

## 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



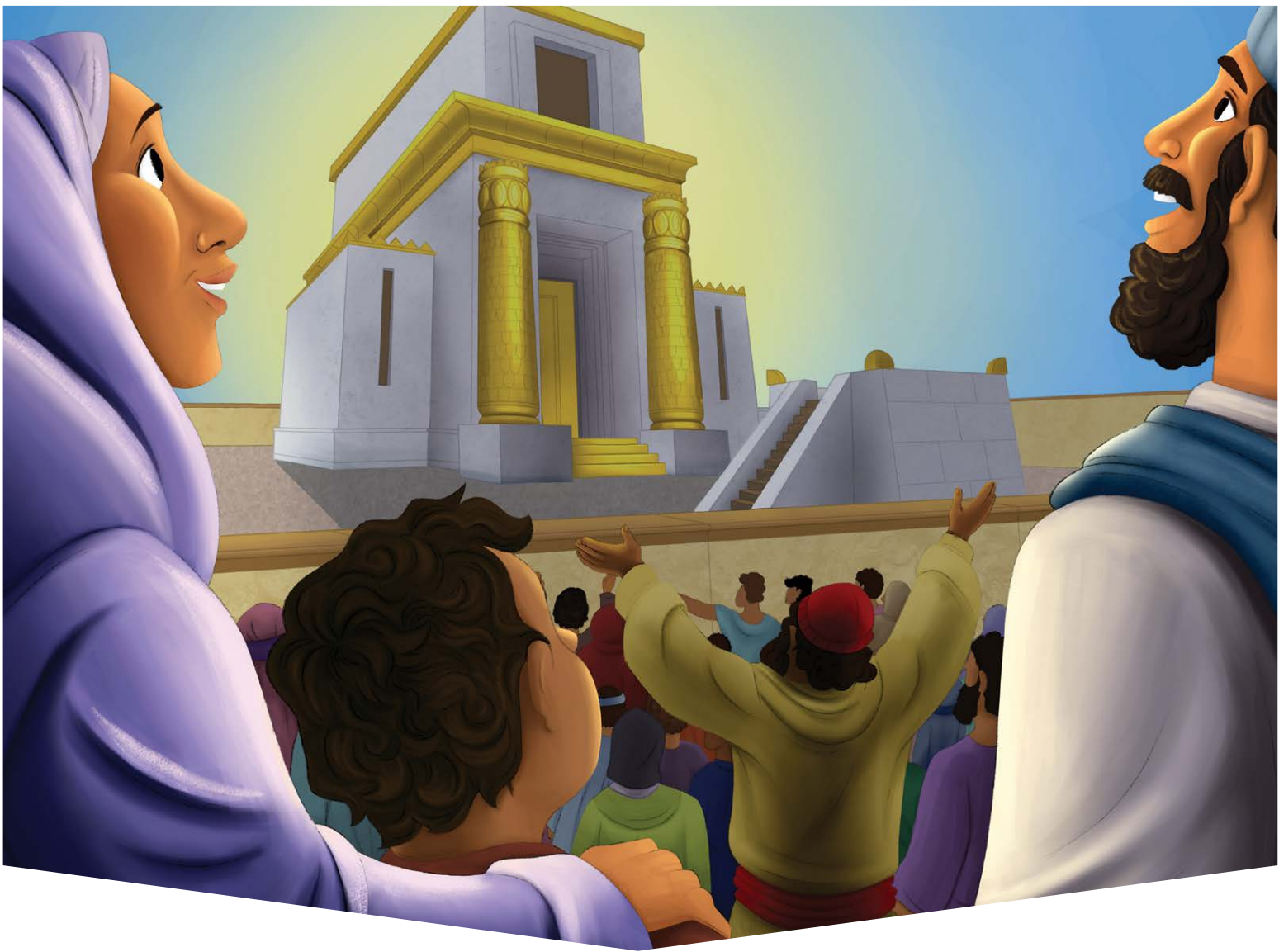
### SESSION 3: The People Rebuilt the Temple

