



10 God's Word Proclaimed

Key Theme

- God wants us to study His Word.

Key Passages

- Nehemiah 8:2–3, 8:5–6, 8:9, 9:1–3

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how the Jews came to conviction of their sin.
- Describe the response of the Jews after hearing God's Law read.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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Students will practice the memory verse by spilling out the Memory Verse Strips and putting them in the correct order. Then, they will say the verse aloud to each other and/or to the teacher. You will use these strips for Lessons 8–12.



Activity 1: God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes

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Students will fill out the God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes as you study the lesson.



Studying God's Word

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The people asked Ezra to read from God's Word. All who could understand listened and responded as Ezra read the Law of Moses out loud until midday. As they heard the Word of God, their hearts were changed. They remembered God's holiness, wept because of their sin, confessed their sins, and worshipped God.



Activity 2: God Is Good Action Game

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Students will repeat some of the ways God blessed the people of Israel as recorded in Nehemiah 9. They will repeat the blessings while moving according to the Action Cards.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print and cut out the Memory Verse Strips from the Resource DVD-ROM for each group of 2–3 students. Print the strips on cardstock.

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Strips for every 2–3 students
- Containers with a lid or small paper bags for each set of strips so students can mix them up and spill the verse



GOD'S WORD PROCLAIMED CLASS NOTES

- Print one God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes for each student
- God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.

- Student Take Home Sheets



GOD IS GOOD ACTION GAME

- Print and cut out the God Is Good Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Print and cut out the Action Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Print the Teacher Game Instructions for your use.
- Keep cards separate.

- God Is Good Cards
- Action Cards
- Teacher Game Instructions



Memory Verse

Nehemiah 9:6 You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them. And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

In our last lesson, we learned about Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem under King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah succeeded in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem under the guiding hand of God, and he continued as the governor over Jerusalem and the surrounding area for 12 years until he returned to Persia in 442 BC (Nehemiah 13:6). During Nehemiah's time as governor, he was zealous to help the people return to a right view of God and to obey Him and worship Him rightly.

Ezra, who led the second return to Jerusalem, was still alive in Jerusalem during this time. As we heard earlier, Ezra was a priest and scribe who had studied God's Law extensively (Ezra 7:10). His desire was to teach the Law in Israel, but his efforts must have fallen short. He had trained some men in the Law, but the people as a whole were still ignorant of what God required of them.

In order that the Law could be taught to the people, a platform was built and the people assembled in Jerusalem to learn. Ezra read from the Book of the Law of Moses to all the people assembled from morning until noon (Nehemiah 8:1–6). As Ezra opened the scrolls, he blessed God, and the people bowed in reverence to their God. Many teachers shared in the responsibility of explaining what the words recorded meant for the people.

Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place. So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:7–8)

Notice what these teachers did—they helped the people understand what was written and gave them the sense of the text. This had always been the responsibility of the priests and elders of Israel, but it had been neglected for so long that nobody even knew what God expected of them. These teachers took the words recorded by Moses and broke them down to explain what they meant. With this help, the people were able to recognize their sinfulness and how they fell short of what God required of them. They wept and mourned over their sin (Nehemiah 8:9).

But as the day was “holy to the Lord your God” (8:9), Nehemiah, Ezra, and the other leaders encouraged them to praise God and be thankful for all that God had done for them. They had so much to be thankful for. “Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (8:10). The people were able to rejoice in their understanding of the words of God and the knowledge that He rewards obedience and pardons sin. That was reason to celebrate.

After this initial teaching event, the people found in the Law that they were to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, and so they celebrated in booths for the first time since the days of Joshua. The Jews continued to respond positively to the teaching of God's Law. Similar to Isaiah's proclamation (Isaiah 55:10–13), the word of the Lord was going out and accomplishing what He sent it for—to bring change to the hearts of those who hear the truth.

As the people learned more from the teaching of the Law, they continued to have a repentant attitude and to focus themselves on the right worship of God (Nehemiah 9:1–3). In response to God, the priests and teachers overflowed in a glorious tribute to God and all that He had done for the Jews in the past. In a sense, they were giving a history lesson through a poem proclaimed aloud to the people. The people repented, and God was glorified through the proclamation of His Word by the teachers who honored Him. All of this was sealed with an oath to walk in God's Law and to observe all of the commands that they now understood (Nehemiah 10:28–29).

