shorter version of the Bible story, read only the bolded text.

Open your Bible to Ezekiel 37 and tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope."

**Leader** • Ezekiel had really, really interesting visions. They were very unique. Can you imagine seeing a valley of dry bones come back to life? Whoa! Why did God show Ezekiel the bones coming to life? It was a message that the people of Israel were like the bones. They were without hope. They were in exile. They were in another kingdom, slaves to other people. God's message was that one day the people would return to their homeland. The people would know that God is the one true God.

The bones coming to life wasn't the only thing Ezekiel saw in his vision. God also showed Ezekiel two sticks. Ezekiel had to write on each stick. What did the two sticks represent? Yes. They represented the Israelites, the people of the Northern Kingdom and the people of the Southern Kingdom. God explained that He would bring

the people back home and unite them again. The people had been divided for many years. Then the two kingdoms were both conquered. The Israelites were exiled. God promised that one day He would bring His people back home. They would worship the one true God. They would obey God. They would be His people; He would be their God. God also promised they would have a new king.

Our big picture question is, *What plan did God show Ezekiel? God planned to bring His people back together in their own land and give them new life.*

The dry bones represented Israel when they sinned. They also help us understand what we are like when we sin. Dry bones are not God's plan for us. God's plan was to send Jesus to give us life—eternal life. In response to Jesus' work, we repent of our sin and trust in Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

### The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Using Scripture and the guide provided, explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Tell kids how they can respond, and provide counselors to speak with each kid individually. Guide counselors to use open-ended questions to allow kids to determine the direction of the conversation.

Because some kids are not comfortable responding during a large group time, encourage girls and boys to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

### Key passage (5 minutes)

**Leader** • Did you hear our key passage during today's Bible story? Our key passage is at the end of Ezekiel 37. Do I have any volunteers who want to say the key passage?

Select a couple of volunteers.

**Leader** • Great job! OK. Everybody read Ezekiel 37:27 with me. One. Two. Three.

Lead boys and girls to read the key passage. If time allows, challenge kids to say the passage without looking at the key passage. Lead kids to sing "My Dwelling Place."

### Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

**Leader** • *What plan did God show Ezekiel? God planned to bring His people back together in their own land and give them new life.* Ezekiel was given a message of hope for the Israelites. One day God would bring the people back together. Have you ever needed someone to cheer you up or remind you that you have hope? Check out this video.

Show the "Unit 18 Session 5" video.

**Leader** • Even cupcakes need hope. Someone tell me about a time you needed hope. Did someone remind you of a Scripture or about God's promise to help you?

Select a few kids to share their experiences. Invite kids to share how we can give people a message of hope by telling them about Jesus. What could they say?

### Sing (4 minutes)

**Leader** • Jesus is the source of all our hope. Stand with me and sing our theme song "Help Me Find It."

Lead girls and boys to sing "Help Me Find It."

**Leader** • *What plan did God show Ezekiel? God planned to bring His people back together in their own land and give them new life.* What plan does God have for you? God wants everyone to repent and trust in Jesus.

• "Unit 18 Session 5" discussion starter video

• "Help Me Find It" song

• Key Passage Slide or Poster  
• "My Dwelling Place" song

## Prayer (2 minutes)

**Leader** • Ezekiel had some very unique visions. God had important messages for His people in exile. Ezekiel was not the last of the prophets, and the people wouldn't always be in exile. *What plan did God show Ezekiel? God planned to bring His people back together in their own land and give them new life.*

I am going to close our time together by praying. After I pray, go with your small group leader to your small group and learn more about Ezekiel and his vision.

Close in prayer.

## Dismiss to small groups

## The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means "good news." It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

**God rules.** Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

**We sinned.** Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

**God provided.** Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

**Jesus gives.** Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

**We respond.** Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

## Small Group LEADER

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### Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- painter's tape

Guide kids to look at the key passage poster and read the passage together. Provide each kid with a piece of painter's tape. Allow two kids to place their tape over a word or two on the key passage poster. Lead kids to say the passage again. Allow two more kids to place their tape on the key passage poster. Continue this pattern until kids can say the passage with all the words covered.