Ezra 2–6



### SESSION 4: God Can Always Be Trusted

Jeremiah 31



UNIT 17 | SESSION 3

## THE PEOPLE REBUILT THE TEMPLE

EZRA 2-6

### 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:

God's people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to worship God. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Now, God does not dwell with His people through the temple. Instead, God dwells directly with His people through His Spirit. Jesus provided something better than the temple; He gives us Himself.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION



## LEADER Bible Study

Imagine this for a moment: It's late Saturday night, and you've been out of the house all day. You've gone from place to place, striving to complete more than seemed possible from your calendar to-do list. You've just returned home and sat down for dinner. Suddenly, you remember that tomorrow is Sunday. You quickly recall that you are scheduled to serve with preschoolers tomorrow morning, your small group is having lunch together after church, and you have yet to plan out this upcoming week. The thought crosses your mind, *What if I just sat this one out tomorrow?*

Does this scenario hit close to home?

In Ezra 3, as the work had begun to rebuild the temple, there was an eager desire among God's people, leading them to anticipate what that place would afford them upon its completion. As the people worked and waited, even in the midst of their exhaustion, they made time to worship.

Read Ezra 3:6. Not only was the temple incomplete, but the first stage of the build was not yet done. Still, the laborers did not forget or fail to keep the purpose at the forefront of their minds. The goal was not the temple; it was the Lord.

We often find ourselves in scenarios like the one above, ready to make excuses to not do the things that matter most because

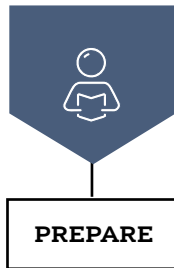
we've misplaced our priorities—or at least lost sight of them in the whirlwind of life. Our decisions reflect what has the seat of greatest importance in our lives.

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching."

Understanding Christ to be our greatest purpose and prize ought to direct our paths toward prioritizing our lives around Christ and His church. Not only will this be good for us, but it will be good for the rest of God's children as well. When we are eager to be with the Lord and His people, not only will we be productive, but we will be truly satisfied.

### PEOPLE TO KNOW

**Zerubbabel:** grandson of King Jehoiachin. Zerubbabel returned from exile as a leader and helped rebuild the altar and lay the foundation of the temple.



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

- “Finish the Temple” activity page

### Session Starter (Option 1)

- dry erase board
- dry erase marker

### Session Starter (Option 2)

- yarn, 20 pieces



LEARN

### Introduce the Session

- countdown video

### Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

### Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

### Tell the Bible Story

- “The People Rebuilt the Temple” video
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- dry erase board or poster paper (optional)

### Questions from Kids

- “Unit 17, Session 3” questions from kids 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 2)

- Big Picture Question Poster

### Journal and Prayer

- Journal Page
- “Where Can You Worship God?” 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** “ Tell me about something you have built or helped build! Have you ever built a tree house, a derby car, a doll house, or a potato lamp? ”

### 1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Finish the Temple” on the activity page.

**SAY** “ It took a lot more work than just drawing for God’s people to finish rebuilding God’s temple in Jerusalem! In today’s Bible story, we will hear how God’s people finished the temple and how God encouraged them when their neighbors tried to stop them. ”

### 2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

#### OPTION 1: START AND STOP



Use a dry erase board to write, *The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever.* Distribute paper and pencils to each kid. Lead the kids to look at the dry erase board and read the message aloud.

Explain to the kids that they will need to copy the message as quickly and as legibly as they can in 30 seconds. Tell kids that when you say “start” they may begin writing but that when you say “stop”, they must pause writing. Continue saying “start” and “stop” throughout the 30 seconds. Ask kids if any of them could complete the message in 30 seconds. As time allows, challenge kids with this activity multiple times.

