

The People Confess Their Sin

Ezra 10:1-17

MEMORY VERSE

EZRA 10:11

“Now therefore, make confession to the LORD God of your fathers, and do His will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Two potatoes or other objects easily passed around.

Yellow and gray construction paper, glue, markers or crayons and glitter.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Rip Van Winkle

We will learn today that the people and leaders of Israel had fallen asleep. They were asleep to God’s Word and asleep to their sin. Because so many didn’t care what was happening, a lot of problems began to take place. They ended up in idol worship and captivity in a foreign land. God was faithful and eventually brought them back to their land again. It was now time to make things right. Sometimes we can fall asleep spiritually. When we don’t pay attention to our relationship with the Lord, problems may begin to happen in our lives. Recount the story of Rip Van Winkle who was a young man who fell asleep under a tree. He woke up 100 years later and discovered that everything had changed around him, including himself.

Find a volunteer to be “it.” Have them stand at the front of the room facing away from the class. Turn off the light (the volunteer can make sleeping noises if they like). While the light is off have two or three children change places or change jackets or other minor changes (you can notify some of the children before class

about what you plan to do). Turn the light back on and ask the volunteer to tell what changed. Pick another one or two children to play.

Reinforce with the children how that things can change in our lives if we are asleep spiritually.

LESSON TIME!

When God called the nation of Israel He said that they would be “peculiar” or different people. They were going to be different from all of the other nations in the world. The true and living God was going to be their God and He would bless them. Part of being “peculiar” was to be separate or different from the world. We are going to learn in today’s lesson that God has also called us to be separated from the world that we live in. The devil wants us to conform ourselves to the world. The kingdom of God is very different from this world, and as God’s people , **God wants us to be separated from the world.**

We will also learn in today’s lesson that when we do not listen to God and obey His Word, problems will arise in our lives just as they did for God’s people in Israel when they did not listen to God and obey His Word. We live in this world, but God never wants us to become a part of it. **God wants us to be separated from the world.**

EZRA 10:1-4

Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly.

And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this.

"Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.

"Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. We also are with you. Be of good courage, and do it."

This lesson is a very sad story. It shows how sin brings sorrow and pain. We find Ezra now at the temple, the house of the Lord, and we find him weeping over the sins of the nation. It broke his heart to see how much the people had sinned and turned away from the Lord.

Ezra knew the scriptures pretty well. He probably read about all of the glorious days of King David and Solomon and how God had greatly blessed the nation of Israel. But now the nation was in ruins because of their sin. But God was working in the hearts of the people at this time.

While Ezra prays we read that a large crowd gathers together around him. They are also sad, their hearts are now broken over their sin against God. It was too bad that so many terrible things had to happen to the nation for them to finally repent from their sin. Sometimes God has to bring chastisement or discipline to us so that we will repent.

But something very wonderful is said by some of the people! A man by the name of Shechaniah speaks up and confesses before everyone that the nation has sinned against God. But the great thing in what he says is that “there is hope in Israel in spite of this.”

This is so important because, even though the nation had turned away from God and was overrun by its enemies, God never cast them away for good. God still loved them through everything. He still loves them now and they have hope because of that. They were now asking God to forgive them of their sin and were committing themselves to serve only Him. Surely, we will receive blessings when we walk in obedience.

It is important for us to know that God want us to serve Him. But if we ever do sin we can always come to Him, ask for forgiveness and then receive forgiveness from Him. Jesus told us that He would never leave us nor forsake us, even when we make mistakes. What this does in our hearts is make us want to serve Him all the more.

The sin they had committed was worshipping idols. A big part of why they began to worship idols is that they began to marry women who were idol worshippers. Instead of leading them to the true God, their wives led them away from God. God had commanded them not to marry these wives because He knew the problems that would come if they did.

