

July 6, 1997
1st - 6th Grades

Ezra 7 - 10
3EZR42

God Keeps His Promises

Ezra



Materials I Need:

Legend:

-  = Option 1, Appropriate for 1st – 2nd Grade
 = Option 2, Appropriate for 3rd – 6th Grade

Memory Work:

For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel. Ezra 7:10


Person	Ezra
People	Jews Returning to Jerusalem
Prophecy	Return & Restoration
Principle	God Keeps His Promises


Aim Questions:

1. What kind of person would be a hero in God's eyes?
2. Why didn't Ezra ask King Artaxerxes for soldiers to protect them on the journey? (*Ezra knew God would protect them and wanted to make a statement of faith in God.*)
3. Why didn't God want the Israelites to marry those that weren't God's people? (*He knew they would be tempted to fall into idolatry again and wanted to keep them pure.*)
4. What will happen if we let sin into our lives and don't deal with it? (*It will eventually destroy us.*)
5. Why was Ezra God's kind of hero? (*He didn't ignore sin but rather sorrowed over and dealt with it.*)

Hook:

- A Super Guy (Role-play).** Call a few students from your class during the week preceding this lesson. Ask them to bring the superhero cape from the last lesson in Daniel if they still have it. Students can wear them when class begins. This week we will be learning about another prophet who is a real hero.
- Get Ready! (Discussion)** If you were told you would soon be taking a 900-mile trip with our church family, what would be the first thing you'd do to get ready? What if as we were planning to leave, a very important rich person generously provided all of us with a certain number of free passes, tons of food, and thousands and thousands of dollars, not to mention gold and silver pieces? How would you react? Do you think our church leaders might be a little nervous carrying all that money on such a long trip? Listen to today's Adventure to hear how Ezra and the Israelites prepared for their long journey.
- Quite a Trip (Discussion).** How far is 900 miles? Look at a map of the U.S. Talk about trips that students have taken and relate the distance to 900 miles. How would you like to walk that far? How long would it take? Have students guess the length of time it would take a large group of people to travel 900 miles on foot. Have a prize for the guess closest to four months.


 **Hero Worship (Discussion).** What makes people heroes in our eyes? Usually it's because they can do things we cannot (*i.e. slam-dunk from the free-throw line, run a four minute mile, bowl a 300, bat a 400 average*). Ezra was a man we can add to the "Bible's Hall of Fame." There are few heroes today that can compare to him. Listen to what set him apart from the crowd.


 **Unequally Yoked (Illustration/Discussion).** Show the Bible students the illustration of a yoke. Explain its purpose. Read 2 Corinthians 6:14. Ask the students what they think this might mean. Read Exodus 34:15,16 and Deuteronomy 7:1-6. Why do you suppose God wanted the people to observe this commandment? (This was why they would not accept help from foreigners.)
3EZR42.GF10




Book:

Presentation Ideas -

 **Going Home (Overhead).** The Israelites had a long road home, approximately 900 miles, that took four long months, **3EZR42.GF1.**

 **Ezra's Sorrow (Overhead).** Ezra's sorrow and grief over the Israelites intermarrying with the surrounding nations was demonstrated by tearing his clothing and pulling out his hair, **3EZR42.GF2.**

 **Waiting in the Rain (Overhead).** All the Jewish men who had taken foreign wives gathered in Jerusalem to see the town leaders. If the wife had not become one of God's own people, she was to be sent away, **3EZR42.GF3.**

Bible Adventure -

You've probably heard the expression, "That guy is a real hero!" It's usually said about someone who has done some act of bravery. Other times our heroes are those with some special kind of skill or talent - a singer or sports figure, perhaps. It's a sad fact that many of today's heroes are self-centered, self-absorbed people who are too busy looking out for themselves to trouble with anyone else.

Today we're going to meet a different kind of hero--God's kind. This hero wasn't wrapped up in himself. He was totally committed to God's people and was used by God at a critical time in Israel's history. The hero's name was Ezra. If you'll remember from last week's story, he was a priest and scribe among God's people during their 70 years captivity in Babylon. The Bible tells us that Ezra was a man who knew God's Word well. He was a teacher and interpreter of God's Law to the people, and he loved the words of God. For this reason and others, God's gracious hand was upon him.

About 60 years have now passed since Cyrus allowed the first group of Jewish captives to leave Babylon and go back to Jerusalem. Artaxerxes was now king of Persia.

