

## Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope

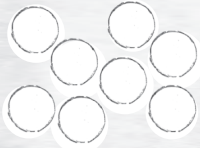
**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Ezekiel 37

**MAIN POINT:** God planned to bring His people back home.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Ezekiel 11:19

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

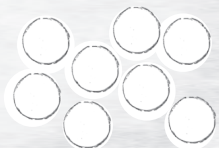
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### Leader BIBLE STUDY

Ezekiel had a tough job: ministering to people who had rejected God and suffered the consequences. The exiled people of Judah were eager to blame God for their circumstances. “It’s not fair!” they argued. (See Ezek. 18:25.)

Ezekiel told the people that they were at fault for their exile; their faithlessness had provoked God’s wrath. The people were getting what they deserved. “I take no pleasure in anyone’s death,” God said. “So repent and live!” (Ezek. 18:32).

God gave Ezekiel a vision. In this vision, God showed Ezekiel a valley of dry bones. The bones represented Israel.

Ezekiel prophesied that God would put tendons, flesh, and skin on the bones. He would put breath in them so they would come to life.

Ezekiel encouraged the exiles. Apart from God, they were dead. But God was offering them life. He would restore their future. “My dwelling place will be with them,” God said. “I will be their God, and they will be My people” (Ezek. 37:27).

We too are dead in our sin. (Eph. 2:1) Sin separates us from God because He is holy. We are apart from God’s presence. But God does not delight in our death. He is patient and wants us to repent and live!

Hundreds of years after Ezekiel died, God’s presence came to His people through Jesus Christ, *Immanuel*—meaning, “God with us.” Jesus is the source of life; He offers us living water. (John 4:10,14) If we do not drink of it, we will become like the dry bones. No life will be in us.

Christ changes that. Evangelical Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias wrote<sup>1</sup>, “Jesus did not come into this world to make bad people good. He came into this world to make dead people alive.” Indeed, He does. God saves us by grace, making us alive with Christ through the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 2:4-5)

1. Ravi Zacharias. “Threads of a Redeemed Heart,” *Ravi Zacharias International Ministries* [online], 28 August 2013 [cited 21 September 2015]. Available from the Internet: [www.rzim.org](http://www.rzim.org).



Additional resources for each session are available at [gospelproject.com](http://gospelproject.com). For free training and session-by-session help, visit [www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject](http://www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject).

# The BIBLE STORY

## Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope

*Ezekiel 37*

**God gave Ezekiel a vision. In this vision, God took Ezekiel to a valley.** The valley was **filled with old, dry bones.** Ezekiel walked through the valley. God asked Ezekiel, “Can these bones come to life?”

Ezekiel said, “God, only You know if these bones can come to life.”

**God told Ezekiel, “Talk to these bones for Me. Say, ‘Dry bones, hear what God says: I will give you breath, and you will come to life. I will give you a body. Then you will know that I am God.’”**

**Ezekiel did what God said. He began to talk to the bones. All of a sudden, there was a rattling noise. The bones were moving and coming together like God had said, but the bones had no breath.**

**God said to Ezekiel, “Talk to the breath for Me. Say, ‘This is what God says: Breath, come into these bones! Make them alive!’”**

**Ezekiel did what God said. He talked to the breath, and the breath went into the bones. The bones came to life, and a big army stood up in front of Ezekiel.**

God told Ezekiel what was happening. **God said, “My people are like these bones.** They think they are dried up. They do not think they have a future. **I want you to talk to My people for Me.”** God’s people had been taken from their homes. They were living in other countries and working for other kings. God’s people were sad.

**God told Ezekiel what to say to the people of Israel. “Say: I am going to bring My people back to the land of Israel. I will give them life in their own land, and they**

**will know that I am God.”**

Then God told Ezekiel to pick up two sticks. The first stick was for the people of Judah, and the second stick was for the people of Israel. Ezekiel held the two sticks together in one hand so they were like one stick. **God said He was going to bring Judah and Israel back together. They would not be two separate nations anymore. They would be one nation.**

**God’s people were also going to get a new king! This new king would be like a shepherd. God promised that His people would go home to their land, and they would never be taken away again. “I will be with them,” God said. “I will be their God, and they will be My people.”**

*Christ Connection: God showed Ezekiel a valley. It was full of dead bones. When we disobey God, we are like those dead bones. But God gave us Jesus to take away our sin. When we turn from sin and trust Jesus, He gives us life so we can be with God forever.*



**WANT TO  
DISCOVER  
GOD’S WORD?  
GET  
MORE!**

Invite preschoolers to check out this week’s devotionals to discover that God’s people felt sad and alone in a foreign land. God’s promise through Ezekiel is still true for us today. One day, we will live with God for all eternity. (Ezek. 37:27) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out [www.lifeway.com/devotionals](http://www.lifeway.com/devotionals).