If we get too close to the world, their ways may rub off on us. We need to love unbelievers, but we should not become like them. Now the people learned the hard way and needed to make things right. Let's not learn the hard way! **God wants us to be separated from the world.**

EZRA 10:5-8

Then Ezra arose, and made the leaders of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear an oath that they would do according to this word. So they swore an oath.

Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib; and when he came there, he ate no bread and drank no water, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity.

And they issued a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the descendants of the captivity, that they must gather at Jerusalem,

and that whoever would not come within three days, according to the instructions of the leaders and elders, all his property would be confiscated, and he himself would be separated from the assembly of those from the captivity.

Ezra takes Shechaniah's advice and calls together the leaders of the people and has them take an oath to obey the Lord. The people were now ready to serve the Lord and do what is right. The next thing that they decided to do was to call the whole nation together. Every man, woman and child was to come to Jerusalem.

All of this began because of Shechaniah coming to Ezra. It is amazing what God will do with one person who is willing to be obedient. God wants to use our lives for His kingdom. He can and will do great things in us if we let Him. **God wants us to be separated from the world.**

Hot Potatoes

The object of this game is to not be caught with the hot potato in your hand. You will need 2 potatoes or other objects that can be passed around.

Have everyone sit in a circle. Give out the two potatoes. Play the music while the children pass around the two potatoes. Have one potato go to the left and one potato go to the right. Stop the music, the one holding the potato sits outside of the circle. Start over until only two remain. Play again.

When you are done, remind the children that God chooses us to do great things for Him. We need to be ready and willing when we are chosen and given a job to do by the Lord.

EZRA 10:9-15

So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth of the month; and all the people sat in the open square of the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of heavy rain.

Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel.

"Now therefore, make confession to the LORD God of your fathers, and do His will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the pagan wives."

Then all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, "Yes! As you have said, so we must do.

"But there are many people; it is the season for heavy rain, and we are not able to stand outside. Nor is this the work of one or two days, for there are many of us who have transgressed in this matter.

"Please, let the leaders of our entire assembly stand; and let all those in our cities who have taken pagan wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of their cities, until the fierce wrath of our God is turned away from us in this matter."

Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite gave them support.

Next we see that all of the people have gathered in Jerusalem. Ezra stands up before them and tells them about their sin. He then tells them to confess their sin and ask forgiveness and then separate themselves from those who don't serve the Lord.

When we sin we are also supposed to confess or talk to God about our sins. We should then ask for forgiveness and then commit to the Lord that we will not continue in that sin. Part of that is to separate ourselves from the world. We live in this world, but the world should never become a part of us. The most important thing to us should be Jesus and His kingdom. **God wants us to be separated from the world.**

EZRA 10:16-17

Then the descendants of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain heads of the fathers' households, were set apart by the fathers' households, each of them by name; and they sat down on the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter.

By the first day of the first month they finished questioning all the men who had taken pagan wives.

The people all confessed their sin and began to obey. It was probably a very sad time for the people. But if they had obeyed in the first place then this would have never happened. It is very important for us to obey the Lord.

Have you ever wondered why there are rules? Or maybe why we should do the things written in the Bible? It is because God knows everything about us. He created us, so He knows how we should live. He gives us His Word to help us to live a happy life. When we obey and follow God's Word we will have a life that is very happy. If we choose to sin and disobey then our lives will have a lot of problems like the people in our story. Let's commit to always serve the Lord no matter what! **God wants us to be separated from the world.**

Stay in the Light

The world is full of darkness. We need to stay close to the light of God's Word and be separated from this world. As a reminder of this have the children make a light bulb and put the memory verse in the center.

You will need yellow and gray construction paper, glue, markers or crayons and glitter. Using yellow construction paper have the children cut out light bulb shapes (approximately 6 inches). Next have them cut out small gray squares for the base of the light bulb. Have the children write the memory verse in the center of the light bulb. As an option, use glitter to make the light bulb look shiny.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to remain separate from the world. Also to ask the Lord for forgiveness for any sin that has not been confessed. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.