By way of application, it is so important for us to study God's Word so that we know what He desires of us and commands us to do. Jesus said, “Have you not read . . . ?” in many different situations to remind the false teachers in Israel that what is set forth in the Scriptures, the Old Testament at that time, is the authority. It is the authority because it has come from God and, as His creatures, we must submit to His authority. Part of that submission is to study what God has said so that we can understand what God expects of us.

As you teach this lesson, you have the opportunity to proclaim the truths of God's Word, as Ezra did, and then explain the meaning to your students, as the other teachers did. This is both a great opportunity and a great responsibility. God has established teachers within the church and given the gifts of the Spirit to build up the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11–16). As you teach this lesson, remind your students that while God does want us to obey His commands, Jesus Christ

has already fulfilled those commands perfectly and His righteousness can be credited to our account. Recognizing sin is the first step toward repentance and celebrating the forgiveness that God offers through Jesus Christ. Proclaim that truth and help those listening to understand how God would have them respond.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Since the beginning of the world, God has called His creatures to obey His commands. In the garden, Adam and Eve were to tend to the plants and avoid eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They failed to keep that command and introduced sin into the world. Since that time, God has revealed His commands to the people of the earth. However, there is a clear pattern—people constantly fail to obey God’s commands. That disobedience is rooted in the sin nature that passed to all mankind from Adam.

But to those who have received the forgiveness available through Christ for sins, past and present, there is no condemnation for disobedience and no fear of punishment (Romans 8:1–4; 1 John 4:16–18). Christ has paid the penalty for those sins in full. Now unshackled from our old natures, we are free to obey Him and keep His commandments. Many people, Christian or not, misunderstand this idea and think that Christians must be constantly obeying to earn God’s favor. But Christ has earned God’s favor for us, and we now have the joy of serving Him and obeying His commands in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:8–10). We can surely block our fellowship

with God through disobedience and grieve His Spirit, but His love for us remains, and as we turn to Him in repentance, that fellowship is restored.

One mark of a true Christian is to be obeying the commands of Christ (1 John 2:1–6). As Jesus was giving His disciples final instructions before He ascended to heaven, He called them to make disciples, teaching them to obey His commands (Matthew 28:18–20). As Christians continue in the work of making disciples, we must continue to teach the commands of Christ. But if we don’t know what those commands are, we can’t teach them to others. We must be diligent to study God’s Word so that the blind are not leading the blind and that we are able to fulfill Christ’s call to make disciples.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord, I join with the Israelites in saying “Amen! Amen!” Your Word is living and powerful. It is a discerner of thoughts and intents of the heart. You speak to me through your Word each time I open its delicate pages and read. Your Words are a comfort and strength to me in times of trial. How precious are the times you bring them to my mind in joy and in sorrow. Please move in the hearts of my students to treasure your Word, study it, and memorize it, too.

► Because of the age and ability of 1st and 2nd graders to read and comprehend, we encourage you to read the Scriptures to the students. However, if you have strong readers, by all means have them participate by reading God’s Word.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will spill the Memory Verse Strips out and put the words from the memory verse in the correct order.
- They will practice saying the verse aloud to their group and/or the entire class.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided this activity on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes

MATERIALS

- God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes
- God's Word Proclaimed Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will complete the class notes today as we study the Bible passages. Use the shapes at the bottom of the page to help you figure out the words that go in the blanks. Do not work ahead. I'll let you know when to fill something in.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will see how powerful the Word of God is to change hearts!



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Refer to Lesson 9 Lesson Theme Poster. God used Nehemiah to lead the third and final group of Jews back to Israel. He went back to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. God protected Nehemiah and the people while the walls were rebuilt. Nehemiah trusted God, prayed, and did what God wanted him to do. Nehemiah was made the governor of Jerusalem and encouraged the people to obey God and worship Him alone.

➤ Use the History of Israel Poster included with your teacher kit to show your class where the biblical accounts you study chronologically fit into this timeline.

► Re-read the verses as you ask the questions so your students will be able to answer directly from God's Word.

Nehemiah 8:2–3

Refer to Lesson 8 Lesson Theme Poster. Ezra the priest was still in Jerusalem.

Remember that Ezra led the second group of Jews back to Israel. The people had turned away from God, so Ezra preached God's Word to them. The people repented of their sins and turned back to God.