- Say**
- God's people are to be an example to the world.
  - When God dwells among a people who are following and loving Him, people who do not believe in God notice. It is a witness to them of who God is.

### Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Small Group Visual Pack
- chart paper
- markers

Form two groups. Guide each group to examine Ezekiel 37:21-28 and make a list of the promises God made the Israelites. After each group finishes, compare the lists to see if one group located a promise another group missed.

- Say**
- The Israelites were without hope. They weren't sure what God's plan was. God reassured His people that He was still at work. His plan of redemption was still happening. One day He will send His Son to

rule God's people as their king. He will be with His people and everyone will know that God is the one true God.

- **What plan did God show Ezekiel? God planned to bring His people back together in their own land and give them new life.**
- What was God's plan to save people who sin? (*Jesus came to earth, died, and was raised to life. He has the power to give us eternal life.*)

Review the timeline in the small group visual pack.

If you choose to review with boys and girls how to become a Christian, explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

- **God rules.** God created and is in charge of everything. (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; Col. 1:16-17)
- **We sinned.** Since Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Rom. 3:23; 6:23)
- **God provided.** God sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. (John 3:16; Eph. 2:8-9)
- **Jesus gives.** Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again so we can be welcomed into God's family. (Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18)
- **We respond.** Believe that Jesus alone saves you. Repent. Tell God that your faith is in Jesus. (Rom. 10:9-10,13)



- tape
- marker
- craft sticks, 5 per team

### Activity choice (10 minutes)

**Option 1:** Review stick puzzle

Place five wooden craft sticks side by side. Place a piece of tape across the top and bottom of the sticks to hold them together while you write on the craft sticks. Print *Jesus has*

Option: Provide each kid with two sticks. Tape the two sticks together as a reminder of God's message to His people.

*the power to give us eternal life.* Remove the tape and mix up the craft sticks. Make another set of puzzle sticks for a second team.

Form two teams. Invite teams to take turns naming a prophet previously studied and one fact about that prophet. For each prophet and fact named, a team earns one puzzle stick.

**Say** • *What plan did God show Ezekiel? God planned to bring His people back together in their own land and give them new life.*

- Our Bible story involved two sticks. What message did God give Ezekiel about the two sticks?
- What phrase did your puzzle reveal? (*Jesus has the power to give us eternal life.*) Why does Jesus have that power? (*Because Jesus came to earth, died, and was raised to life, He has the power to give us eternal life.*)

Review the gospel plan as time allows.

### Option 2: Watercolor painting

Challenge kids to use watercolors to paint a picture.

Encourage kids to paint a “clear picture” of the image.

- Say** • Is it possible to paint a clear picture? Did any of the watercolor spread onto a section you didn't want it to go on?
- Sometimes we are like the Israelites. We are without hope. We can't understand what God is doing; we can't figure out His plan. We may think that the paint is spreading into the wrong area, but God can see the whole picture.
  - Even when we don't understand, God is painting a perfectly clear picture and has a clear vision for His people. We can trust God. The Israelites learned through Ezekiel's message that God had a plan for

them even when they were unsure. Even though Israel sinned and had to endure the consequences, God's plan was still working.

- *What plan did God show Ezekiel? God planned to bring His people back together in their own land and give them new life.*

### Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journals and pencils to kids.

- Say** • Sometimes being separated from friends and family can provide us with time to become closer to God. When the Israelites were in exile, it became important again for them to focus on God and following His law.
- When we have time alone with God, we can focus on God and listen to Him. For journal time today, spread out and write in your journal. You can write whatever you want in your journal. Think about what you have learned today and what God wants you to remember.

Provide kids with a few minutes of time to write in their journals.

**Say** • *What plan did God show Ezekiel? God planned to bring His people back together in their own land and give them new life.*

- Does anyone have a prayer request they want to share with our group?

Close in prayer, mentioning the prayer requests the kids shared.

As time allows, lead kids to complete the activity page “Timeline Review.”

- pencils
- journals
- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Journal Page, 1 per kid (enhanced CD)
- “Timeline Review” activity page, 1 per kid

- watercolor paint
- paint smocks
- large paint brushes
- “Watercolor Picture” (enhanced CD)
- small cups of water
- paper towels