



Mustard Seed Children's Summary for March 1, 2009
Released on Wednesday, February 25, 2009

"God Gives New Life"

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 11:14–21.

LESSON TEXT: Ezekiel 11:14–21.

MEMORY VERSE: "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you" (Ezekiel 11:19).

Ezekiel 11:14–21

14 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

15 Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in possession.

16 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.

17 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.

18 And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence.

19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh:

20 That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

21 But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord GOD.

TEACHER'S NOTES

It is true that Ezekiel is a book that deals primarily with Israel as a nation. The messages the prophet carried from God were indeed mainly messages of rebuke, warning, and promise to a group of people living in exile in Babylonia long ago. Yet, surprising as it may seem, it is also true that what Ezekiel said contains truth that is appropriate for young children today.

This week's lesson truly starts off a new quarter at the beginning of the Christian walk. It introduces both the need for new birth and God's provision through the gospel. Young children can understand both.

Israel was at the end of a long trail that included repeated obeying, falling back into idolatry, and the resulting chastisement. This time Babylon's military forces had overwhelmed them. Then the Babylonians, following their customary policy, transported thousands to distant Babylonia. Both the innocent and the guilty

were swept up in this resettlement. Ezekiel, God's prophet, found himself exiled along with the others.

There was some freedom for the exiles. Nebuchadnezzar would have been chiefly concerned that conquered populations just be transplanted to where they would not be troublesome. Ezekiel was able to live in his own house near the River Chebar, which was probably a canal. From there he functioned as God's prophet to the captives.

The messages the Lord sent the people through Ezekiel focused on the reason for their being there (their sins) and the certainty of God's future blessing. This lesson highlights the inner change the Lord promised to bring about in them, which would be a change in their behavior when He returned them to their land.

Inner change is something we all need to experience. We are enabled to please God not through our efforts but by accepting His solution to our sin problem. Jesus said we "believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29). Then He makes a great inner change that makes pleasing the Father with our actions possible.

This first lesson is strongly evangelistic. Use it to present the gospel. Let us give the boys and girls something to believe so that they can trust the Holy Spirit to apply what they hear.

THE OBJECT IN VIEW:

Teach that people as they are can never please God, but because of what Jesus has done, He can produce in us the changes that make pleasing Him possible.

TRUTHS TO STRESS:

1. God's people needed to have new life within in order to change on the outside, and God promised to work that change in them.
2. We too need inward change because "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23).
3. Because Jesus died for us, God will change us too if we will believe in Him.

PLANNING VISUAL AIDS

For Telling the Lesson, you will need flannelgraph figures or pictures of a crowd, a prophet speaking to a crowd, and Ezekiel. You will also need three flash cards: "change," "inside," and "outside."

For Helping to Remember, supply for each child glue, crayons, a small picture of Jesus, and a plain paper plate.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Brian and his mother were driving back from the market.

"Mom, Nick was at the store," Brian said.

Mom nodded. "Yes, I saw him."

"Well, I saw him try to steal a candy bar again. The clerk made him put it back. Nick steals things. He fights. He tells lies. Why does he keep doing things like that?"

Mom thought a moment. "Brian, I think what your friend Nick needs is an inside change."

"It looks to me like the outside is what needs fixing," Brian grumbled.

This time Mom said, "But, you see, it is only when Jesus makes things right inside that a person can do what pleases God on the outside. What Nick needs is Jesus."

Then she said, "But we must never forget that it is not just the people who steal and lie and fight who need change inside. You know what the Bible says. No matter how good we try to be, all of us have sinned and need Jesus to give us new life."

"I remember," Brian said. "I am going to pray that Nick will let Jesus do that for him."

Long ago some people in the Bible needed changing. Let us see what God said He would do for them.

TELLING THE LESSON

The Lord's people seemed to get into trouble over and over. (Show crowd.) They knew what kind of living pleased the Lord. He had told them. But did they do what He said? Maybe for a while. But before long, most of the people would be doing just what they

wanted to do. That was a big mistake, for the Lord would let different kinds of trouble come to help them remember how He wanted His people to live. That happened not just one time or two times but again and again. The people never seemed to learn that going their own way was not a good idea. (It is never a good idea for us, either.)

The Lord loved His people, however. He loved them because He is God. He would send them special men called prophets. The work of a prophet was to tell people messages from God. (Show prophet speaking to crowd.) A prophet would say things like this: "People, think what you are doing. The Lord has given you good rules, and you are not listening. If you do not change and start doing what is right, big trouble is sure to come."

One of those men who spoke for God was a prophet named Ezekiel. (Show Ezekiel.)

At the time Ezekiel was a prophet, there was already trouble. Enemy soldiers had come into the country, and no one was strong enough to stop them. The enemies took what they wanted; then they carried off many of the people to a faraway place and made them stay there. (Show crowd.) They even took Ezekiel away. The people who were left began saying, "God took them away because He is angry with them. Since we are safe, He must be pleased with us." But actually, most of His anger was aimed at those in Jerusalem.

You and I should remember two important things. (Count on fingers.) First, all this trouble was not God's fault. It was really the people's own fault. Second, because the Lord is God, He still loved His people very much, anyway.

One day the Lord told Ezekiel to go to the people who were carried off and tell them something for Him. "Tell them," the Lord said, "I let enemy soldiers take you far from home, but I will keep you safe in the faraway land where they took you. And someday I will take you back to your own land again."

Listen to what God told Ezekiel next. "I shall change them and make them new inside. (Show "change.") I shall change their hard, stony hearts that do not want to obey Me so that they will truly be My people, and I will be their God." What a good promise!

This makes me think of Paul and what happened when God changed him. Do you remember Paul? He was the man who went here and there putting as many of Jesus' people in jail as he could in order to stop all preaching about Him. But then God changed Paul, and Paul himself began telling everyone that Jesus was the Saviour sent by God. He changed outside because God had changed him inside. (Show "inside.")

You see, both Paul and those people in Ezekiel's time all needed change inside before they could please God by doing what was right on the outside.

That is the way it is today. You and I may try to be good, but we still can never please God until He changes us on the inside. When we have new life inside, we can please Him by doing what is right on the outside. (Show "outside.")

TELLING HOW TO LIVE

Did you know God's Book says that even nice people have done wrong things? Did you know that when God looks down at us, He sees we *all* need changing inside? Did you know that we can never change ourselves by trying to be good? And did you know that is just why Jesus came?

The Bible says that when Jesus died on the cross, He took the punishment for those wrong things we have done. Now, when we believe that Jesus did that for us, God Himself makes the changes in us that we need. God makes us clean from the sin of wanting our way instead of His way. God makes us want to please Him. Also, He makes us *able* to please Him. What good changes those are!

If you want to be sure the Lord has changed you, be sure to come talk to me after class.

HELPING TO REMEMBER

Let the children print "I want" and glue a picture of Jesus on one side of the paper plate. On the other side, they should print "to change" and draw themselves smiling. If time permits, they may add spring flowers to each side.

EXPLAINING THE MEMORY VERSE

"I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you" (Ezekiel 11:19). This is a promise God made to His people long ago. He meant that someday He would change them. He said He would make them new inside so that they would want to please Him instead of just wanting to please themselves. Instead of being mean to other people, they would do what was good for others. They would be different outside because God had changed them inside.

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY:

Willie Ferrell
Jesus Is All Ministries
www.jesuisall.com

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The Pulpit Commentary, Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Hrsg.), Bellingham, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc.

The KJV Parallel Bible Commentary, by Nelson Books.

LESSON ACTIVITY:

God Gives New Life (Ezekiel 11:14-21)

Puzzle

Z U E P J R M H Q O Z N S Z S
H P K E H U Z S S S J A E P M
C R P O B D Q U E E N Y I Y F
M N Z P I I E T S D L R R N C
Q M E L A S U R E J I F T O G
L R W E D T R T A T B X N T X
S I Z R A I E A O T T B U S H
I J O T S S F E E O T G O N Q
F L S U T R A E H L V A C E F
P G L A E Z E K I E L L C W A
Z R B U A Z A E A V F N I S K
E L G I V E P L B Q K R O P H
E Z Y R G S B B U E M R G E Q
T S Y F X O X R L F D R L G I
O S G G I Z D S W I K G E B S

COUNTRIES
DETESTABLE
EZEKIEL
FLESH
GIVE
GOD
HEART
ISRAEL
JERUSALEM
LORD
NEW
PEOPLE
SCATTARED
SPIRIT
STATUTES
STONY

16 of 16 words were placed into the puzzle.

God Gives New Life (Ezekiel 11:14-21)

Puzzle Solution

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+ + + P + + + H + + + + S + S
+ + + E + + + + S S + + E P +
+ + + O + D + + E E + + I Y +
+ + + P I + E T + D L R R N +
+ M E L A S U R E J I F T O +
+ + + E D T R T A T + + N T +
+ + + R A + E A + T + + U S +
+ + O T + S + + E + T + O N +
+ L S + T R A E H L + A C E +
+ + + A E Z E K I E L + C W +
+ + B + + + + + + + + S +
+ L G I V E + + + + + + + +
E + + + G + + + + + + + + +
+ + + + + O + + + + + + + +
+ + + + + + D + + + + + + + +
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(Over, Down, Direction)

COUNTRIES (13, 9, N)

DETESTABLE (10, 4, SW)

EZEKIEL (5, 10, E)

FLESH (12, 5, NW)

GIVE (3, 12, E)

GOD (5, 13, SE)

HEART (9, 9, W)

ISRAEL (5, 4, SE)

JERUSALEM (10, 5, W)

LORD (2, 9, NE)

NEW (14, 8, S)

PEOPLE (4, 1, S)

SCATTARED (14, 11, NW)

SPIRIT (15, 1, SW)

STATUTES (3, 9, NE)

STONY (14, 7, N)