

Unit 17: The People Return

Unit Description: God’s time of disciplining His people had been completed, and true to His word, He returned them to the land of promise. Once there, they began to rebuild the temple—the important reminder that God was with them, that He is faithful, and that He can always be trusted.

Big Picture Question: Can God be trusted? Yes, God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said.



SESSION 1: God Delivered His People

Ezra 1



SESSION 2: Zechariah Gave Hope

Zechariah 13–14



SESSION 3: The People Rebuilt the Temple

Ezra 2–6



SESSION 4: God Can Always Be Trusted

Jeremiah 31



UNIT 17 | SESSION 2

ZECHARIAH GAVE HOPE

ZECHARIAH 13-14

KEY PASSAGE:

Jeremiah 17:7

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Can God be trusted? Yes, God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said.

CHRIST CONNECTION:

Zechariah spoke a message of hope to God's people. God would one day set up a new and better kingdom with a new and better King. God kept His promise by sending Jesus. Because of Jesus, we can have hope and forgiveness of sins by trusting in Him.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION



LEADER Bible Study

Peace and security are words often heard in the whirlwind of our news cycles. They are used as ideas or desires that require work to achieve. They are used in the negative sense of not being a current reality. They are used as the aim, answer, or solution to the world’s problems.

Though the idea of peace and security are not foreign to our vernacular, they are most certainly foreign to much of our world’s reality. It is hard to find a pocket of the earth that might be described with these terms. Rather, what is most found is chaos and fear.

When we understand the true impact of sin on the world, this comes as no surprise. It’s not shocking to see the news of war and violence. It does not bring amazement to hear of murder and strife. There is no astonishment at the experience of disappointment or pain because we know that we live in a world riddled with sin and its implications.

Read the words of Zechariah 14:11. What comes to mind? “People will live there, and never again will there be a curse of complete destruction. So Jerusalem will dwell in security.”

Are you struck by the thought of such a place that could be described as secure? Are you left longing for that to be your reality?

Are you doubtful that this could ever be a reality?

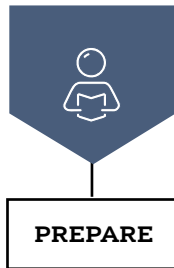
Ultimately, this is a promise that is sure to happen. This promise is reiterated in Deuteronomy 7:7-9:

“The LORD had his heart set on you and chose you, not because you were more numerous than all peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors, he brought you out with a strong hand and redeemed you from the place of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps his gracious covenant loyalty for a thousand generations with those who love him and keep his commands.”

This promise was for God’s people then, and it is for all who follow Jesus today as well. This peace and security is ours in Christ. As sure as Christ has come, lived, died, and risen, so can we find rest that this promise is true and this day will come.

PEOPLE TO KNOW

Zechariah: prophet who encouraged God’s people to finish rebuilding the temple. He also encouraged the people to rebuild their relationship with God and truly worship Him.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- “Remove the Idols” activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- hula hoops, 2
- music

Session Starter (Option 2)

- cups, 20
- balls, 2
- painter’s tape



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- countdown video

Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- “Zechariah Gave Hope” video
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- robe, head covering, scroll (optional)
- yellow paper (optional)
- white paper (optional)

Questions from Kids

- “Unit 17, Session 2” questions from kids video

Missions Moment

- “Hudson Taylor” missions video

Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- “Trust In the Lord (Jeremiah 17:7)” song
- worship song of your choice (optional)



LOVE

Review & Bible skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set
- world map



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- “Mandarin Characters” printable, 1 per kid

Journal and Prayer

- Journal Page
- “New Kingdom” activity page



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

| **SAY** “ What is something you heard this week that encouraged you? Why was it encouraging? ”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Remove the Idols” on the activity page.

| **SAY** “ What is idolatry? [Allow kids to respond.] Idolatry is a sin of the heart in which we love and value something else above God. In today’s Bible story, the neighbors of God’s people surrounded them with idols. God promised that He would remove the idols and set up a new kingdom with a new king. ”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: HULA HOOP CHALLENGE



Form two teams of kids. Guide each team to form a single line. Explain to kids that they will need to hold hands continuously while trying to pass the hula hoop down the line. Add an additional challenge by explaining that every time you play music, everyone in the line must jump up and down while still trying to pass the hula hoop. Direct kids to stop jumping when you stop the music.