**SAY** “ Was it frustrating to continue to be interrupted while trying to complete the message? Sometimes we can become upset or discouraged when things do not go as we had hoped. In our Bible story today, God’s people needed to be encouraged to trust God even when things weren’t going as they hoped. ”

#### OPTION 2: SEARCH ROYAL RECORDS

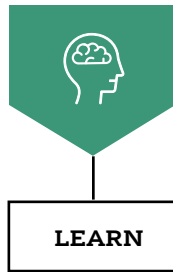
Create 20 scrolls using paper and yarn. Choose one scroll and write the words, “Let God’s temple be rebuilt” on the inside.

Scatter the scrolls on the floor. Lead kids to untie the yarn and unravel the scrolls in search of the scroll with the message. Invite the kid who finds the message to read it aloud.

**SAY** “ In today’s Bible story, the king’s officials searched the royal records to prove that God’s people were allowed to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. God keeps His promises and His words will never fail. Through our Bible story, we will be reminded that we can always trust God because He never lies or is wrong. ”

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** “ Hello! I’m so glad to see you all here today! My name is [your name]. I brought my Bible with me this morning. [Hold up Bible.] We can trust everything we read in the Bible because it is God’s Word, and God cannot lie. Who brought their Bibles with them this morning? [Distribute Bibles to those who don’t have one.]

Our Bible story today is found in the Book of Ezra. Is Ezra in the Old or New Testament? [Allow responses.] Yes, it is an Old Testament book. We can find it in our Bible after 2 Chronicles and before Nehemiah. An important message in Ezra is the reminder for God’s people to return to right worship of God. One way God encouraged the people toward right worship was through the rebuilding of the temple. ”

### 2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

**SAY** “ Can God be trusted? [Allow kids to respond.] Yes, God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said. Sometimes we can be tempted to not trust God when our circumstances are difficult. If we have hard things happening in our life, we might wonder if God knows what He is doing. In the Old Testament, God’s people reacted this way sometimes. But God can never lie or be wrong. We can trust that even when times are hard, God is working to show us that what we need most is Jesus. Knowing Jesus gives us hope in hard times and helps us remember that He came to undo all the horribleness of sin.

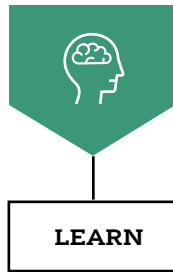
Let’s say our big picture question together. **Can God be trusted? Yes, God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said.** ”

### 3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

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

**SAY** “ God’s people disobeyed God and worshiped idols. God judged their sin and sent them into exile. But God promised that after 70 years, He would set them free. Just like God promised, His people went home to Jerusalem after 70 years in exile. But the city of Jerusalem was in ruins. God sent prophets like Zechariah to encourage God’s people and give them hope while they rebuilt the temple. Let’s read our Bible story to learn if the temple was completed. ”





## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

# LEARN the Bible Story

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

Open your Bible to Ezra 2–6. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “The People Rebuilt the Temple.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

### THE PEOPLE REBUILT THE TEMPLE

“**Zerubbabel** (zuh RUHB uh buhl) **and the high priest led a group of God’s people back to Judah to rebuild the Lord’s temple in Jerusalem.** First, **the priests rebuilt the altar. They gave burnt offerings to God and celebrated.** Then **they laid the foundation of the temple.** When the foundation was finished, **the priests put on special clothes and the people praised God.** They sang, “The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever.”

**Not everyone was happy though. Some of the older people remembered what the temple had looked like before it had been destroyed.** They cried and shouted loudly.

Sometimes **other people interrupted the rebuilding of the temple by making the people of Judah discouraged or afraid.** At one point, **the building of the temple stopped for a while. God sent prophets to encourage the people,** and they started working again.

At this time, **Darius** (duh RIGH uhs), **the king of Persia, ruled over the land of Judah.** The king was in charge of a lot of land, so **he put governors in charge of some of the land. A governor named Tattenai** (TAT ih nigh) **noticed what God’s people were doing.**

**Tattenai asked the workers, “Do you have permission to rebuild this temple?” The workers said, “We do.”** Still, Tattenai sent a report to the king about what God’s people were doing. “They said King Cyrus gave them permission to rebuild the temple,” Tattenai wrote. “Please search the royal records to see if this is true.”

