

Session 5

The exile

Children learn about the exile

Scripture: 2 Kings 18:9–12, Jeremiah 52:1–14

Supplies

- Blocks like Jenga or boxes that can be stacked
- Map of the 2 kingdoms, Israel and Judah, and the places where their people were taken
- Copy the words of the “Shema” and John 10 on a poster or presentation
- Paper and crayons
- A puzzle of the map



Welcome

Musical chairs or “fruit salad”, but each time someone is out they have to go sit in a corner on a chair. After the game has finished, ask the children how they felt about sitting in the corner. It’s not really fun, is it? Today we’re going to learn about the stories of people who felt like that. Make sure the children understand that they are precious and very special to God, and that they are safe in this group.

Another idea: Divide the group in two and give each group a leader. They must make up their own unique whistle or sound. Let them play with a ball, but when they hear that special sound they need to leave everything as quickly as possible and run to their leader before they can play again. Do this about 3 times.



Worship

Settle down ritual: Let the children close their eyes. Let them look at the dark and light patterns inside their eyelids. After 10 counts say in a quiet voice: “God’s light shines over all of us, whether it’s dark or light in our lives. Ask God to show you the dark things in your life and to help you get rid of them.” Wait a few more seconds and then close with “Amen”.



Word

(Build two walls with the Jenga blocks or with boxes to portray the two kingdoms beforehand)

Do you remember the bad decisions of king Rehoboam? It caused the kingdom to split into the Northern kingdom (Israel) and the Southern kingdom (Judah). *(Point to the two walls while you’re explaining.)* The Northern kingdom’s capital city was Samaria and the Southern kingdom’s capital was Jerusalem *(Point them out on the map).*

Read 2 Kings 18:9–12 and Jeremiah 52:1–14

The stories tell how both the Northern and Southern kingdoms were defeated by other nations and were taken to distant countries, far from home. This is what the word “exile” means. People who are exiled are also slaves. You don’t belong in that country and you are a slave to the people who live there. *(While telling the next part, slowly take down the wall one by one. Start with the Northern kingdom.)*

The Northern kingdom was defeated in 722bC by the Assyrians. Their king was king Shalmaneser. They were taken to Assyria and left behind only a few refugees and sick people. The ten tribes are still known as the 10 “lost tribes” because they never returned from Assyria. *(Make sure that only a few of the blocks or boxes are left now.)*

Assyria was later conquered by Babylon who were later conquered by the Persians.

(Now break down the wall of the Southern kingdom)

The Southern kingdom was conquered in 587bC by the Babylonians and their king, Nebuchadnezzar. They were taken to Babylon. In the next few sessions we’ll find out what happened to them during their exile. After 70 years, the Southern kingdom was allowed to go back to Jerusalem, and they could rebuild their city. We’ll hear more about this later.

(Make sure that there are only a few boxes left for both walls.)

To be in exile is a terrible thing. The closest we get to this feeling is when a teacher or parent tells us to go sit in the naughty corner. No one is allowed to be with you, you are entirely alone and feel really bad about yourself.

Ask the children who of them have been put in the naughty corner before. Think about how you felt. Luckily we can leave there again!

During this time, it was very important for children to know who they were, especially those born in the new country. Their parents taught their children scriptures, it’s called the “Shema”. It goes like this: “Shema Yisrael Adonai Elohim Adonai echad.” It means: “Listen Israel, the Lord is your God, He is the only God.”

It’s also in our Bible in Deuteronomy 6:4 – Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

The Shema was taught to the Jewish children from a young age and they would pray it often. If we are in bad places, we can also use a prayer to help us remember who our God is and how He protects us.

You can learn this version of John 10: “Jesus is my shepherd, I am His; nothing and no one can take me from His loving hand.”

Let the children repeat this a few times until they remember it.

Children reflect on the story:

1. I wonder what it feels like to be a slave
2. I wonder how you would feel if you were excluded
3. I wonder how it feels to know that no one will help you when you’re in trouble
4. I wonder who you would like to talk to when you feel sad and alone



Working and Playing

- Give the children paper and crayons and let them draw people in a strange place or in jail. Use strips of paper to make the jail.
- Print/write the two verses on cardboard. Give the children one each. Let them decorate them and take them home.
- Make a puzzle with the map and let the children rebuild it. See if they can find Babel. Show them where Jerusalem is.

Closing prayer to end the session

“Lord, help me to remember that I will always belong to You, even if bad things happen to me.”

Shema Yisrael
Adonai Elohim
Adonai echad.

Jesus is my Shepherd; I am His; nothing
and no one can take me from His hand.