Begin the challenge by providing each team with a hula hoop and saying “Go!” Start and stop the music periodically throughout the challenge. The first team to complete the challenge wins.

| **SAY** “ Passing the hula hoop without the music was a challenge on its own. Then, adding jumping made it even more challenging. In today’s Bible story, God’s people were faced with a challenge to rebuild the temple while others tried to stop them. They needed a message of hope in their time of difficulty. ”

OPTION 2: SCATTER THE SHEEP

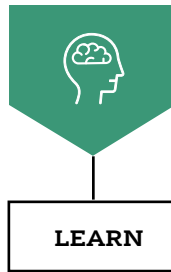
Gather two sets of 10 cups and place them in rows like bowling pins. Use painter’s tape to make two starting lines on the floor 6–10 feet away from the cups. Form kids into two teams and direct each team to form a line behind the painter’s tape. Explain that the cups represent sheep and that kids will roll the ball to try and scatter them.

Give a ball to the first player in line and let her roll the ball to scatter the sheep. When she has finished her turn, she should reset the cups, pass the ball to the kid behind her, and move to the end of the line. Keep track of which team knocks over the most cups. Continue until every kid on each team has had a turn.

| **SAY** “ In today’s Bible story, Zechariah foretold Jesus’ death and resurrection to pay for our sins. He said that ‘the sheep will scatter’ when Jesus was arrested. But God had a plan to restore His people. Let’s read our Bible story to learn more. ”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “ Welcome! Who is excited to learn more about God through His Word? [Allow kids to respond.] My name is [your name], and I can’t wait to read the Bible with you. Who brought their Bibles with them today? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.]

The Bible is God’s Word. We’ve been learning that God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust that everything we read in the Bible is true. Our Bible story today is from the Book of Zechariah. Zechariah was a prophet who encouraged the people to rebuild the temple after they returned from exile. He also gave them hope by reminding them of God’s promises. ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

SAY “ I’m so excited for us to learn more about why we can trust God! Can anyone tell me an example from our story last week of why we can trust God? [Allow kids to respond.] God kept His promise and provided His people with everything they needed to rebuild God’s temple. Let’s say our big picture question together. **Can God be trusted? Yes, God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said.** ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “ In last week’s story, God’s people were living in exile in Babylon because they had turned away from God. After 70 years in exile, just as God promised, the people were free to go back to Jerusalem. God’s purpose was fulfilled through King Cyrus, who not only freed the people but also gave them what they needed for their return home. In today’s Bible story, God continued to help His people, and He reminded them of a future promise that was fulfilled through Jesus. ”



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Zechariah 13–14. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Zechariah Gave Hope.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

ZECHARIAH GAVE HOPE

“ After living in Babylon for 70 years, **the exile was over. God’s people were home! A group had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild God’s temple.** Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest led the people. **They started the work, but their neighbors didn’t want them to rebuild the temple, so they stopped.**

God sent prophets to encourage His people to finish the temple and give them a message. One of those prophets was named Zechariah (ZEK uh RIGH uh). God told Zechariah what would happen in the future, and then Zechariah told the people what God said.

Zechariah gave a message of hope. He shared what God would do for His people in the future. This is what **Zechariah said: “A day is coming when the Lord will remove every idol from this land. No one will remember them or worship them.”** God was going to set up a new kingdom over the nations.

Zechariah said God would give His people a new king—like a shepherd caring for a flock of sheep. “Then God will say, ‘Sword, strike my shepherd,’ and the sheep will scatter. **There will be troubles, but God will be doing something good,”** Zechariah explained.

In this new kingdom, God will judge and punish all evil. He will lead His own people back to Himself. **Zechariah said, “The people will call out to God, and He will answer them. He will say, ‘You are My people,’ and they will answer, ‘The LORD is our God.’”**

The new kingdom will have a new city—a New Jerusalem—that brings all the nations together and heals all of creation.

Christ Connection: Zechariah spoke a message of hope to God’s people. God would one day set up a new and better kingdom with a new and better King. God kept His promise by sending Jesus. Because of Jesus, we can have hope and forgiveness of sins by trusting in Him. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Dress like a prophet: Wear a robe and head covering and carry a scroll. Consider placing the Bible story inside the scroll and reading God’s words from it at that point in the story.

Form groups: Form two groups of kids, one to represent “Jerusalem” and one to represent the “neighbors.” Distribute white paper to the “Jerusalem” and yellow paper to the “neighbors.” When you teach about removing idols, take the yellow paper from the “neighbors.” When you teach about striking the shepherd, guide kids with white paper to scatter around the room.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ God kept His promise to send His people back to Jerusalem, but they still had a lot of work ahead of them. They still needed to rebuild the temple and make Jerusalem their home again. God also had an even bigger plan to restore the people’s relationship with Him forever.

What was God’s plan for the future? Look at Zechariah 13:1. **[Choose a volunteer to read aloud Zechariah 13:1.]** God had a plan to wash away the sin that separated people from Him. Jesus is the fountain whose blood was poured out to wash away our sin. Jesus paid the cost of our sin. Through faith in Jesus, we can be cleansed from our sin once and for all.

The exiles who returned to Jerusalem faced troubles while rebuilding the temple. How did Zechariah’s message give them hope? Look at Zechariah 14:11. **[Choose a volunteer to read aloud Zechariah 13:9.]** Jerusalem was in utter destruction. The people’s sin had visible results. Zechariah’s message gave the people hope because God’s promise to wash away their sin also meant that God’s people would dwell in security. Not only would all things that are broken be made new, but they would be saved from the wrath of God. Jesus secures our future and offers us a way to be saved. ”

3 CHRIST CONNECTION

SAY “ Zechariah spoke a message of hope to God’s people. God would one day set up a new and better kingdom with a new and better King. God kept His promise by sending Jesus. Because of Jesus, we can have hope and forgiveness of sins by trusting in Him. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 17, Session 2” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. Why does the Bible say Jesus is like a shepherd?
2. What are some other names used to describe Jesus in the Bible?

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Show the missions video. Explain that Hudson Taylor became a missionary and trusted God to meet his needs. Tell the kids that Hudson married a lady named Maria Dyer, a daughter of another missionary couple in China.

SAY “ After Hudson was married, he continued his work in China. His church grew to 21 members. In 1861, he became very ill and went back to England to recover. While he was in England, Hudson continued translating the Bible into Chinese, as he had been doing while he was in China. He also worked to recruit more missionaries.

Hudson began a ministry called ‘China Inland Mission’ (CIM). Hudson continued to pray for more



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

| missionaries to come to China. Eventually, more missionaries did volunteer to go to China. ”

Pray, thanking God for the missionaries who were faithful to go to China. Ask God to help other Christians trust Him and go out into all parts of the world to tell others about Jesus.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Jeremiah 17:7 together.

| **SAY** “ God’s Word gives us hope because we trust that everything He says is true. When we memorize God’s Word, we carry that hope with us everywhere we go. ”

Lead kids to sit in a circle. Guide kids to say the verse popcorn-style, with one kid saying the first word, his neighbor saying the next, and so on until the key passage is complete. Repeat as time allows, and encourage kids to get faster with each round.

Lead kids to sing “Trust In the Lord (Jeremiah 17:7).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

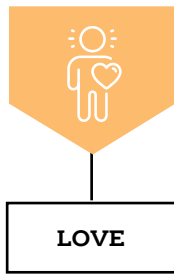
7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

| **SAY** “ God, thank You for having a plan to wash away our sin and restore our relationship with You. Help us rely on You in both easy and difficult situations so that we learn to trust You more. Amen. ”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the Old Testament Mediterranean Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Zechariah 13. Explain that Zechariah was a prophet who shared God's words with the people while they rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem.

Point out the location of Jerusalem (G10) on the map. Consider comparing the Old Testament Mediterranean Map to a modern-day map to help kids understand where these stories took place. (Tip: Locate the areas in and around modern-day Israel.)

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Zechariah 13:9.

SAY “ Zechariah told the people of Jerusalem that God uses trials and sufferings to refine His people, but that the end result will be the praise of His name. Like the people of Judah, we will face hardships, but we can trust God and have hope knowing Jesus’ sufferings secure our future. There are no trials that can separate us from God or undo God’s promises. God’s promise to save us and make a new kingdom came true in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. **Can God be trusted? Yes, God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said.** ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

| **SAY** “ What do you think the new Jerusalem will look like? ”

Encourage kids to consider what the world might look like without sin. Remind kids that sin separates us from God, but accepting Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf restores our relationship with Him.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rev. 21:1-4.)

| **SAY** “ Zechariah told the people, ‘Sword, strike my shepherd, and the sheep will scatter.’ How did Zechariah’s prophecy come true in the New Testament? ”

Remind kids that Jesus was called the Good Shepherd and that God struck Him with the penalty for our sin when Jesus died on the cross. Lead kids to think of how Jesus’ disciples deserted Him and scattered when Jesus was arrested, under trial, and crucified. Encourage kids that Jesus will never desert them.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matt. 26:31.)