It may have been Artaxerxes hearing that God's people had been gradually losing interest in rebuilding the temple that caused him to issue a new decree, or it may have been that Ezra asked him to do it. Whatever the reason, God had caused Artaxerxes to look with favor on Ezra, and Artaxerxes issued the decree that Ezra could return to Jerusalem with whatever Israelites wanted to go with him. God so moved in the heart of the king that he gave God's people some wonderful gifts and freedoms as they went. They were to take silver and gold for the temple. They were even given more of the temple items that had been held by the Persians to take back with them. In short, they could have whatever they needed for God's temple.

Artaxerxes had more to say in his decree. Ezra was to appoint magistrates and judges to make sure the people obeyed Persian law and God's Law. Anyone who didn't would be severely punished.

After Ezra finished reading the king's decree, he immediately began praising God. Just imagine! They were being given such blessings by the king it almost went beyond understanding. Ezra knew this was God's work. He gained the courage to gather leaders among the Jewish captives to go to Jerusalem with him.

It was a 900-mile trip and a dangerous one. They were carrying a lot of silver and gold, and there were many robbers along the way. Ezra thought about asking King Artaxerxes for soldiers to go along to protect them. Then he remembered that he and the other Jewish leaders had told the king that God's hand was on everyone who looked to him. Asking the king for protection would be like admitting they did not trust God to keep them safe. Instead, the people fasted and prayed. God was pleased to answer them and kept them safe on the four-month long trip. Ezra and the travelers rested for a few days once they got to Jerusalem. Then they counted out all the gold and silver and the temple items and deposited them in the temple. Like the first group that returned to Jerusalem, they spent some time worshipping God before they did anything else.

About four months later, some of the leaders in the city came to Ezra and told him of a very serious problem. It seemed that some of the Jewish men had married women who were not of God's people. Even some of the priests and other leaders had failed to keep themselves separate from those in the lands surrounding them.

When Ezra heard this, he tore his clothing and even pulled out parts of his hair and beard. He was so upset he sat down on the ground and stayed there. Why did Ezra have such a strong reaction? He was part of a long line of priests who took God's Law very seriously. He knew that God had commanded the people more than once that they were not to marry anyone who did not belong to God's people (see *Deuteronomy 7:1-4* and *Exodus 34:11-16*). He warned that if they did this, they would be led away from Him into worshipping idols. They had just finished with 70 years of captivity because of their involvement in idolatry, and now here they were in danger of doing the very same thing again!

Ezra's actions showed how Israel's sin grieved him. That evening he fell on his knees with his hands outstretched and wept as he prayed. Though Ezra himself was not guilty of this sin, he acted as a spokesman for his people in admitting their guilt. He did not make any excuses but rather told God He would be just if He destroyed them all. Ezra did not ask anything of God, he simply poured out his broken heart before Him. The people who were watching as Ezra prayed had a change of heart because of his sorrow over their sin. They began to weep, too. A man named Shecaniah said, "The Israelites have been guilty of terrible sin in marrying foreign wives. We should send these wives away and then perhaps there will be hope for us." They wanted Ezra to help them do this. Within a few days all the Jewish men in the area gathered in Jerusalem. Ezra confronted them all with their sin. The people agreed with him and asked that in each town all those who had taken foreign wives should come before the town leaders. If the wife had not become one of God's own people, she must be sent away.

You might be wondering why Ezra, who knew God's Law so well, would be encouraging the men to do this. Doesn't God hate divorce? Yes, He does. But in Ezra's mind, the danger to God's people was something that had to be dealt with, no matter the cost. To become involved with idol worship again could mean death to the Jewish nation. The men, in marrying these women, were polluting the holiness of God. His people were to be set apart and holy, just as He is. The only way for them to be holy was to put the wives away from themselves.

It's that way with sin in our own lives. If we invite it in and let it live with us, it will lead us away from God and will eventually destroy us. Ezra understood the deadly nature of sin. Do you? When you see it in your own life, do you react the way Ezra did, with sorrow and grief and confessing to God? Or is it no big deal?

What about when someone we love is caught up in sin? Do we handle it the world's way, ignoring it or even excusing it? Ezra identified himself with sinful Israel. He didn't condemn them but looked for a solution and then worked to make it happen. That is why Ezra was God's kind of hero. He really fit the words of Jesus when he said, "if anyone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently (*Gal. 6:1*). Ezra didn't compromise God's Word and he didn't ignore the sin he saw around him. Isn't he the kind of example you'd like to follow?



