
GOD REDEEMS

SERIES: KEEP IT REAL

Join us throughout the month of February as we hear stories that show how GOD IS REAL! We will be going through the books of Daniel, Esther, and Nehemiah!

REMEMBER VERSE

PROVERBS 19:21—Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.

SCHEDULE

All Services

- 0:00—0:35 Small Group (Respond Activity/Lesson)
- 0:35—0:40 Transition to Large Group
- 0:40—1:00 Large Group (B100)
- 1:00—1:05 Transition to Small Group
- 1:05—1:15 Bless and Dismiss

NOTES

LEADER RESOURCES

SERIES OVERVIEW

WEEK 1: God Is Real

Daniel

WEEK 2: God Is In Control

Esther

CURRENT WEEK: God Redeems

Nehemiah

WEEK 4: Remember & Celebrate

Feast of Harvest

EQUIP

The hundred-year process of restoring the city of Jerusalem and its temple symbolized how God redeemed broken things—not just the physical city, but also the hearts of His people.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC. Nebuchadnezzar did this when Jehoiachin, the last king of Judah, rejected the advice of the prophet Jeremiah and rebelled against Babylon. Although Jerusalem had been resisting Nebuchadnezzar's army for about a year and a half, it eventually gave in, and Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city along with its temple.

All of this happened to Jerusalem because God's people had disobeyed His covenant. By allowing Babylon to destroy Jerusalem and take the people captive, God chastened His people for their sin, just as He had promised He would (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27–30). But God had also made this promise to the people: "If you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name" (Nehemiah 1:9).

Regathering God's people took place in three separate waves over about 100 years. Under the decrees of Persian kings, the exiles were permitted to make their way back to their homeland. Cyrus, king of Persia (who had conquered Babylon without a fight in 539 BC), authorized the first wave. Artaxerxes Longimanus authorized the second and third waves. The first wave was led by Zerubbabel, Shaeshbazzar, and Jeshua in 538 BC; the second by Ezra in 458 BC; and the third by Nehemiah 13 years later, in 445 BC (Ezra 1:2–3; Nehemiah 7:4).

The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple dealt a thunderous blow to the Israelites; the people loved their city and especially the temple that represented God's pleasure with and presence among His people (Psalms 48; 84; 87). But the God who redeems restored both things and brought His people back into relationship with Him.

ENCOURAGE

All throughout Scripture, God redeems His people. He buys them back from destruction, despair, loss, and brokenness. The first hint of redemption is seen in Genesis 3, when a Savior is promised. God then continues to redeem through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph through hard times. Later, God tells Moses, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people ... I have heard them crying ... and I am concerned about their suffering" (Exodus 3:7). Years after that, God's people once again feel hopeless because their home is in pieces.

God sees His people and the destruction they endure. He cares. He knows each person by name. Take a few minutes to read Isaiah 43:1. After reading through it once, notice what words stand out to you. Write those words or phrases down. What do you need from your Redeemer today? Spend time in prayer crying out to God today on behalf of yourself or perhaps any children in your group who are in need of God's care, love, and redemption this week.

WELCOME

Some fun ideas to welcome kids as they check-in to your room at the beginning of service.

Invite the kids to color on the provided coloring page or work on the provided activity page.

As kids arrive, feel free to ask them this week's Connect Question. Feel free to write the question on the board and encourage some fun dialogue before you start your lesson.

QUESTION: What is the coolest thing you have ever built?

RESPOND

A chance for kids to respond to what God is putting on their hearts through creative expression.

Our souls, our relationships, our hearts, and many other things will be broken in this world. But God wants to redeem these broken places because He loves each one of us.

INSTRUCTIONS: Hand each child a God Redeems Template and Stone cutouts. Instruct them to color the unfinished wall as well as the stone cutouts. Then, have them cut out the stones and encourage them to unscramble them into a sentence. Once they have the sentence, have them glue the stones over the numbers of the unfinished wall until the wall is complete.

SUPPLIES:

- God Redeems Template
- Stone cutouts
- Coloring Supplies
- Scissors
- Glue

REFLECT

A chance to reflect on what kids have just learned about The Big God Story.

Even though the people had disobeyed over and over again, God redeemed them when they turned back to Him. God loves His people and desires to redeem them back to himself.

- Why had God's people been taken captive?
- What did Nehemiah do when he heard about Jerusalem? *Nehemiah 1:4; 2:5*
- What does *redeem* mean?
- What happened when the Israelites' enemies tried to stop them from rebuilding the wall? *Nehemiah 4:15*
- How were the people able to build the wall so quickly? *Nehemiah 6:16*
- What did the people do when they heard God's Word? *Nehemiah 8:6; 9:2*
- What do you need God to redeem in your life?