Ezra loved to preach the Word of God. And we are going to read about a time that Ezra read the scroll of God's Law to the people who had gathered together to hear it. The Book of the Law is God's Word! Open your Bibles to Nehemiah 8. I'm going to read Nehemiah 8:2–3. *Read the verses emphasizing the answers to the questions below.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What did the Bible call Ezra? *Nehemiah 8:2. A priest.*
- ? What did Ezra bring to read to the men and women? *Nehemiah 8:2. The Law.*
Yes, and remember, the Law is God's holy Word.
- ? Where was Ezra when he read the Book of the Law? *Nehemiah 8:3. In the open square.*
- ? How long did Ezra read? *Nehemiah 8:3. From morning until midday.*

Ezra opened the Book of the Law and started to read. The Bible says he read from morning until midday. This means he started when the sun rose and went until lunch time. It was probably six hours or more! A very long time!

- ? Now look at #1 on the class notes. Which words will complete that statement? Match the shapes in #1 with the shapes at the bottom of your sheet. Will someone read that for me? *Assign a reader. Ezra read God's Word. Have students complete #1 on the class notes.*
- ? And what about #2? Who can read that one and how will you answer it? *Assign a reader. He read from morning until noon. Have students complete #2 on the class notes.*
- ? Did the people listen to Ezra as he read? How do you know? Listen again to Nehemiah 8:3. *Re-read the verse. Yes. The Bible says the ears of the people were attentive.*

Nehemiah 8:5–6

This was an exciting time for the people of Israel. They had asked Ezra to read God's Word, and he did! They were listening. Let's read a little more about this. I'm going to read Nehemiah 8:5–6. *Read Nehemiah 8:5–6.*

- ? Where was Ezra standing as he read the Book of the Law? *Nehemiah 8:5. Above all the people.*
- ? What did the people do when Ezra began to read? *Nehemiah 8:5. They stood up.*

The people stood up for the reading of God's Word. Remember, he read from morning until midday—that's about six hours! The fact that they stood that whole time was a sign of respect for God and His Word. They were showing how much they loved the Word of God!

? Now someone read #3 on the class notes for us. Look at the pictures and figure out how you will complete that. *Assign a reader. The people respected God's Word and stood up. Have students complete #3 on the class notes.*

? Now listen as I read Nehemiah 8:6 again. What did the people answer after Ezra began reading? *Re-read Nehemiah 8:6. They answered, Amen! Amen!*

? Does anyone know what *amen* means? *Allow discussion.*

Saying amen is a way of letting someone know that you agree with what they are saying. The people were standing in respect, and they were agreeing with Ezra, his prayer, and the reading of God's Word. So they said, "Amen! Amen!"

? And what about #4 on your class notes? What did the people cry out? Will someone read that for me? *Assign a reader. Amen! Amen! Have students complete #4 on the class notes.*

? What else did the people do as they heard God's holy Word being read? Listen to the end of Nehemiah 8:6. It lists three different things. *Read the last part of Nehemiah 8:6. They lifted their hands, bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord.*

But something odd happened during this reading of the Word. Listen as I read and tell me if you know what it was. *Read Nehemiah 8:9 emphasizing "all the people wept, when they heard the Words of the Law."*

? What were the people doing as Ezra read the Law? *Nehemiah 8:9. They were weeping, mourning, crying.*

? What did the priests say about the day? *Nehemiah 8:9. It was holy to the Lord.*

? It was a holy day to the Lord. And the people were crying as they heard the Word of God. Why would they cry? *Allow discussion.*

Nehemiah 8:9

Discover the Truth

The people had not heard God's Word for a long time. They didn't have Bibles to read like we do today. Ezra and the priests helped the people to understand God's Word. As they heard and understood God's Word, they realized they had forgotten about God. They had turned away from Him and sinned. And when they heard the Words of God, they cried.

But even though they were crying, Ezra and the priests told them that this was a holy day—a good day! That is because the Word of God was being read. And the people were turning back to God. They were sorry for their sins. God wants His people to be sorry for their sins and turn back to Him. This was a good and holy day!

? Now look at #5 on your class notes. Will someone read that for me? What goes in the blanks? *Assign a reader. They were sorry for their sin. Have students complete #5 on the class notes.*



READ THE WORD

The people listened to God's Word and their hearts were changing. They were sorry for their sins and asking God for forgiveness. Let's keep reading! I'm going to read Nehemiah 9:1-3 about another day when Ezra read God's Law to the people. *Read the verses.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? The Bible says that the children of Israel were assembled. They were fasting, in sackcloth, and had dust on their heads. Does anyone know what fasting means? *Allow discussion.*

When the people fasted it usually meant they didn't eat or drink anything. They would spend that time in prayer.

And when the Bible says that the people had sackcloth on, it means they put on clothes that were made from rough material. This was a sign that they were asking God for forgiveness. They would also put ashes on themselves. Again, the ash showed that they were humbly seeking God and publicly admitting that they had sinned against Him.