Look:



God Saved It All! (Worksheet) God directed the making of the gold and silver pans, plates, bowls, and utensils used in the temple. These were all plundered by Nebuchadnezzar during Daniel's time and were now to be brought back to Jerusalem. Discuss with the students how heavy all of this must have been unlike the china, plastic, and aluminum pieces we use today, **3EZR42.GF4**.



God Keeps His Promises (Maze).



Help the Israelites find their way from Babylon back home to Jerusalem, **3EZR42.GF5**.



Gifted People (Discussion). As you read the letter that Artaxerxes wrote to Ezra (*Ezra 7:12-26*), look for all the gifts that were given to the second group of exiles returning to Jerusalem. Make a note of who gave the different items for the temple. Why were the Persian king and his people so generous? Look in verse 23 for a clue.



Is God a Racist? (Discussion) Why had God forbidden his people to take husbands and wives from other nations? Read Deuteronomy 7:3,4 and Exodus 34:15-17. What reason was behind his commands? Would God accept people who were not of the Jewish race if they wanted to worship him? Read Isaiah 45:22 and 49:6. Read Hosea 2:23.



Ezra's Prayer (Discussion). Once again (*as in Daniel*) we get to "overhear" our hero in prayer. Read Ezra's prayer in Ezra 9:5-15. As the prayer is read, look for clues about Ezra's character. What does he say about events in Israel's past? What does he say about God? What similarities do you notice to Daniel's prayer? Are there any differences? Discuss these questions.



Study, Obey, Teach (Worksheet). "For Ezra had devoted himself to the **study** and **observance** of the Law of the Lord and to **teaching** its decrees and laws in Israel." Complete the worksheet by filling in the blanks with the correct words, **3EZR42.GF6**.



Took:




Secret Message (Worksheet). Find out what Ezra did with God's Word, **3EZR42.GF7**.



The Long Dark Tunnel (Craft). Roll a piece of heavy construction paper into a tube approximately 1 1/2" in diameter. (*An empty paper towel tube can be used as a guide by rolling the construction paper around it, taping the ends, and removing the tube.*) Give each Bible student one circle containing a cross and one containing a heart. Have each student cut these circles and then the shapes out. Glue or tape them to each end. Have each student look through their long dark tunnel through the heart end so that they see the cross at the other end. Discuss how our paths can lead us through long dark tunnels but if we keep looking ahead, Christ is our hope through our journey, **3EZR42.GF8**.



Daily Walk (Devotional). Continue to encourage students to spend a quiet time in God's Word this week. Just as Ezra did, what things can we devote ourselves to do concerning God's Word? **3EZR42.GF9**

 **Jumpin' P's (*Jump Rope Ditty*)**. Here is an Ezra jump rope ditty to help you remember what he was all about.

The Prophet is Ezra
The People -- Israelites in Jerusalem
The Prophecy -- Return & Restoration
The Principle -- God Keeps His Promises!
These are the 4 P's
Got 'em from Ezra
Now it's time to jump out!

GOING HOME.