**King Darius’s officials searched the royal records for Cyrus’s order. They found it—a scroll with a record from King Cyrus. This is what was written on the scroll: “Let God’s temple be rebuilt. It will be a place to offer sacrifices. Let its foundation be rebuilt.”** King Cyrus had also ordered for the cost of building the temple to be paid for out of the royal treasury.

**So King Darius sent a letter back to Tattenai. He gave this order: “Stay away from the workers in Jerusalem. Don’t bother them or try to stop them. Give them whatever they need.”**

**Tattenai obeyed the king’s order. The Jewish leaders kept building, and they finally finished the temple of God! The people celebrated and made offerings to God. They chose priests and assistants to serve in the temple. Then God’s**

### STORYTELLING TIPS

**Act it out:** Form five groups of kids. Designate one group to be the priests, one to be the older people who wept and got discouraged, one to be prophets and workers, one to be the governors, and one to be King Darius’ officials. Encourage kids to act out their sections of the story.

**Draw the temple:** Use a whiteboard or poster paper to visually represent rebuilding the temple. Add a section to the temple each time God provided a solution to a problem His people faced.



## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

**people celebrated the Passover.** God's people were so happy. **Now the temple of God was finally complete.**

Christ Connection: God's people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to worship God. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Now, God does not dwell with His people through the temple. Instead, God dwells directly with His people through His Spirit. Jesus provided something better than the temple; He gives us Himself. ”

### 2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

**SAY** ” The temple was the place the Jews worshiped God. It also represented God's presence with His people. God's plan for the people to rebuild the temple was meant to be a reminder that He was with them and that they should worship Him alone.

What did God's people do first when they settled back in Jerusalem? Look at Ezra 3:2. **[Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ezra 3:2.]** God's people rebuilt the altar first. They offered sacrifices for their sin and praised God. Then they laid the foundation of the temple. Some of the older people were sad that the temple did not look like the original. Even though the temple was different, God was still with His people. It was not how the temple looked that was important, but how God had continued to be faithful to His people.

Why were the neighbors of God's people unable to stop the rebuilding of the temple? **[Allow responses.]** God put a plan in place to provide for His people years before they would need it! God's promise was put in writing by King Cyrus. Nothing can stop God's words from coming true. **Can God be trusted? Yes, God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said.** ”

### 3 CHRIST CONNECTION

**SAY** ” God's people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to worship God. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Now, God does not dwell with His people through the temple. Instead, God dwells directly with His people through His Spirit. Jesus provided something better than the temple; He gives us Himself. ”

(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 3” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How should we respond when others tattle on us or when someone lies about us?
2. Why can we trust God in all circumstances?





## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### 5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Tell the kids that Hudson Taylor spent a total of 51 years as a missionary to China. Explain that Hudson developed a plan to send missionaries to the interior of China. Teach kids that Hudson's plan was named the "China Inland Mission" (CIM) and it was something very new at the time. Explain that he was also one of the first people to allow unmarried women to become missionaries.

**SAY** “ Some of the things that Hudson began in his CIM company changed the way missions was done in some areas. Some of these changes that Hudson began are still in place today. Hudson Taylor continued to work in China through difficult situations with his ministry. He faced his own health issues as well as the illnesses and deaths of some of his family members. ”

Pray, thanking God for missionaries who continue their mission work through challenging times. Pray for the strength and health of missionaries serving all over the world.

### 6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

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

**SAY** “ Our story reminds us that we can trust God to do what is right and say what is true. We can worship God joyfully and thank Him for being trustworthy. ”

Distribute Bibles to each kid. Challenge kids to race to find Jeremiah 17:7 in their Bible and shout it aloud. Lead kids to study and reread the verse several times. Invite volunteers to recite the verse from memory.

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

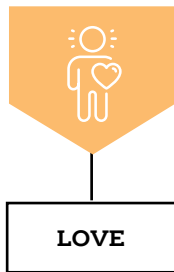
### 7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

**SAY** “ God, thank You for setting Your plans in motion before we even know we need it. Thank You that we can always trust You. Help us trust You more and tell others about You. 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 Ezra 6. Explain that Ezra is in the Old Testament. Explain that in those times, people who followed God burned sacrifices to pay for their sin. Remind kids that when Jesus came into the world, He paid the price for sin once and for all by dying on the cross and rising from the dead. Point out Jerusalem (G10) on the map. Consider comparing the map to a modern-day map to help kids understand where this story took place. (Tip: Locate the areas in and around modern-day Israel.)

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ezra 6:7,12.

**SAY** “The neighbors wanted to stop the work of God’s people. They threatened and intimidated God’s people. They tried to stop the work by force and by law. But could God’s plans be stopped? [Allow responses.] No, God’s plans can never be stopped! The king’s decree to rebuild the temple came true because it was God’s plan all along. We can trust that God’s good plans for us through Jesus will also come true. Even when we face troubles, like the Jews did, we can trust that God will be with us.”

### 2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

**SAY** “How can we show others that we trust God?”

Lead kids to discuss how one way we can show that we trust God is to worship Him and tell others of His goodness when challenging times come. Challenge kids to think of difficult situations and how they could still worship God in that situation.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Thess. 5:16-18.)

**SAY** “Why is Jesus a better gift than a temple?”

Emphasize how a temple was a temporary reminder of God’s presence with His people. Remind kids that God sent Jesus to die for our sins and raise to life so that we can have forgiveness, life forever, and the promise of the Holy Spirit. Lead kids to understand that unlike a temple, which can only be in one place, God is with us always through His Spirit.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matt. 12:6.)

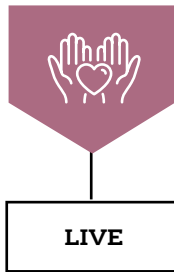
**SAY** “How should we respond when others might tempt us to disobey God?”

Guide kids to discuss how the Jews had a choice to continue to follow God’s plan and rebuild the temple or listen to those who tried to stop them. Remind kids that following Jesus is better because He leads us to life and forgiveness. Encourage kids that they can pray and God will be with them to give them courage.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Acts 5:29.)

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





## THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

### LIVE the Mission

#### 1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

##### OPTION 1: FINGERS OUT



Pair kids with a partner. Lead each partner to face each other. Direct kids to hold up one fist. Explain that you will say, “ready, set, go” and that on “go” each partner must extend any number of fingers while simultaneously shouting out a number from 0–10. Kids may choose to display the number zero by keeping a closed fist. Lead kids to count the sum of the fingers extended. The kid from each pair who shouted the number closest to the sum of the fingers gets a point. Play until a kid from each pair earns five points.

**SAY** “Fingers out is a traditional Chinese game played by children in China. It is important for missionaries to learn about the cultures of the people they serve and to find ways to build relationships with the people. Hudson Taylor not only learned the Mandarin language, but he also took time to learn the customs of the Chinese as well.”

##### OPTION 2: WRITE A PRAISE SONG



Prompt kids to form groups of four to six kids. Distribute a piece of paper and a pencil to each group. Challenge kids to write a praise song including the sentences, *The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever.* Encourage kids to think of different music styles they might use to make their worship songs. Guide kids to look at the psalms for examples. Encourage kids to take turns sharing their praise songs with the class.

**SAY** “Like God’s people in today’s Bible story, we can sing songs to God to thank Him for keeping His word. No matter what situation we face, God is always worthy of praise. We can praise God for His faithfulness and trustworthiness. **Can God be trusted? Yes, God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said.**”

#### 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 we have the gift of His presence through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As time allows, lead kids to complete “Where Can You Worship God?” 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 3

## THE PEOPLE REBUILT THE TEMPLE

Ezra 2-6

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

Zerubbabel and the high priest led a group of God's people back to Judah to rebuild the Lord's temple in Jerusalem. The priests rebuilt the altar. They gave burnt offerings to God and celebrated. They laid the foundation of the temple. The priests put on special clothes and the people praised God.

Not everyone was happy though. Some of the older people remembered what the temple had looked like before it had been destroyed. Other people interrupted the rebuilding of the temple by making the people of Judah discouraged or afraid. The building of the temple stopped for a while. God sent prophets to encourage the people.

Darius, the king of Persia, ruled over the land of Judah. He put governors in charge of some of the land. A governor named Tattenai noticed what God's people were doing. Tattenai asked, "Do you have permission to rebuild this temple?" The workers said, "We do."

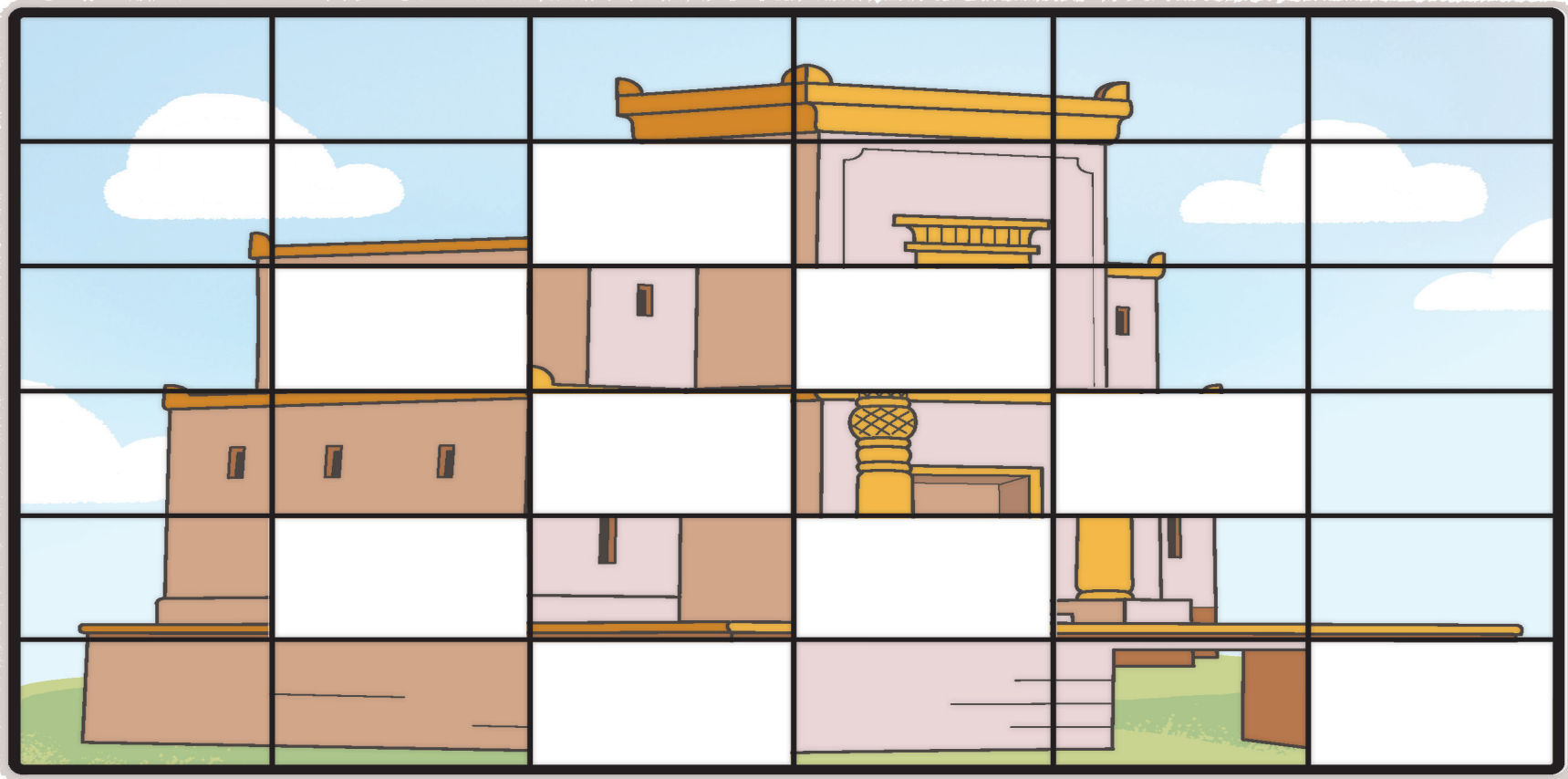
King Darius's officials searched the royal records for Cyrus's order. They found it. This is what was written on the scroll: "Let God's temple be rebuilt. Let its foundation be rebuilt." King Cyrus had also ordered for the cost of building the temple to be paid for out of the royal treasury.

