

Ezekiel's Call

Ezekiel 2:1-3:15

MEMORY VERSE

EZEKIEL 3:10

“Son of man, receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Masking tape, small balloons and blindfolds (old clean socks or rags will do).

Tortillas (one for each child in your class) and honey.

A copy of both templates for each child, scissors, crayons or markers, and paper fasteners.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Balloon Rebellion

God’s people didn’t want to hear the message that Ezekiel would bring to them. But what the people learned is that when they disobey God they miss out on blessings. When we don’t obey we also miss out on blessings. For this game you will need masking tape, small balloons and blindfolds (old clean socks or rags will do).

Using masking tape, make a square 4’ x 4’ (make bigger if needed). Divide the class in half and have half of the class stand inside of the square. Give them each blindfolds. Have everyone else blow up a small balloon. Have the children with the balloons stand against the walls around the classroom. Have the children tap the balloons into the air and keep them in the air using no hands, but by blowing them to propel them up. They need to keep blowing on the balloons to keep them airborne. The children inside of the square must listen for the balloons and keep the balloons from coming into the square. They also cannot use their hands, only by blowing on the balloons. If a balloons lands in either area a point

will go to that team. Keep playing until all of the balloons have landed or set a time limit of a few minutes.

After playing, have the children gather together and introduce today's lesson. The people in the center square are like the people of Israel in our story. They are blinded by their sin. The balloons are like the Word of God. The people of Israel didn't want the Word of God anywhere near them. The other children trying to get the balloons into the square are like Ezekiel. They keep faithfully trying to deliver the Word even though the children in the square are trying to keep it far away. Sometimes God may call us to do something for him. Other people may not like it that we are serving the Lord. But we need to be strong and do what we know is right.

LESSON TIME!

Some say it's hard to teach an old dog a new trick. But by giving a dog rewards and discipline you can teach them to obey. As a parent, training children to obey is not always an easy thing to do. Unlike a dog, God has given us a free will, giving us the opportunity to make choices that will honor Him or disgrace Him. We have a responsibility to make the right choices as God has directed us in His Word. He also tells us in His Word about the things that will happen when we disobey, hindering us from a life of blessings.

Ezekiel was a man who chose to obey God. He was a priest as well as a prophet and served God by actively preaching His Word in Babylon for 22 years. He preached to everyone, telling them about God's judgment and salvation, and calling them to repentance and obedience. Ezekiel lived out what he preached. The love that Ezekiel had for God was shown by his obedience to do what God wanted. **To love God is to obey God.**

Ezekiel was born and raised in the land of Judah and was preparing to become a priest in God's temple when the Babylonians attacked

in 597 BC and carried him away along with 10,000 other captives (see 2 Kings 24:10-14). This captivity came upon Israel as a result of their disobedience. Five years later, living as a captive in Babylon, Ezekiel would see one of the most glorious and awesome displays of God's presence and power (verse 1:4).

Through this vision God called Ezekiel to be His prophet. The Israelites in exile had lost their perspective on God's purpose and presence in their life. Ezekiel would be commissioned by God to remind them of His love and purposes for them and to warn them that sin will only bring destruction. As we look at our lesson today, we will see that Ezekiel faced a tremendous challenge to obey God among a hardhearted and stubborn people.

EZEKIEL 2:1-7

And He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you."

Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me.

And He said to me: "Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.

"For they are impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.'

"As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse; for they are a rebellious house; yet they will know that a prophet has been among them.

"And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

"You shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse, for they are rebellious.

It's interesting to note that every time God reveals His glory to someone in the Bible they fall to the ground in fear, reverence and awe. Ezekiel is no different. As God reveals His glory Ezekiel can do nothing more than to lay on the ground in humble adoration. We can only imagine what the glory of heaven will be like, but one thing we know for sure is that it is going to be so awesome that our response will probably be the same, fall to our faces in respect.

The Creator addresses His creation by calling him "son of man" (or son of dust). It is amazing that God chooses to work His divine will on earth through mortal, imperfect beings. We are made from dust, yet God chooses to place within us His life and breath. We should respond to Him in honor and respect, living in obedience. **To love God is to obey God.**

Ezekiel was given the opportunity to show God how much he loved Him. As the Spirit of God entered Ezekiel, God enables him to stand and reveals His divine message. When God saw Ezekiel's open and obedient attitude he filled him with His Spirit and gave him power for the job ahead. God does not expect us to understand everything about Him, but He wants us to be willing and obedient servants.

Ezekiel would be asked to carry out a very difficult ministry. He would have to stand before his people who were very stubborn and rebellious against God. Instead of accepting God's judgment and confessing their sins, the Jewish exiles thought of their time in

Babylon as a temporary setback that would soon end. Ezekiel would become a thorn in their side.