TO JERSUALEM

Ezra's Sorrow



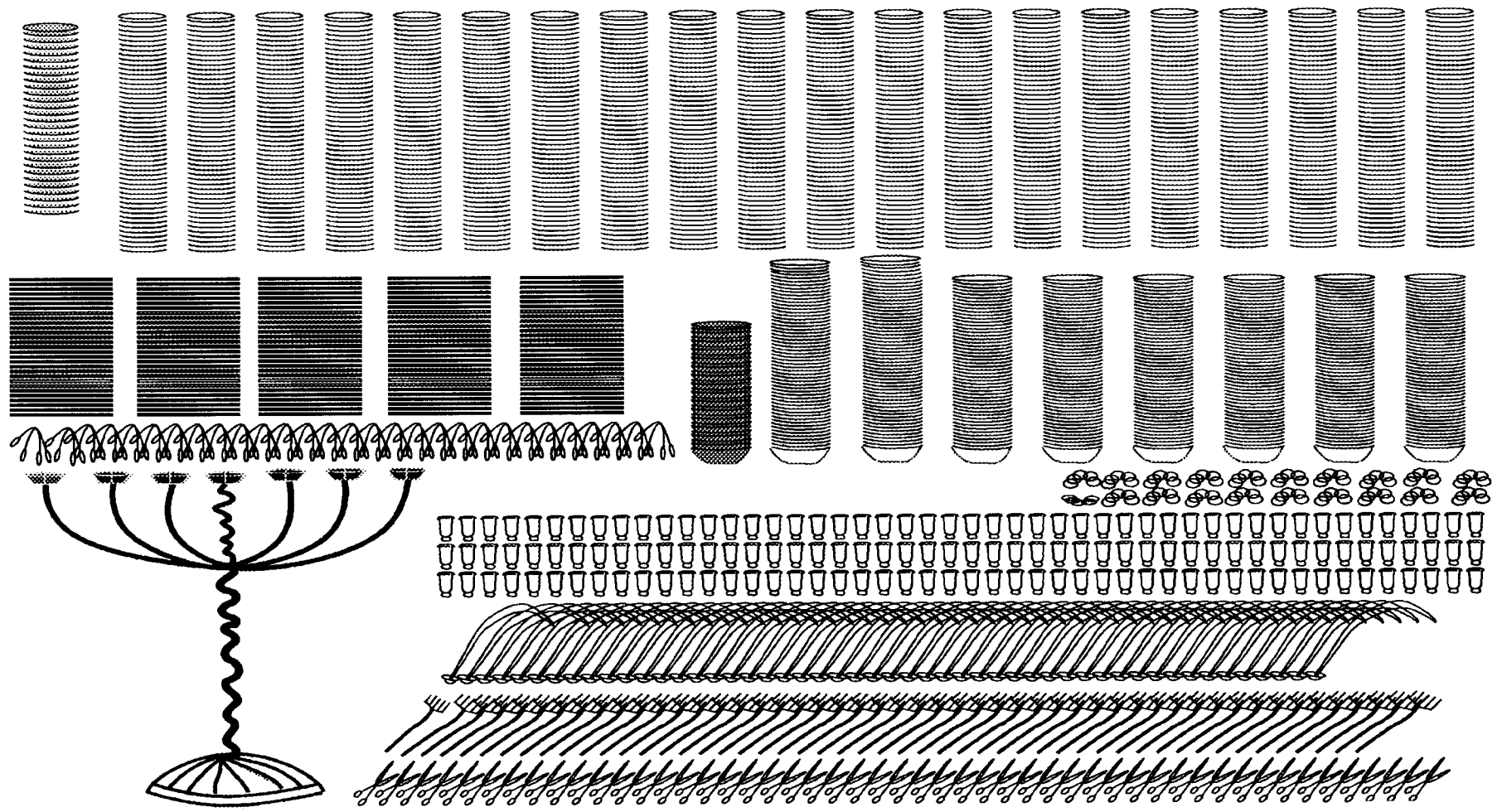
Waiting in the Rain



God Saved It All

God performed a great miracle by saving so much of the gold and silver that King Nebuchadnezzar had taken. These gold and silver pans, plates and bowls, and other things were used in temple worship. God had directed their making. Can you guess how many pieces there were?

2000? 750? 3,500? 3,500? 5,400? 1,750? 900?



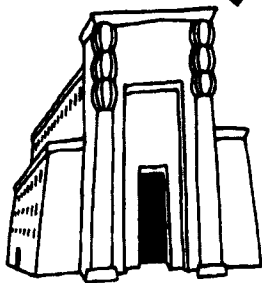
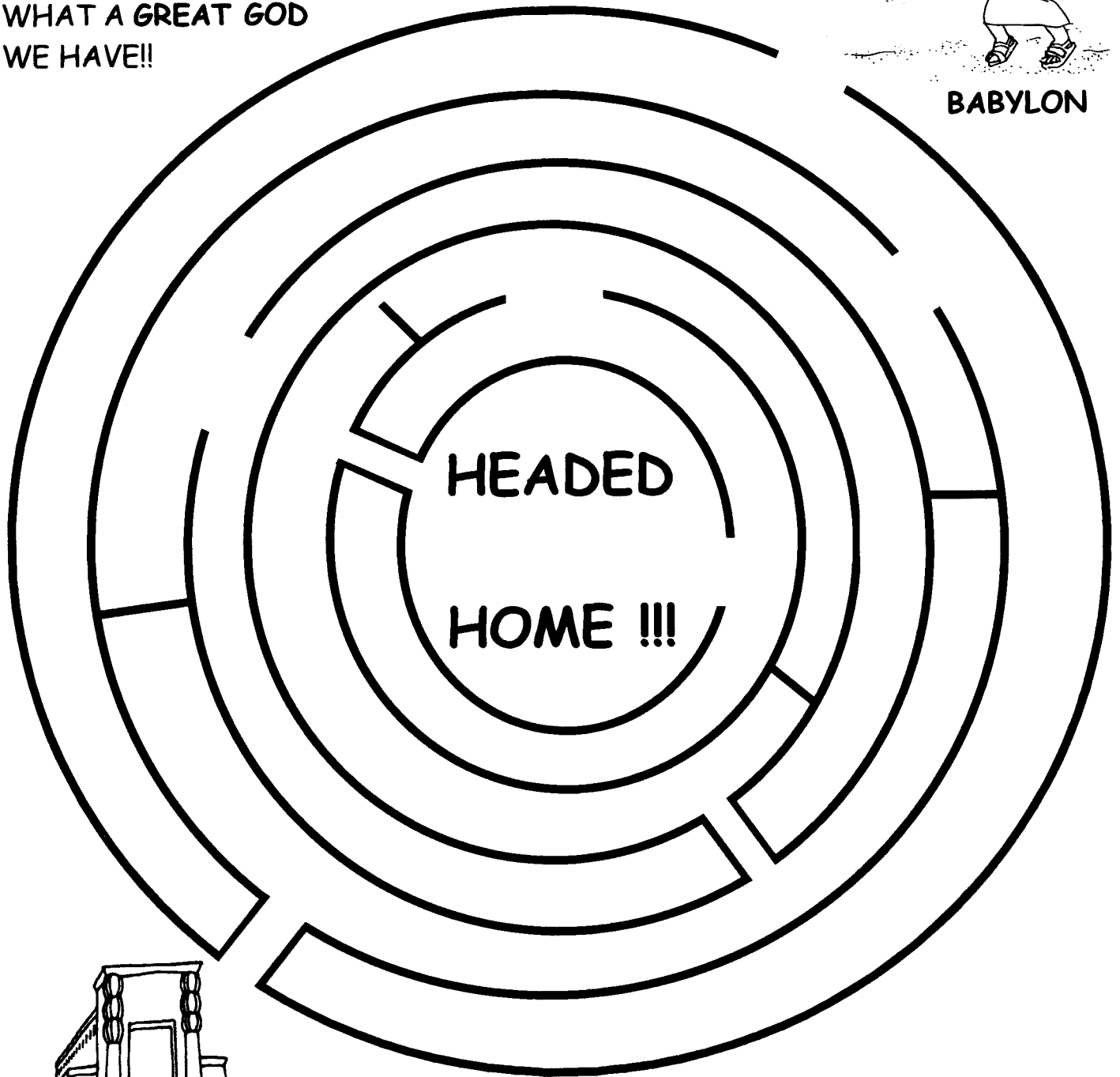
GOD KEEP'S HIS PROMISES

GOD SAID HE WOULD SEND HIS PEOPLE HOME TO JERUSALEM! THEY WOULD REBUILD HIS TEMPLE AND WORSHIP HIM THERE. HE EVEN SENT ALL THE THINGS TO RESTOCK THE TEMPLE THAT HAD BEEN TAKEN WHEN THEY WENT INTO CAPTIVITY. WHAT A GREAT GOD WE HAVE!!

L
E
A
V
I
N
G



BABYLON



JERUSALEM

~Study, Obey, Teach~

“For Ezra had devoted himself to the **study** and **observance** of the Law of the LORD, and to **teaching** it’s decrees and laws in Israel.”

Ezra was a man who handled the word of God as he should. Here are some other verses that tell us what to do with God’s word. On the blank, indicate which of these the verse is talking about: **study**, **obey** (observe), or **teach**.

_____ You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Titus 2:1

_____ For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

_____ Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.
Joshua 1:8

_____ Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.
Luke 11:28

_____ Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. Deut. 4:9

_____ Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching....He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.” John 14:23,24

_____ Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”

SECRET MESSAGE

TO FIND OUT THE SECRET MESSAGE

Use the letters below in the box to fill in the blanks.

Tip of the Day. Cross out the letters as you use them. All the letters are in order.

