

## 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



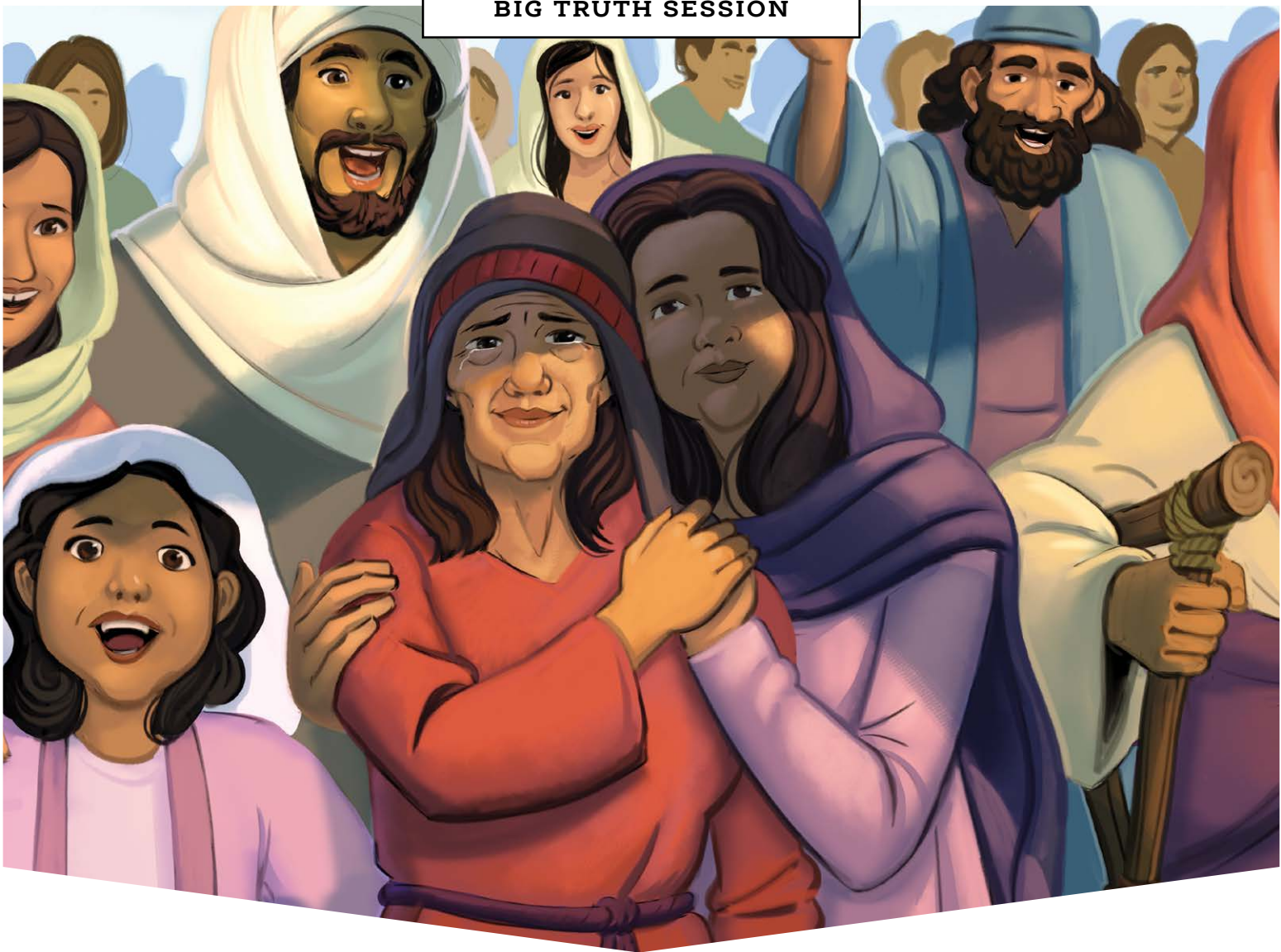
### **SESSION 3: The People Rebuilt the Temple**

Ezra 2–6



### **SESSION 4: God Can Always Be Trusted**

Jeremiah 31



UNIT 17 | SESSION 4

## GOD CAN ALWAYS BE TRUSTED

JEREMIAH 31

**KEY PASSAGE:**

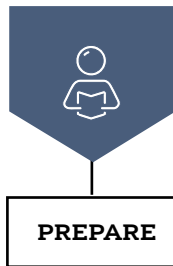
Jeremiah 17:7

**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 words brought hope to God's people because His words were true. God can always be trusted. Jeremiah told about a day when God would forgive sin and change people's hearts. Jesus' death and resurrection provides forgiveness of sins. Through Jesus, we have new hearts and life with God forever.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION



## LEADER Bible Study

There's a strong likelihood that you have had to repeat a message to the same person multiple times, whether that person is a spouse, child, coworker, or friend. Some things are so important they are worth repeating. And some people are so quick to forget, we must repeat.