BLESS

A powerful way to bless the kids and parents by sending them off with a benediction.

INSTRUCTIONS: Invite the parents into your room at the end of the service to say one last prayer together with the whole family. Instruct them to find their child and sit/stand by their side. Explain what their child learned today and read the verse below. Pray together and then dismiss.

PSALM 107:1-3 – Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south.

BLESSING: May God redeem every part of your life. May you tell others the story of how God has redeemed you.

NOTES

This script serves as an outline of what your storytelling might sound like. Items written in italics are cues for the storyteller and are not meant to be read out loud. You are fully encouraged to make it your own and add a personal touch.

The script serves as an example, however if you would like to teach based on the script and are in need of any supplies mentioned, we would be happy to supply those for you! Storytelling images mentioned will always be provided in your basket each week, but if you need any other supplies for your lesson, contact a Grove KIDS Staff member beforehand so we can supply it for you! You are also welcome to bring in your own props if you would like!

RESOURCES PROVIDED

- None

STORYTELLING

Have you ever seen a torn-down house or building? It's basically a pile of rubble. Rubble means lots of broken things—pieces of wood, rocks, bricks, broken concrete, etc. Today's part of The Big God Story picks up with the Israelites, God's people, living in a foreign land while their home, Jerusalem, is a pile of rubble!

Jerusalem is the city where King David lived and worshipped God. Many years after King David, an enemy nation called Babylon took over Jerusalem and destroyed it. They tore down the city walls and took the Israelites captive to Babylon. You see, years earlier, God had told the people that if they faithfully worshipped Him, He would bless them—but if they disobeyed Him, He would curse them, and their land would be destroyed (Leviticus 26:14–35). But God is a loving God, and He promised that no matter how scattered His people were, that if they stopped disobeying and turned their hearts back to Him, He would redeem them!

What does the word redeem mean? *Invite kids to respond.* Think of redeem like “to buy back” something that was lost. When we talk about God redeeming us, we're talking about God working to bringing us back to Himself and out of sin and brokenness. Why would God want to redeem His disobedient people and fix their home? *Encourage responses.* God wants to redeem His people because He is a loving, forgiving, patient God. God redeems!

Many years after Babylon, a new empire rose up: the empire of Persia. Remember how the Israelites had been taken captive? The Persian king allowed them to return to Jerusalem—even though it was still rubble. And because the walls had been destroyed, the people living in the city weren't safe from their enemies outside the city. But God had a plan to redeem His people and rebuild their home. God redeems!

One of the Israelites was a man named Nehemiah. Nehemiah worked in the king of Persia's palace. One day, he heard the bad news about the people of Jerusalem—how they didn't have a wall to protect them. *Encourage kids to turn to Nehemiah 1:3–4 and follow along as you read.* God spoke to Nehemiah's heart, and Nehemiah fasted and prayed to God. He confessed the sins of God's people, including his own. He begged God to remember His promise to bring them home if they turned their hearts back to Him. God put it on

Nehemiah's heart to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and Nehemiah asked for God's help with it. *Read Nehemiah 1:11.*

Invite kids to follow along as you read Nehemiah 2:1–6. Nehemiah asked the king for the wood to rebuild the walls around the city and for help with safe travels. The king provided some soldiers to keep Nehemiah safe as he traveled to Jerusalem. It was a lot to ask for, but God was helping Nehemiah. *Read Nehemiah 2:8b.* God was redeeming His people and their home. God redeems!

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he told the people living there how God had worked on their behalf, and he challenged the Israelites to join him in rebuilding the wall. They started working right away. Because there was so much work to do, everyone helped: priests, merchants, servants, people who worked with gold, men, women, and families. They all worked together to rebuild the wall.

As the people worked long and hard under the hot sun, their enemies got nervous because they didn't want Jerusalem to be strong again. So, they tried to discourage the Israelites from rebuilding. The higher, stronger, and bigger the wall got, the more Israel's enemies tried to stop it. But God protected His people. *Read Nehemiah 4:14 as everyone follows along.* God redeems!

The Israelites set up guards to watch over the wall and the workers day and night. The workers carried swords to protect themselves and kept building. God protected His people, and the people worked so hard that they finished the wall in 52 days! They never could have finished it that quickly without God's help. *Invite kids to follow along as you read Nehemiah 6:15–16.*

After they finished the wall, the people of Israel gathered together and listened to the Word of God read aloud to them. They worshipped God, they confessed that they had disobeyed Him, and they promised to live as His people. Then they celebrated how God had redeemed them and brought them all home! God redeems!

Because God loved His people so much, He forgave them, brought their city back to life, and brought them back into relationship with Him. He redeemed their home and their hearts. God redeems!

God loves you. He wants to redeem the broken places in your life and bring these places back to life.