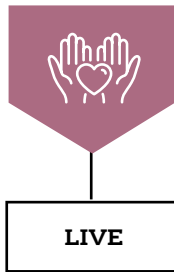
| **SAY** “ How have trials or hard times caused you to trust God more? ”

Answers will vary. Remind kids that because we live in a fallen world, we will all face troubles. Encourage kids to remember that God uses suffering for our good and that one day sin will be no more.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Peter 4:12.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: MANDARIN MATCH UP



Provide each kid with a “Mandarin Characters” printable. Ask the kids if they have seen these characters before. Explain that these are the Chinese characters for the numbers 1–10. Provide kids with a piece of paper and a pencil. Lead kids to try and write the characters for each number. Invite kids to show their characters to the class.

SAY “ Many people think Mandarin, a form of the Chinese language, is one of the hardest languages to learn. Learning a difficult language is just one of the challenges for missionaries serving in China. Hudson Taylor began studying Mandarin when he was a teenager in preparation to go to China and one day tell the Chinese people about Jesus. ”

OPTION 2: WHO IS OUR HOPE?



Form eight small groups of kids. Give each group one of the following Bible verses to look up in their Bibles: Romans 5:1-2; Ephesians 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17; 1 Timothy 1:1; Titus 2:13; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 Peter 1:13.

Distribute a slip of paper to each group and a pencil. Lead each group to read the Bible verse together and answer the question, “Who is our hope?” Ask kids to write down their answer on the paper, fold it, and hand it back to you.

Open up each piece of paper and read each one aloud. Emphasize that our only hope is Jesus. Discuss how we were once separated from God, having no hope in this world, but then God gave us the hope of salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

SAY “ God is so gracious to give us hope through Jesus! Many people do not have this hope. Like Zechariah, we need to share the hope of Jesus with others. ”

2 JOURNAL AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page. As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas.

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

Review the gospel and encourage kids to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions. Then pray, thanking God for the hope we have of a new and better kingdom ruled by King Jesus. As time allows, lead kids to complete “New Kingdom” on the activity page.



JOURNAL PAGE

1. What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
2. What does this story teach me about myself?
3. Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
4. Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
5. How does this story help me to live on mission better?

FOLD



Unit 17 • Session 2

ZECHARIAH GAVE HOPE

Zechariah 13-14

**CAN GOD BE TRUSTED? YES, GOD CANNOT LIE OR EVER BE WRONG,
SO WE CAN TRUST WHATEVER HE HAS SAID.**

The exile was over. God's people were home! A group had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild God's temple. They started the work, but their neighbors didn't want them to rebuild the temple, so they stopped.

God sent prophets to encourage His people to finish the temple and give them a message. One of those prophets was named Zechariah. God told Zechariah what would happen in the future, and then Zechariah told the people what God said.

Zechariah gave a message of hope. Zechariah said: "A day is coming when the Lord will remove every idol from this land. No one will remember them or worship them." God was going to set up a new kingdom over the nations.

Zechariah said God would give His people a new king—like a shepherd caring for a flock of sheep. There will be troubles, but God will be doing something good," Zechariah explained.

In this new kingdom, God will judge and punish all evil. Zechariah said, "The people will call out to God, and He will answer them. He will say, 'You are My people,' and they will answer, 'The LORD is our God.'"

The new kingdom will have a new city—a New Jerusalem—that brings all the nations together and heals all of creation.

Christ Connection: Zechariah spoke a message of hope to God's people. God would one day set up a new and better kingdom with a new and better King. God kept His promise by sending Jesus. Because of Jesus, we can have hope and forgiveness of sins by trusting in Him.

Remove the Idols | Put an X over every idol you find in the temple below.



New Kingdom | Look up each Bible verse. Then use the Bible verses to draw or write how God's Word describes the new Jerusalem.

Isaiah 65:17-19,25

Hebrews 12:22

2 Peter 3:13

Revelation 21:1-4

Revelation 22:1-5

NAME:



the **GOSPEL** PROJECT.

Zechariah Gave Hope

BIBLE STORY SUMMARY:

- God's people were rebuilding God's temple in Jerusalem, but their neighbors wanted them to stop. So they stopped.
- God sent prophets to encourage His people to finish the temple. The prophet Zechariah gave a message of hope. He told them what God would do in the future.
- Zechariah said God would give His people a new King and set up a new kingdom.

CHRIST CONNECTION:

Zechariah spoke a message of hope to God's people. God would one day set up a new and better kingdom with a new and better King. God kept His promise by sending Jesus. Because of Jesus, we can have hope and forgiveness of sins by trusting in Him.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 17:7

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Can God be trusted? Yes, God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said.