For example, each of my four children have gone through seasons when brushing their teeth was such a chore that you would have thought they were being asked to eat nails. My wife and I would remind them dozens of times in the morning and dozens of times in the evening to brush their teeth, and yet still we would later find evidence that it didn't happen. I feel confident none of them were belligerent in wanting their teeth to rot, but we were loving enough to remind them that this was likely to happen if they didn't remember to complete this menial task a couple of times a day.

In Jeremiah 31, there is a phrase that is repeated by the Lord to the hearer of these words. The phrase, "the LORD's declaration" occurs 10 times in these 40 verses. These words even appear at times in the middle of a thought or sentence, uniquely placed to garner great attention. In addition the phrase, "This is what the Lord says" occurs seven times. Clearly, the Lord wants the hearers to be abundantly clear from whom

these words are coming.

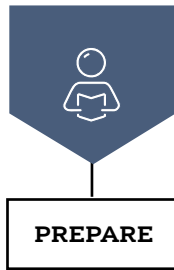
We are most certainly forgetful people, often forgetting the smallest of details and even the most significant of facts. The Lord knows us on the deepest level and knows how great our need is for direct reminders.

Jeremiah 31 contains difficult truths and delightful promises. God knows that the hearer is likely to bristle at the warnings and rejoice in the hope, but he also seemingly wants to ensure that we who read these words do not forget that they are His words.

As we read the Bible, it is crucial that we recall the voice behind the words: the voice of God. Only God has the highest authority, holds all knowledge, and is perfectly good. Maybe you need to remember as you read and listen to God's Word that this is the Lord's declaration.

### DOCTRINE TO KNOW

**God is truthful:** In God, there is no falsehood (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). Everything He says can be trusted. Telling the truth is one way we bear the image of God.



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

- “Write God’s Law on Your Heart” activity page

### Session Starter (Option 1)

- index cards, 5–10



LEARN

### Introduce the Session

- countdown video

### Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

### Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

### Tell the Bible Story

- “God Can Always Be Trusted” video
- Bible Story Picture Poster

### Questions from Kids

- “Unit 17, Session 4” questions from kids video

### Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- “Trust In the Lord (Jeremiah 17:7)” song
- worship song of your choice (optional)
- sticky notes, 1 per kid



LOVE

### Review & Bible skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set
- world map



LIVE

### Activity Choice (Option 1)

- masking tape

### Activity Choice (Option 2)

- heavyweight paper strips, 1 per kid
- stickers

### Journal and Prayer

- Journal Page
- “Opposites” 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’ve been really excited for? Why did it make you excited? ”

### 1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Write God’s Law on Your Heart” on the activity page.

| **SAY** “ Our hearts do not naturally love God. Because of sin, we turn away from God and love other things before Him. But God made a way for us to have new hearts. In our Bible story, we will learn about how God made it possible to give us new hearts. ”

### 2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

#### OPTION 1: HOPE FOR IT

Before the session, write 5–10 hopeful and discouraging phrases on separate index cards. Examples may include winning a baseball tournament, getting an A on a test, breaking your video game, losing your favorite necklace, leading someone to Jesus, etc.

Select volunteers to choose one of the index cards, read it aloud, and say if the phrase is hopeful or discouraging. Discuss why it is either hopeful or not. Repeat until all of the index cards have been chosen.

| **SAY** “ We can hope for certain things to happen, like getting an A on a test. But things do not always go the way we hope. It’s important to remember that no matter what we face, we can always hope in God’s Word. Today, we will learn about a time when God’s people needed to be reminded of the hope they had in God’s promises. ”

#### OPTION 2: SADNESS INTO JOY

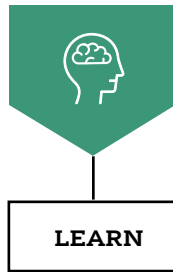


Guide kids to sit in a circle. Choose one volunteer to be It and stand in the middle of the circle. Instruct him to choose a kid from the circle and try to make him smile or laugh within 30 seconds. Instruct the kid who is not It to resist laughing, if he can. Explain that if he laughs, he is out of the game. If he does not laugh or smile, allow him to be the new It. Continue playing, allowing others to have a turn being It.

| **SAY** “ You all tried so hard to make others laugh! We don’t always feel like laughing or being joyful all the time, do we? God’s people had times when they were sad too. In today’s Bible story, God said He would turn His people’s sadness into joy. ”







## 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, everyone! My name is [your name]. I’m so glad you are here today! I brought my Bible with me. Did you bring your Bible with you today? Show me your Bible if you did! [Distribute Bibles to those who need one.] As we read from our Bibles, we remember that every word from God is true and that we can trust whatever God has said.

In today’s Bible story, we will learn that God’s people needed hope. Their sin led to a time of suffering and they needed hope for their future. The Lord spoke to His people through Jeremiah and gave them a great promise they could trust in. ”

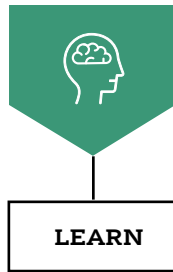
### 2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

**SAY** “ Our big picture question is, **Can God be trusted?** What do you think? [Allow kids to respond.] **God cannot lie or ever be wrong, so we can trust whatever He has said.** When we trust God, we can live joyfully and courageously. We know that God is with us and that He will provide for us. We can trust Him to help us remember that life in Jesus is best. 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 brought His people back to Jerusalem just like He promised. After 70 years in Babylon, King Cyrus sent God’s people back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. God also used King Cyrus to give His people whatever they needed. When their neighbors tried to stop their work, God sent prophets to encourage them and give them hope. God’s plans could not be stopped and the people eventually completed the temple. Today, we will continue to learn that God can be trusted. ”



## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

# LEARN the Bible Story

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

Open your Bible to Jeremiah 31. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “God Can Always Be Trusted.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

### GOD CAN ALWAYS BE TRUSTED

“**Jeremiah was a prophet to the people of Judah** from the time Josiah was king, through the invasion of their enemies, and during the Jews’ exile in Babylon. **He warned the people of God’s judgment because of their sin. But even though the people disobeyed, God had not abandoned them. His love never stopped, and God had a good plan for His people.**”

**God spoke through Jeremiah.** This is what the Lord said: **“On the day when I restore My people to their land, I will be the God of all the families of Israel. They will be My people.”** God’s people had been divided, but God was going to bring them back together.

**The people suffered in exile, but God said, “You will make music again. You will dance with joy!”** God was going to bring His people back home. He had scattered Israel, but **He would gather them again. He would watch over them like a shepherd guards his flock.**

**God said, “I will turn their mourning into joy, comfort them, and bring happiness out of grief. My people will be satisfied with My goodness.”**

God declared, **“There is hope for your future!”**

**Jeremiah told the people of Judah that God had a plan to change their hearts. God promised a new and better covenant so they could be saved from their sins.**

God said that the new covenant would not be like the old covenant. **In the old covenant, the people had God’s commands in writing. They disobeyed His commands and had to make sacrifices every year for their sin. In the new covenant, God was going to write His law on their hearts.** That means **He would give His people the power to obey His commands. God said, “I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sin.”**

Christ Connection: God’s words brought hope to God’s people because His words were true. God can always be trusted. Jeremiah told about a day when God would forgive sin and change people’s hearts. Jesus’ death and resurrection provides forgiveness of sins. Through Jesus, we have new hearts and life with God forever. ”

### STORYTELLING TIPS

**Display thumbs up:** Lead kids to give a thumbs up when they hear God’s promises in the Bible story.

**Make the sign for Jesus:** Teach kids the sign for Jesus. (Hold your hands up, palms facing. Touch the middle finger of one hand to the palm of the other hand. Repeat, using the opposite finger to opposite hand.) Every time God mentions restoration or a new covenant in the story, lead kids to make the sign for Jesus.



## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### 2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

**SAY** “ Before God’s people ever went into exile in Babylon, God used Jeremiah to warn the people of Judah what would happen. The people of Judah ignored Jeremiah’s words and God punished their sin. The people of Judah were sad and afraid as they were taken away to Babylon. How did Jeremiah give the people hope? **[Allow responses.]** Jeremiah told the people that not only was God going to bring them back home to Judah, but He was also going to give them a way for their sins to be forgiven forever.

Jeremiah told the people that God was going to give them a new covenant. What were some things Jeremiah said about the new covenant? **[Allow responses.]** God’s law was going to be written on hearts, it would wash away our sin forever, and it would help us obey Him.

How did God fulfill His promise to give us a new covenant? **[Allow responses.]** God fulfilled this promise through Jesus! In Christ, we have the forgiveness of sins, new hearts that can love God rightly, and we are given the power to say ‘no’ to sin. God words will never fail and we can always trust Him. ”

### 3 CHRIST CONNECTION

**SAY** “ God’s words brought hope to God’s people because His words were true. God can always be trusted. Jeremiah told about a day when God would forgive sin and change people’s hearts. Jesus’ death and resurrection provides forgiveness of sins. Through Jesus, we have new hearts and life with God forever. ”

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

1. What should we do when we keep messing up and do the wrong thing?
2. What are some ways we can see how God changes hearts?

### 5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Explain that Hudson Taylor trusted God would meet his every need during his time as a missionary in China. Hudson was able to build relationships with the Chinese people and learned Mandarin so he could tell them about Jesus. Help kids understand that the China Inland Mission (CIM) that Taylor founded is still in operation today under another name to support missionaries in China.

**SAY** “ The CIM, under Taylor’s leadership, established 20 mission stations, brought 849 missionaries to China while he was there, trained over 700 Chinese workers, raised money, and





## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

| developed a witnessing Chinese church of over 125,000 people. ”

Pray, thanking God for missionaries, like Hudson Taylor, who were faithful to tell people in China about Jesus and for missionaries serving in other countries throughout the world.

### 6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

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

**SAY** “ We can trust everything God says. We can worship Him joyfully and live our lives without fear! Trusting God gives us hope regardless of our situation. ”

Form kids into teams of four or five. Distribute a sticky note to each kid. Lead kids from each team to each take a few of the words from the key passage and write them on their sticky notes. Lead each team to choose a wall to place their sticky notes on in random order. Then direct kids to have a seat in the middle of the room. Tell kids that when you say “Go,” each team will race to their sticky notes and attempt to put them in the correct order.

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

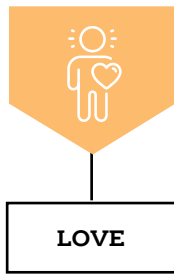
### 7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

**SAY** “ God, thank You for teaching us that everything You say is right and true. We know that we can always trust You. Thank You for making a way for us to be saved. Help us obey You and share Your love with those around us. 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 Jeremiah 31. Explain that Jeremiah was a prophet in the Old Testament. Discuss how Jeremiah warned God's people to repent and also reminded them of God's promises of hope.

Consider comparing Jerusalem (G10) and Babylon (E11) on 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 and Iraq.)

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Jeremiah 31:34.

**SAY** “ God’s people could never obey Him perfectly or love Him rightly. They needed new hearts. But God had a plan for His people. God’s plan came true when Jesus was born, died on the cross, and rose from the dead to pay the price of our sin. Those who trust in Jesus for salvation have their sin forgiven forever, are given new hearts, and receive the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, God’s teaching is now written on our hearts. ”

### 2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

| **SAY** “ Why is the new covenant better than the old covenant? ”

Discuss how the old covenant sacrificial system was a shadow of the perfect and complete sacrifice of Jesus. Remind kids that the law revealed sin and showed how we can never obey God perfectly. Lead kids to understand that the new covenant was fulfilled through Jesus, who obeyed the law perfectly, became the sacrifice for our sin, and made a way for us to be brought back to God.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 8:6.)

| **SAY** “ How have you experienced God’s promises in your life? ”

Answers will vary. Encourage kids to share about times they have experienced God’s promise to save them from sin, to turn sadness into joy, to have hope, to know He is always with them, to produce the fruit of the Spirit, and so on. Remind kids that we can always trust God.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 2 Pet. 1:3-4.)