So King Darius sent a letter back to Tattenai. He gave this order: "Stay away from the workers in Jerusalem. Give them whatever they need."

Tattenai obeyed the king's order. The Jewish leaders finally finished the temple of God! The people celebrated and made offerings to God.

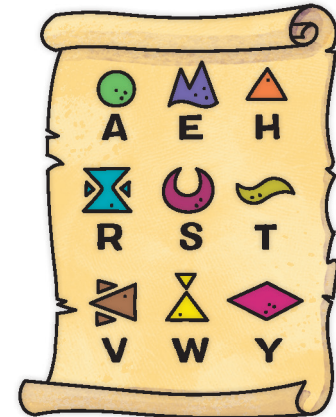
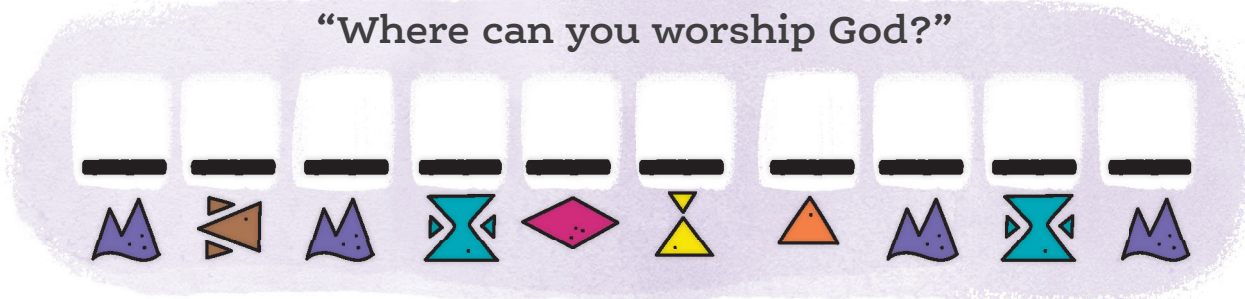
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**Finish the Temple** | Draw in the missing pieces on the grid to complete the rebuilding of the temple. Then color the completed temple.



**Where Can You Worship God?** | Use the decoder key to answer the question.

“Where can you worship God?”





NAME:



theGOSPELPROJECT.

## The People Rebuilt the Temple

### BIBLE STORY SUMMARY:

- God's people were rebuilding the Lord's temple in Jerusalem. They laid the foundation and praised God.
- Sometimes the people stopped building when they felt discouraged or afraid.
- King Darius gave the people what they needed, and they finished God's temple.

### CHRIST CONNECTION:

God's people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to worship God. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Now, God does not dwell with His people through the temple. Instead, God dwells directly with His people through His Spirit. Jesus provided something better than the temple; He gives us Himself.

**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.