# Small Group OPENING

**SESSION TITLE:** Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Ezekiel 37

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**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

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## Welcome time

- “Trust in Jesus” song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert download
- favorite toys

Play the unit theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church’s security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

## Activity page

- “Dry Bones” activity page, 1 per child
- pencils or crayons

Instruct preschoolers to draw a line connecting the bones to where they belong on the skeleton.

**SAY** • In our Bible story today, God used a bunch of old bones to give Ezekiel a happy message for His people.

## Breathe like animals

Lead preschoolers to breathe like different animals.

- Bunny: three quick sniffs through the nose and then one deep exhale through the nose
- Bear: pause and count to three between slowly inhaling and exhaling through the nose
- Elephant: dangle arms in front like an elephant trunk, breathe in through nose while holding arms above head, breathe out through the mouth while



swinging arms down

- Snake: inhale through the nose, exhale through the mouth while making a hissing sound

**SAY** • When something is breathing, you know it is alive. In today's Bible story, God showed Ezekiel a valley of dry bones. God gave the bones breath, and they came alive. Listen to the story to hear what happened.

## Play “Doggy, Doggy, Where’s Your Bone?”

Invite preschoolers to sit on the floor in a circle. Choose a preschooler to be the *doggy*. *Doggy* sits in the middle of the circle with a beanbag behind him. Instruct *doggy* to close his eyes. Choose a preschooler to sneak up behind *doggy* and take the beanbag, return to her seat, and hide the beanbag where *doggy* cannot see it.

Lead preschoolers in singing, “Doggy, doggy, where’s your bone? Somebody took it from your home. Guess who? Maybe you!” Then *doggy* opens his eyes and guesses who has the beanbag. He has three chances to guess correctly. Choose another *doggy* and play again.

**SAY** • There are lots of bones in today’s Bible story, but not a dog bone. God showed Ezekiel a valley of old, dry bones. God said His people were like those old, dry bones. Let’s discover what God was talking about when He said that.

## Transition to Bible study

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, flip off the lights, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Invite preschoolers to shake like bones as they move to Bible study.



• beanbag

Option: Use a clean plastic dog bone instead of a beanbag.

• countdown video (optional)

# Large Group LEADER

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## Introduce the Bible story

Invite preschoolers to press on their shin.

**SAY** • Do you feel something hard when you press on your shin? That is your shin bone. You have more than 200 bones in your body. That is a lot of bones! In today's Bible story, God gave Ezekiel a vision of old, dry bones. Let's discover what this vision was about.

## Watch or tell the Bible story

Place a bookmark at Ezekiel in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

**SAY** • God's words are in the Bible, and God's words are true. There is no other book like the Bible. Our Bible story for today comes from the Book of Ezekiel.

Show the Bible story video "Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope," or tell the Bible story in your own words using the script provided. Use the bolded version for younger preschoolers.

## Talk about the Bible story

**SAY** • God's people were sad living in other people's land and not the land God had given them, but God had

- bookmark
- Bible
- "Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster

- Main Point Poster
- Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

not forgotten His people. **God planned to bring His people back home.** They would be one nation again. God said. “I will be their God, and they will be My people.”

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline or big story circle as you ask the following review questions:

1. What did Ezekiel see in the vision God gave him? (*old, dry bones*)
2. What did God tell Ezekiel to do to the bones? (*talk to them*)
3. Who was like the old, dry bones? (*God’s people*)
4. What did God say He was going to do for His people? (*bring them back to their land, make them one nation again, and give them a new king*)

## Learn the big picture question

**SAY** • We are like the dead bones Ezekiel saw, but God sent Jesus to give us life. ***Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.*** When we remember how much God loves us and how much it cost God to rescue us from sin, we want to obey Him.

• Big Picture Question Poster

## Practice the key passage

Open your Bible to Ezekiel 11:19. Read the key passage aloud several times. Sing together the key passage song, “One Heart.”

• Key Passage Poster  
• “One Heart” song

**SAY** • Our key passage reminds us of the promise God made to His people. God promised to change His people’s hearts. He planned to put His Spirit within them to help them obey Him.

## Transition to small groups



# Small Group ACTIVITIES

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- construction paper
- scissors

## Put shapes together

Cut geometric shapes out of different colors of construction paper such as a circle, square, oval, triangle, and rectangle. Cut each shape in half. Lay out the shape halves on a table and invite preschoolers to put the correct halves together and then name the shape.