All of these things—the fasting, the sackcloth, and the ashes—were ways the people showed on the outside how sorry, sad, and upset they were because of their sins against God.

? What were the people reading from? *Re-read Nehemiah 9:3 if necessary. The Book of the Law of the Lord their God.*

? And how long did this reading last? *Nehemiah 9:3. For one-fourth of the day.*

? And how long did they confess and worship God after the reading? *Nehemiah 9:3. For one-fourth of the day.*

Now one-fourth of the day was three hours. They measured time and "day" by the daylight hours. The people heard the Word of God for three hours, and then they confessed and worshipped for three hours. It was a total of about six hours!

Discover the Truth

God's Word is powerful! It can change hearts. When the people heard God's Word, they realized they had sinned against God, and their hearts turned back to God. They confessed their sins and worshipped God who had done so much for them.

? Now, who can read #6 on the class notes? How will you answer that? *Assign a reader. God's Word changed their hearts.*



► After completing each point on the class notes, have the students re-read the statement together or call on individual students to read it.



God Is Good Action Game

MATERIALS

- God Is Good Cards
- Action Cards
- Teacher Game Instructions

INSTRUCTIONS

Print and cut the God Is Good Cards and the Action Cards. Have the class sit in rows facing each other—two teams. Explain the two types of cards and read what each says. Put the cards in two separate stacks face down on the floor between the students.

Assign two students from team 1 to take one card from each stack. They should read the cards out loud (assist them if necessary) and return to their team. The team will then perform the cards together. They will replace the cards when finished and then take a seat. Repeat alternating teams.

Example: Susie picks the God gave them kingdoms and nations card—say it 2 times and Max chooses the run in place card. Susie, Max and their team will repeat “God gave them kingdoms and nations” two times while running in place.

You can motivate everyone to participate by keeping score using the numbers on the God Is Good Cards. Points awarded if the entire team participates.

The priests reminded the people of the many great things God had done for them. When the people heard God’s Word and

remembered how good God had been to them, they were sorry for their sins. In our game today we’ll be repeating some of the things God had done for His people. Each team will choose one Action Card and one God Is Good Card. Read the cards for your team and lead your team in doing the action and saying what is written on the cards. We’ll go back and forth between teams so everyone can play. Let’s get into teams. Ready? *Begin to play.*

Use the points on the God Is Good Cards to keep score when the teams cooperate together to repeat and act out the cards.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Ezra talked about the goodness of the Lord to the Israelites. As you know, the Israelites weren’t always obedient to God. Many times they turned away from Him. But when they heard the Word of the Lord read out loud, they understood what it said, and their hearts were changed. They confessed their sins and remembered how good God had been to them. They wanted to live lives that would honor God. And it all started by hearing and believing His holy Word!



Applying God’s Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. Ezra the priest was trained in understanding the Law of Moses. When he went to Jerusalem, the people asked him to read the scroll of the Law of Moses—the Word of God. The people had turned away from God in their sin and had not heard the Word of God read for a long time. The Word of God changed the hearts of the people as they

listened. They realized how good God had been to them in the past. And they realized they had turned away from the Creator God and turned back to their sinful ways. They reacted by shouting “Amen,” bowing their heads, and lifting up their hands. The people wept when they heard the words of the Law because they knew they had not been obeying God.

GOD’S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD.

The people who heard Ezra read were changed by God’s Word. As you hear God’s Word and understand it, you will find that it can change you, too! But only if you read it and listen carefully to those who teach it.

As you learn it better, you will see that it tells of God’s amazing plan to save sinners from the punishment of hell that they deserve. You see, we are all sinners. And because God is holy He can’t look at our sin. And our sin will keep us out of heaven. But we know that Jesus came to earth so that sinners could be saved. When Jesus died, He took the punishment of everyone who would believe in Him. Jesus’s death made a way for us to get to God. The Bible says if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and turn from our sins we will be saved. And all of our eternity can be spent with Jesus.

As you grow, I pray that you will fall in love with the Word of God and read it every day! It will teach you amazing things. God gave us His Word, and He wants us to study His Word. The Bible is something you can study for the rest of your life. The more you study, the more you’ll learn; the Bible never ever gets old!



► Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Nehemiah 9:6 You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them. And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God that His Word is living and powerful.
- Pray that God will put a love and desire in your students’ hearts for His Word.
- Ask God to help you and your students know Him better through His Word.