

## Esther Saved Her People

You may never have said it aloud before, but there is a good chance that you have thought it: “If I just had \_\_\_\_\_ [*fill in the blank with your greatest desire*], then following Jesus would be so much easier.” What is your greatest desire? For some it may be money; for others, possessions; for others, power or a relationship or a feeling.

We live in a broken world and may often fantasize about what life would be like if our ideals came to pass. We may even hurt or mistreat others in pursuit of our dreams—to gain that which we believe has the greatest importance. But the reality is that even if we have all that we want, there is still a great temptation to desire more and continue seeking our own good at the expense of others.

This sinful reality is part of what makes the events in the Book of Esther so surprising. We observe Mordecai’s journey from faithful adoptive father of a young girl in a foreign land to his becoming the king’s right-hand man.

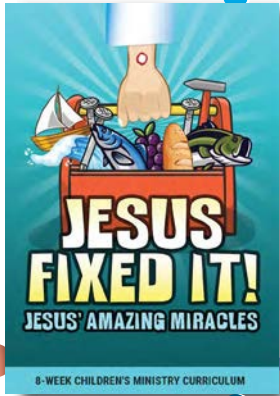
Mordecai was faithful. He was faithful to take in Esther, his cousin who was without father or mother. He was faithful to sit, wait, and watch every day at the gate of the king’s palace to see what God would do through this beautiful young woman. He was faithful to speak up with boldness and confidence, even at the threat of death. And he was faithful to lead beside the king in an honorable way seeking the flourishing of the kingdom.

Mordecai rose to a position of great power and authority. Many figures in power tend to forget their roots, turning to selfishness and unfaithfulness. Mordecai, however, did not. Read Esther 10:3.

In our temptation to seek our own pleasure, we must remember that our Savior, Jesus Christ, “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). In remembering the work of Christ, we find not only an example to follow but also the power to do the same.

Christ in us seeks the good of those around us. No matter how high or low our rank in the world, He is always good and always desires that we seek the good of those around us, for His glory.

Wednesday, March 6, 2024



# MAKE IT STICK

5 Simple Ways You Can Make This Lesson Stick With your Kids

## Jesus Fixed It Lesson 6

### THIS WEEK'S LESSON: KNOW THE FIXER



#### IN THE CAR:

Ask your child what they learned about this week on the drive home:

Jesus healed a blind man and helped him to see again. The man learned that Jesus is the Son of God, and he put his faith in Jesus. There's nothing that Jesus cannot do because he is the Son of God. John 9:1-17, 27-39, Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind



#### HANGING OUT:

Make this week's lesson real:

Share some things you are afraid of. Let everyone in the family share at least one real fear. Ask your kids how God can help each of you deal with those fears.



#### AT DINNER:

Here are some great discussion starters:

- How did Jesus heal the blind man?
- Why did Jesus reveal who He is to the blind man?
- Is there anything Jesus can't fix?



#### AT BEDTIME:

Quiz your child on this week's memory verse:

*"Lord my God, I called out to you for help. And you healed me." Psalm 30:2 (NirV)*



#### PARENT TIME:

What you need to know:

We hire roofers to work on a roof because that's their specialty. We hire plumbers to work in the bathroom because that is their specialty. Jesus is the Son of God, and we can trust Him to fix things between us and God because that is why He came to Earth. Jesus loves us, and there's nothing He won't fix for us.

## **Nehemiah Rebuilt the Walls**

Recall the last time you were faced with devastating news or found yourself filled with angst, worry, or fear. How did you respond?

Anger and bitterness are common reactions to bad news. We may feel tempted to isolate ourselves from others. Grief is complex, and responses vary greatly. However, according to the Bible, Nehemiah's response is the best response.

Read about Nehemiah's general response in Nehemiah 1:4. Then in Nehemiah 1:5-11, we discover the specific way that Nehemiah prayed in response to this devastating news. He recognized God's faithfulness, requested God's ear, confessed sin, and committed his people to the Lord's care.

Nehemiah began his prayer with a recognition of the faithfulness of God. He indicated his confidence that God had been and would continue to be faithful. He then requested God's ear. Though Nehemiah was confident that God heard him, he opened and closed his prayer of dependence by begging God to listen to his request.

Why did Nehemiah pray this way? Likely, he was further demonstrating his deep conviction that God and God alone is able to work in such a way that would bring about restoration.

Nehemiah's prayer also demonstrates his belief that sin has serious consequences. He confessed his own sin and the sin of his family, recognizing that God was fully aware of their sin, but also that this sin was not to be taken lightly and needed to be dealt with.