**SAY** • Many years before, Israel had been split into two nations: Israel and Judah. God said He was going to bring Judah and Israel back together. **God planned to bring His people back home.** Israel would be one nation again, and they would live in the land God promised them.

- painter's tape
- plastic cone

Tip: Use one cone and square for every 4-5 children.

## Play a “go home” game

Use painter's tape to create a large square on the floor. Place a plastic cone in the center of the square. Explain that the cone represents the promised land and the tape lines represent other countries. Invite preschoolers to walk along the tape lines by putting one foot in front as if walking on a balance beam. When you call out “Go home!” preschoolers should move quickly to the cone in the middle. Direct preschoolers back to the tape lines and play again. Consider

letting preschoolers have a turn calling out, “Go home!”

**SAY • God planned to bring His people back home.** God was going to give his people life like He did with the dried bones He showed Ezekiel. They were going to get to go home to the land God had given them. When we disobey God, we are like those dead bones. But God gave us Jesus to take away our sin. When we turn from sin and trust Jesus, He gives us life so we can be with God forever.

## Make a string picture

Before the session, use a marker to draw a simple crown on the top half of a sheet of construction paper. Then draw a simple shepherd’s hook on the bottom. Cut brown and yellow yarn into 2-inch pieces.

Provide a drawing for each preschooler. Trace the marker lines with glue. Invite preschoolers to lay yellow yarn along the lines of the crown and brown yarn along the lines of the shepherd’s hook. Consider letting older preschoolers draw their own crown and hook shapes.

**SAY • God planned to bring His people back home.**

God’s people were also going to get a new king! This new king would be like a shepherd. The new king is Jesus! When we turn from our sin and trust in Jesus, He takes away our sin so we can be with God forever.

## Sing “Dem Bones”

Lead preschoolers in singing “Dem Bones” while using their hands to touch the different body parts mentioned. If you are unfamiliar with the song, search online for the lyrics and tune. Modify lyrics to fit your preschoolers.

**SAY • God told Ezekiel His people were like the dry bones**

- construction paper
- marker
- glue
- yellow yarn
- brown yarn
- scissors
- baby wipes for cleanup



Tip: Download an MP3 of the song to play as you sing.

in the valley. They were living in other countries and working for other kings. They thought they did not have a future, but **God planned to bring His people back home.** God chose Ezekiel to tell them the good news.

## Make bone snacks

- Allergy Alert download
- pretzel sticks
- miniature marshmallows
- white chocolate chips
- microwave-safe bowl
- waxed paper
- fork
- ziplock bags

Provide each preschooler with several pretzel sticks and miniature marshmallows. Invite preschoolers to skewer a marshmallow on each end of a pretzel stick. Skewering the rounded side of the marshmallow works best. Microwave white chocolate chips in a microwave-safe bowl on 50 percent power in 30-second intervals, stirring between intervals until melted. Be very careful to not overheat the white chocolate. If a microwave is not available, you may melt the chocolate in a fondue pot or small crock pot.

Allow preschoolers to drop their bones in the white chocolate. Use a fork to lift the bone out of the chocolate and lay it on waxed paper to harden. Place leftover bone snacks in a ziplock bag to send home.

### **SAY • God planned to bring His people back home.**

God wanted Ezekiel to tell His people about His plan. God showed Ezekiel a valley. It was full of dead bones. When we disobey God, we are like those dead bones. But God gave us Jesus to take away our sin. When we turn from sin and trust Jesus, He gives us life so we can be with God forever.

## Snack

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Guide preschoolers to clean their areas. Take a restroom break and wash hands. Gather preschoolers for snack time. Thank God for the snack.

Serve the bone snacks preschoolers made earlier or serve string cheese for snack. Explain that cheese contains calcium, which makes our bones strong. Remind preschoolers that God said His people were like the old, dry bones He showed Ezekiel. God's people were sad, but **God planned to bring His people back home.** When we disobey God, we are like those dead bones. But God gave us Jesus to take away our sin. When we turn from sin and trust Jesus, He gives us life so we can be with God forever.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert download
- snack food
- paper cups and napkins

## Transition

When a child finishes her snack, guide her to throw away any trash. She may select a book or puzzle to examine, play quietly with play dough or a favorite toy, or color the Bible story coloring page.

Offer the journal page and invite preschoolers to draw a picture of a bone. Explain to preschoolers that God gives sinful people new life through Jesus. Pray for the children.

**SAY** • God, You never forget Your people. You planned to give Your people a new life. Thank You that You forgive our sin and give us new life when we turn from our sin and trust in Jesus. Amen.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- books
- puzzles
- play dough
- Journal Page printable, 1 per child
- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- *Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschool*