

BRINGING THE STORY HOME

Week of February 4, 2018

Timeless Truth: God always keeps his promises

Bible Basis: 2 Kings 17:13-18; Ezekiel 11:14-20

The Story for Kids Weekly Reading:

Chapter 19 The Return Home

Memory Verse: "...They will be my people. I will be their faithful God, I will keep my promises to them." Zechariah 8:8



TABLE TALK

NOTE: These questions are designed to help prompt discussion among a wide range of ages. Please adapt them as they best fit YOUR family.

When the bad kings of Israel led their people away from God, God warned them that they would be captured and taken away from Jerusalem for 70 years. However, God also promised to bring them back. It was sort of like a 70 year time out to think about what they had done wrong. After 70 years God stirred Cyrus, the king of Persia, to build a temple to God in Jerusalem. Cyrus told the captured Israelites that they could go back and build the temple and that all people must give gifts to help built the temple. Some Israelites chose to stay, but over 42,000 people felt God's stirring and left Persia to return to Jerusalem. Even though their homes had been destroyed, the first thing they started building was the temple to God.

- How did the Israelites show their love to God?
- Have you ever felt a 'stirring' in your heart?
- How can you tell the difference between a true stirring from God, and just something you really want to do?

EXTRA MILE

Even though King Cyrus gave his decree that the Israelites could rebuild the temple of God, many people already living in Jerusalem didn't want it built and gave them a hard time. After a while God's people gave up and built their own houses. Eventually, God sent a prophet named Haggai to tell remind them that living for themselves was never going to be enough. They needed to finish building His temple first. Ask:

Gather some clothing (shoes & socks, a shirt and hat, some pants) and ask your children to follow your instructions to get dressed.

1. Put on your shoes.
 2. Pull up your pants;
 3. Put on your hat;
 4. Put on your shirt;
 5. Put on your socks.
- Did my instructions make any sense? Why not?
 - When we do things out of order it turns out pretty crazy. Just like we should've put our socks on before our shoes, and our shirt on before our hat, God wanted his people to "put first things first." What should always come first in our life? God!
 - How can we make sure that we're putting God first in our life?

PRAYER TIME

Dear God, You are the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, and we want you to be that in our life. Help us to remember to pray to you before all we do and then to thank you when we're done. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



The Story for Kids 3x Week Reading Plan

DAY 1

Reading: *Time to Go Home*, pg 142 – through break on pg 144 (blue–pg 157 – break on pg 159) (mins)

This reading covers: Ezra 1, 3

Summary: After years in a faraway land, it was time for God's people to go home.

Do together: Talk about a long trip the family has taken together. Discuss the frustrations of travel and the hassle of being away from home. What do we miss the most? What do we wish we could take with us when we leave? Talk about how good it feels to come back to your own house, your own bed, your own toys, your own friends.

Think about: God's children in our story were gone for a long time. But they were not on a vacation. They were away from home because of their disobedience. When we come home from a long trip with unpacking to do, and grass to cut, and laundry to get done, we are still glad to be in our own house and the things we are comfortable with.

Also read: Psalm 60:1-4

Prayer: Dear God, Thank you for our home. Thank you for the memories that we are making in this home and the way we are all growing up in you. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

DAY 2

Reading: *Time to Work*, break on pg 144 – through break on pg 147 (blue– break on pg 159 – break on pg 162) (5 mins)

This reading covers: Haggai 1; Zechariah 8

Summary: God used his messengers to challenge his people to work on his house.

Do together: Have you ever had a big project in your house? Talk about how you worked together to get it done. Your job might've been to keep your toys picked up, or to pay the workmen, but all tasks are important. Talk about how it feels when all is finished and you can stand back and see the completed task. It feels good!

Think about: When you did your job, who was the biggest encourager? Who kept us going? How did we feel when the work was done? Sometimes we have to do work first, before we play. And after a big job is completed, it always feels good to stand back and enjoy the results. God's people had a big job to do. God sent his helpers to encourage them in their task and to keep them going.

Also read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you that you never give us more than we can handle, as long as we rely on you. Even when you ask us to do a big job, you are there to encourage us, and you send helpers to encourage us. Thank you for helping us to finish our job. Thank you for the example of the people in the Bible who finished their jobs, too. In Jesus' name. Amen.

DAY 3

Reading: *Time to Celebrate* –break on pg 147 - end (blue – break on pg 162- end) (3 1/2 mins)

This reading covers: Ezra 5-6

Summary: God guides his people to complete the work, which calls for a celebration.

Do together: Enjoy a small family party. You can be as creative as you like and include aspects your family particularly enjoys.

Think about: Explain that you are celebrating a job well done, just like the people in our Bible story celebrated. Aren't you glad it didn't take many years to finish our job? The people in the bible story took a very long time to build the temple. They looked forward to this celebration for many, many years. They had not worshiped God in his Temple for a long time and they were so happy!

Read also: Psalm 145

Prayer: God, thank you that you are always with us. Even when we are working hard and doing a big job, you are with us. We know you are happy when we work together. And we know that you like to celebrate with us when we are done. In Jesus' name. Amen.