Finally, he committed his family—the Jewish people—into the hands of this faithful and just God. He trusted God to be faithful to His word and His people. Though Nehemiah didn't know what the outcome would be, he was confident in his God, that He would remain faithful no matter what.

Nehemiah's response demonstrated a deep love, trust, and confidence in God that is exemplary for each of us. When we face moments of devastation, we can—with deep dependence—turn to God and find comfort.

## **Ezra Read the Law**

Find 1 John 1:9 in your Bible and read it slowly two or three times. Many Christians are familiar with these words; perhaps you have them memorized. We agree that God wants us to confess our sins to Him. We believe that God is faithful to forgive His children by the blood of Jesus. But do you find it easy to confess your sin to God? If not, why? Do you believe the lie that keeping quiet about our sin will prevent God from knowing about it?

In Ezra 9, leaders approached Ezra and declared to him the grim reality of the people of Israel who were caught up in devious behavior and lifestyles. Following the second return of exiles to Jerusalem, the men of Israel began to intermarry with foreign women again. It was as if they had completely forgotten God. Ezra's response of honest confession before a holy God ought to teach us something about his character and about our need to do likewise.

First, Ezra stood before God and the faithful of Israel, and he cried out before the Lord. Ezra didn't point fingers as he went before God. He didn't shift the blame or use the chance to gossip about others in his community. Ezra did precisely what we see later recorded in 1 John 1:9: he confessed his sin to God.

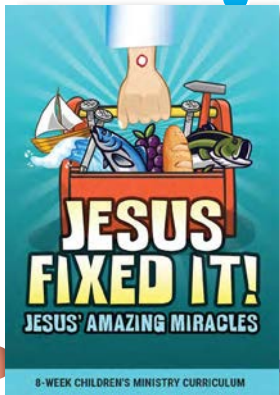
Ezra truly believed that it was right to bring his sin and the sin of his community before God, to lay it all out before the Lord and to seek God's forgiveness by faith and repentance. And not only did Ezra see the good of confession, he found reason to celebrate as he did.

Read Ezra 9:13. Ezra recognized the necessity of confession and then celebrated that God's grace was still enough, still active, and still effective toward His people.

Ezra took his sin seriously and confessed it before a holy God. And Ezra confessed with hope that the God he had sinned against, had been gracious and would continue to be so.

When we bring our sin before God, let us do so with humility rooted in our deep need for God and confidence grounded in our understanding of His amazing grace.

Wednesday, March 20, 2024



# MAKE IT STICK

5 Simple Ways You Can Make This Lesson Stick With your Kids

## Jesus Fixed It Lesson 7

### THIS WEEK'S LESSON: UNFIXABLE?



#### IN THE CAR:

Ask your child what they learned about this week on the drive home:

Mary and Martha were sad. Lazarus was dead, and they thought it would be impossible for Jesus to help now. But Jesus showed them that nothing is impossible with God; Jesus can fix it. John 11:1-44, Jesus Raises Lazarus



#### HANGING OUT:

Make this week's lesson real:

Talk to your kids about the last major thing you had to replace around the house. Why did you decide to replace rather than repair? Then ask them why nothing is impossible for Jesus to fix.



#### AT DINNER:

Here are some great discussion starters:

- What did Jesus do to the tomb of Lazarus?
- What did the people think when they saw Lazarus return from the grave?
- Is there anything Jesus cannot do?



#### AT BEDTIME:

Quiz your child on this week's memory verse:

*"Lord my God, I called out to you for help. And you healed me." Psalm 30:2 (NirV)*



#### PARENT TIME:

What you need to know:

Nothing is impossible with God, and nothing is impossible for Jesus. He raised Lazarus from the tomb to show us that He has the power even over death. If there's an impossible situation you are facing, ask God to demonstrate His power. Ask Him to do the impossible.

## Jesus' Triumphal Entry

The Sunday before Easter is Palm Sunday—the day Jesus entered Jerusalem as the King of kings the week of Passover. Many of God's people traveled to Jerusalem for Passover. Jesus and His disciples traveled to Jerusalem as well. Near Bethphage (BETH fayj) and Bethany near the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples ahead into a village to bring a donkey to Him.