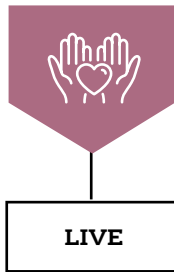
| **SAY** “ What might you tell a friend who isn’t sure if she should trust God? ”

Prompt kids to think of questions that others might ask them about God’s character. Encourage kids to think of Bible verses and Bible stories that prove God’s faithfulness. Remind kids that God will help them and give them words if they ask for His help.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 12:11-12.)

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





## THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

### LIVE the Mission

#### 1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

##### OPTION 1: MISSIONS TIC-TAC-TOE



Before the session create a tic-tac-toe grid on the floor using masking tape. Form the kids into two teams and provide each team with five pieces of paper and a Bible. Designate one team as X's and the other as O's. Lead each team to write either X's or O's on their papers.

Call out one of following Scripture references: Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 1 Chronicles 16:24; John 20:21; Isaiah 52:7; Mark 16:15; Acts 13:47; Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10. The first team to find the verse and read it aloud gets to put a X or an O on the grid. The first team to get three in a row wins.

**SAY** “ Can anyone tell me what all of these verses had in common? [Allow responses.] Yes, the verses are all about telling others about the Lord. Just as Hudson Taylor obeyed God’s command to tell others about Jesus, so are we called to obey. We do not have to travel to China to share the gospel, but can share Jesus with people wherever we are. ”

##### OPTION 2: HOPE BOOKMARKS



Cut heavyweight paper into two inch wide strips and distribute one strip to each kid. Provide markers, stickers, and other assorted craft supplies for kids to use to decorate their bookmarks. On the top of the bookmark, direct kids to write the key passage.

If time permits, challenge kids to look up verses about hope in the Bible and write the references on their bookmarks (Jeremiah 29:1; 1 Peter 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; Ephesians 1:18-21; Hebrews 10:23; Isaiah 40:31; Philippians 1:6). Encourage kids to decorate their bookmarks and use them to remember we can trust God’s promise of hope.

**SAY** “ The entire Bible is one big story of hope because all of the Bible points to Jesus. God’s plan to save sinners came true in Jesus. Through faith in Jesus, we can have hope to be saved from our sin, live a godly life for Him, and one day live with Him forever. ”

#### 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 His Word and that we can always trust Him. As time allows, lead kids to complete “Opposites” 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?



Unit 17 • Session 4

## GOD CAN ALWAYS BE TRUSTED

Jeremiah 31

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

Jeremiah was a prophet to the people of Judah. He warned the people of God's judgment because of their sin. But even though the people disobeyed, God had not abandoned them. His love never stopped, and God had a good plan for His people.

God spoke through Jeremiah: "On the day when I restore My people to their land, I will be the God of all the families of Israel. They will be My people."

The people suffered in exile, but God said, "You will make music again. You will dance with joy!" God was going to bring His people back home. He would gather them again. He would watch over them like a shepherd guards his flock.

God said, "I will turn their mourning into joy, comfort them, and bring happiness out of grief. My people will be satisfied with My goodness. There is hope for your future!"

Jeremiah told the people of Judah that God promised a new and better covenant so they could be saved from their sins.

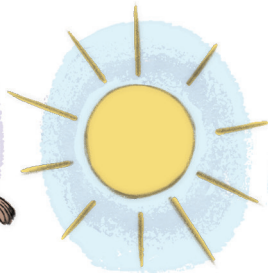
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Christ Connection: God's words brought hope to God's people because His words were true. God can always be trusted. Jeremiah told about a day when God would forgive sin and change people's hearts. Jesus' death and resurrection provides forgiveness of sins. Through Jesus, we have new hearts and life with God forever.

FOLD

## Write God's Law on Your Heart

Look up Jeremiah 31:33 and write the verse on the heart.



**Opposites** | God promises that He will make all things new. Match each picture above to its opposite.



NAME:



theGOSPELPROJECT.

## God Can Always Be Trusted

### BIBLE STORY SUMMARY:

- Jeremiah was a prophet to God's people around the time of the Babylonian exile.
- Through Jeremiah, God said He would bring His people back together and comfort them. God promised a future and a hope.
- Jeremiah said God would give them a new covenant to save them from their sins.

### CHRIST CONNECTION:

God's words brought hope to God's people because His words were true. God can always be trusted. Jeremiah told about a day when God would forgive sin and change people's hearts. Jesus' death and resurrection provides forgiveness of sins. Through Jesus, we have new hearts and life with God forever.

**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.