God asked Ezekiel to declare His Word to His people. Whether they responded was the people's own responsibility. God told him to not be afraid, but to speak His words. Ezekiel needed encouragement because the task would be difficult. The people's response would be sharp, barbed like a thorn, stinging like a scorpion. His love for God would truly be tested.

EZEKIEL 2:8-3:3

"But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you."

Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it.

Then He spread it before me; and there was writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe.

Moreover He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel."

So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll.

And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you." So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness.

What an awesome responsibility Ezekiel had in presenting God's message to people who were ungrateful and abusive. Three times

God told Ezekiel not be afraid or dismayed. His ministry would demand that he remains strong and unshaken, as others would threaten him and possibly even try to kill him.

Sometimes we are also called to be an example or share our faith with people who may be unkind to us. They may not want to hear about Jesus and His love for them. Just as the Lord told Ezekiel not to give up, He wants us to be faithful in sharing the gospel with others in those times that are easy to share as well as those times when it may not (2 Timothy 4:2). **To love God is to obey God.**

When God's spirit is within us, we can lay aside our fears of being laughed at, or worse, because His strength is powerful enough to help us live for Him even under the worst criticism.

Ezekiel could have refused God's call on his life. He could have looked at what God asked him to do and say that it was too hard. He could have told God to find someone else to do this difficult task; but had Ezekiel done that, he would have missed out on the blessing of serving God. He certainly was left with a difficult choice. God didn't want him to rebel as the people did, but still Ezekiel had to make the choice to follow God and obey Him.

God's request may have seemed kind of strange. A scroll was given to him and he was told to eat it. Could you imagine having to eat a scroll? But we are told that it tasted as sweet as honey. Though God's judgment would be bitter to those who disobey God, His Word tasted as sweet as honey to Ezekiel. If Israel had only listened and obeyed God's Word; it would have been as honey to their lives. His Word would not only build their faith, but its wisdom would sweeten their lives with blessings. Now it would bring a bitter judgment to punish them.

Israel made the mistake of trying to make it without God. They neglected to read and apply God's Word to their lives. We need to make sure that we don't make the same mistake. We need to feed

ourselves spiritually just as we do physically. This means doing more than just simply giving God's message a casual glance. We need to take His Word to heart and make it part of our life. A changed heart is a changed life.

Honey Dipped Scrolls

Bring some tortillas and honey. Have the children take one tortilla each. They can gently tear off the edges to make squares. From the squares let them make scrolls. Pass the honey around and let them dip their scroll in honey and eat them (no double dipping though...☺), just like Ezekiel ate the scrolls.

EZEKIEL 3:4-11

Then He said to me: "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.

"For you are not sent to a people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, but to the house of Israel,

"not to many people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, had I sent you to them, they would have listened to you.

"But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted.

"Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads.

"Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not be afraid of them, nor be

dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house."

Moreover He said to me: "Son of man, receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears.

"And go, get to the captives, to the children of your people, and speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' whether they hear, or whether they refuse."

God had called the nation of Israel to be a light among the rebellious nations around them. They were called to live as God's representatives, drawing all men to Him so they too could experience His mercy and grace. But now the people of Israel had turned away from God, choosing to live in the darkness of His judgment. The far off foreign nations would listen to Ezekiel's message, but God's people turned a deaf ear to his words.

God gave Ezekiel the ability to be as hard and stubborn as they were to proclaim His message. God makes His followers strong enough to stand against anything or anyone, including those who hate what is right. Just as God gave Ezekiel tough love and tough faith, He will also give us the stability, perseverance, and insight we need to live up to the task He has given us. He will prepare us to carryout His calling in our life. We need only to respond in obedience. **To love God is to obey God.**

For Ezekiel's preparation, God wanted His Word to sink deep into his own heart before he spoke it to others. If we are going to be effective in ministry, we need to allow God's Word to have a place in our heart. As God's Word changes our heart, we can live as an effective witness. The apostle Paul said it well, "walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Colossians 1:10)

EZEKIEL 3:12-15

Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great thunderous voice: "Blessed is the glory of the LORD from His place!"

I also heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, and a great thunderous noise.

So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

Then I came to the captives at Tel Abib, who dwelt by the River Chebar; and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

Ezekiel must have been in awe as the Spirit of the Lord lifted him up to take him to the place where he will begin his ministry. Distracted by a loud rushing sound, Ezekiel hears the wings of the cherubim brushing against each other. Overcome by the sight and sound of God's glory Ezekiel responded with praise to God.

As Ezekiel is flown to his destination he is overcome with a fierce anger towards God's people because of their rebellion. As he dwells in the presence of God's glory, he felt the same emotions towards Israel's sin as God did. How could so many people turn away from God's love and concern for them?

By the river Chebar Ezekiel sat quietly for seven days. This was a customary period of mourning for the dead (Genesis 50:10, 1 Samuel 31:13, Job 2:13). It appears that Ezekiel was mourning for the spiritually dead. Sorrow over the sins of the people had gripped his heart. The message of repentance would burn in his heart as he proclaimed God's judgment and salvation for the next

22 years. He would be God's object lesson to the people to illustrate His message. Out of his love for God Ezekiel obeyed and faithfully proclaimed God's Word. **To love God is to obey God.**

Ezekiel was very successful in completing what God had asked of him. God had equipped him to do it, for the strong hand of the Lord was upon him. Not only would God strengthen him, the sinfulness of man would also affect him as it did God. Ezekiel would stand against the wicked and preach obedience to God and His Word at all costs.

If we truly love God we will live in obedience to God's Word. He wants what is best for us. If the people of Israel had obeyed, they would have had a blessed life, but because of their rebellion they lived as captives in a foreign land.

As we walk with the Lord there will be times of great joy when we feel close to the Lord. But there will also be times when we will struggle with sin, hardships, or everyday tasks that will overwhelm us. Ezekiel demonstrated his love for God even in the midst of great trials. Like Ezekiel, we should obey God even when we don't feel like it. Never let feelings hinder our obedience to Him. We should obey God because we love Him. **To love God is to obey God.**

God's Promises

For today's craft you will make a "God's Promises" wheel. God promised to be with Ezekiel and to give him strength. God has also promised to be with us in everything we do. You will need a copy of both templates for each child (provided with the curriculum), scissors, crayons or markers, and paper fasteners.

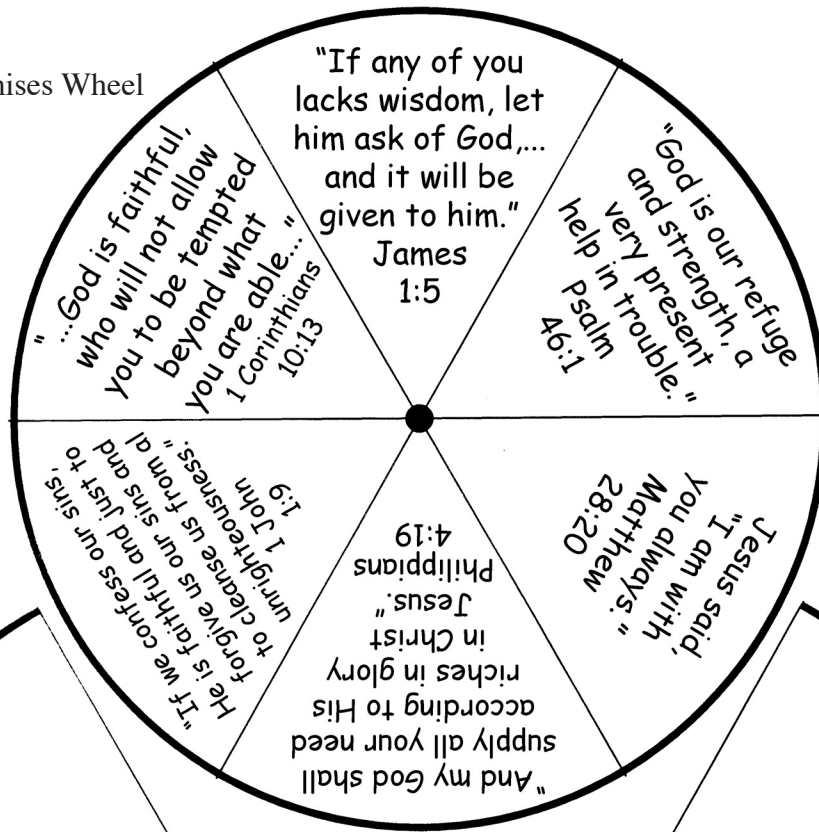
Cut out all of the circles. Color the pictures and the writing using markers or crayons. Place the circle with the pictures on the bottom. The smaller circle with the scriptures will go on top of the

circle with pictures. Then the “God’s Promises” circle goes on top. Poke a hole through the center of the three circles. Place a paper fastener or brad through the hole. All three wheels should be able to spin.

Have the children turn the picture circle and to find a picture. Then challenge them to match the scripture verse with the picture. Help the children to remember that anytime that they have a problem they can go to the Lord for help.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to follow God and to obey Him. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.



"Son of man, receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears." EZEKIEL 3:10

GOD'S PROMISES

EZEKIEL 3:10