Jesus made a spectacular entrance into the city. He rode the donkey, and people laid branches and their robes on the ground in front of Him. The people welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem believed He was the promised Messiah, but they expected Him to overthrow Roman oppression and set up an earthly throne. Jesus sent a different message. The next day, Jesus entered the temple and turned over the tables of the money changers and those selling doves. Jesus referred to Isaiah 56:7, declaring that His kingship would not just be over the Jews but over all people. While Jesus was in the temple, He healed the blind and the lame. Jesus' actions declared, "I am not just your King; I am also your God" (Isa. 35:4-6).

Finally, the priests and the scribes heard the children in the temple worshiping Jesus as their King. "Do You hear what these children are saying?" they asked. Jesus replied, quoting Psalm 8:2. Jesus gladly received their praise because He was worthy of their praise. Jesus is the Son of God who came to overthrow sin and set up an eternal throne.

**During Jesus' triumphal entry, the people welcomed Him as King. Jesus was the Messiah spoken about by the prophet Zechariah: "Look, your King is coming to you; He is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). One day, Jesus will return to earth on a white horse as King over everything. (Revelation 19:11)**

As you prepare for and celebrate Easter, help your kids connect the dots between God's promises of a Messiah and Jesus' coming. Help them understand why Jesus came: to save the world from sin!

## The Last Supper

Jesus knew it was time for Him to die. He sat down with His disciples for the Passover meal and did something very unusual. Jesus washed His disciples' feet. This humble act was usually reserved for a servant. The foot washing symbolized a spiritual cleansing. The disciples were already positionally "clean" before God (see John 13:10) but even redeemed people still sin and need daily cleansing. (See 1 John 1:9.) In this, Jesus also set forth an example of love and humility for His disciples to mirror in their own actions toward one another. (John 13:15) As they ate the Passover meal, Jesus broke bread and gave it to His disciples. He shared the cup with them too, explaining that the bread and cup represented His body and blood. Jesus established a new covenant.

In the Old Testament, God made a covenant, or promise, with His people. He gave them commandments to follow so they could live in right relationship with Him. But God's people broke the covenant. They didn't obey God, and they didn't love Him. By dying on the cross, Jesus brought forgiveness and made the way for people to know and love God again.

Jesus and the disciples ate the first Lord's Supper at Passover, a time when God's people remembered how God had rescued His people from the Egyptians—passing over the houses marked with the blood of a lamb. Jesus instituted a new memorial, to Himself—the Lamb of God whose blood would bring salvation to the world.

Believers take the Lord's Supper to remember what Jesus did for us in His death and resurrection. We remember God's faithfulness, and we look forward to the day He will return.

**At the Passover, Jesus shared His last meal with the disciples before His death and resurrection. Jesus said that His death would establish a new covenant. God's people had broken the old covenant, and God promised to make a new covenant to forgive sins. God forgives the sins of those who trust in His Son, Jesus.**

Your kids may not be ready to take the Lord's Supper at church. Gently explain that the Lord's Supper, like baptism, is an ordinance of the church and is a celebration for those who have repented of their sin and trusted in Jesus for salvation.

## Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection

God's law for the people was plain. Read Deuteronomy 6:5. But God's people, and all people, have broken the law. We have loved other things more than we love God. That is sin.

Jesus' purpose for coming to earth was to save us from our sin. (Matt. 1:21) Why did Jesus have to die? Why couldn't He just say, "You are forgiven"? God is just and requires due payment for sin. To simply forgive sin without requiring a payment would be unjust. According to God's Word, the payment of sin is death. (Rom. 6:23) But not only is God just, He is also loving. That is why Jesus was willing to die in our place.

Jesus came to live and die to show God's love to us (Rom. 5:7-8) so that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16) Jesus came to die so that we would be forgiven. (Eph. 1:7) Jesus came to die to bring us to God. (1 Pet. 3:18)

Jesus died on the cross to satisfy the wrath of God toward sin. Jesus' resurrection proved that God was satisfied with Jesus' sacrifice, and forgiveness and life are found in Him. (See 1 Cor. 15:17.) If Jesus had died but not been raised up, He would have been like military leaders who died without a throne. (Acts 5:33-37) But Jesus conquered death, just as He said He would. (John 2:19-21)

Jesus' resurrection gives us hope for our resurrection. (Rom. 6:5) And Romans 8:11 says that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead will raise our bodies to life.

Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection are not the end of the story, but the center of it.

**The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is the center of the gospel. We deserve to die because of our sin, but Jesus died in our place. He was the blood sacrifice made once and for all for the forgiveness of sin. God was pleased with Jesus' sacrifice and raised Jesus from the dead to reign as King over all creation. We are forgiven only through Jesus. (Acts 4:12)**