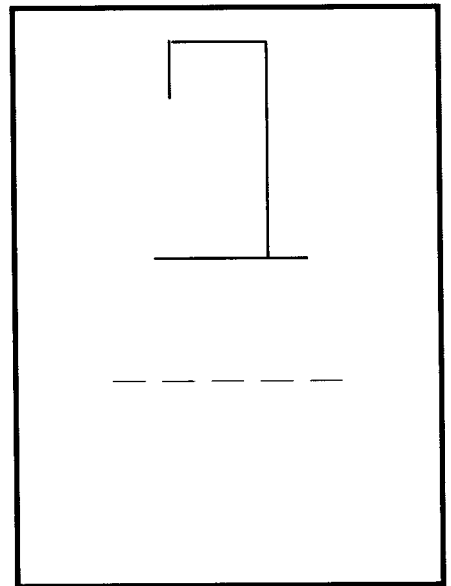
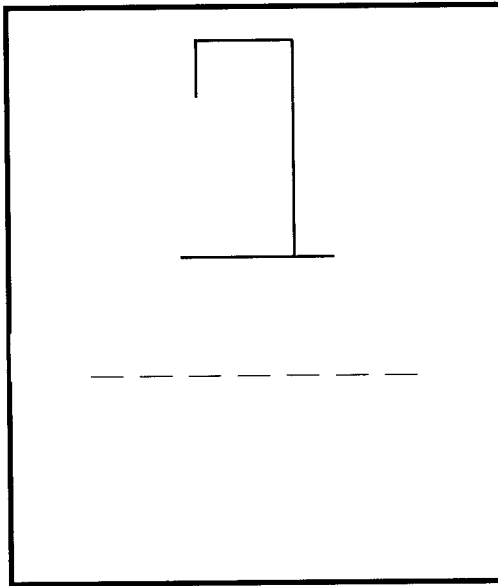
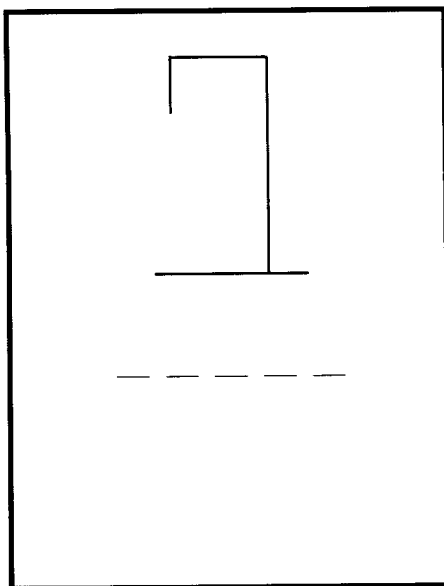
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t__th__st__dy__nd__bs__rv__nc__f
th__L__w__f__th__L__RD, __nd__t__
t__ch__ng__ts__d__cr__s__nd
l__ws__n__sr__l. __zr__7:10

HANGMAN

CAN YOU FIND THE THREE SECRET WORDS???

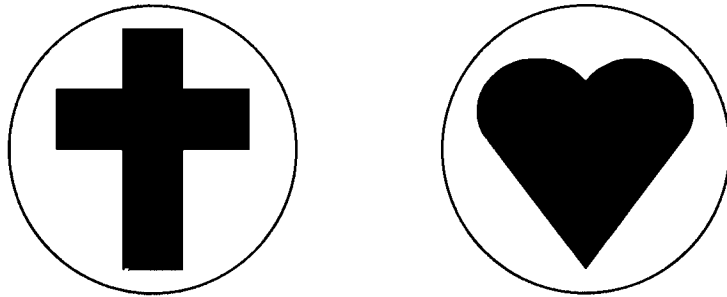
(THEY ARE IN THE MESSAGE ABOVE).



What three things did Ezra do with the Law of God?

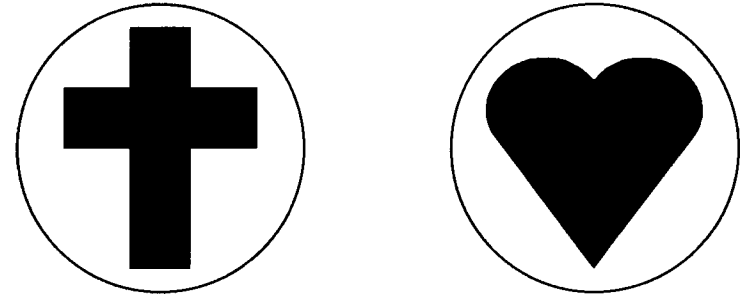
The Long Dark Tunnel

Cut out the circles, then cut out the shapes within the circles. Make sure you keep the circle whole. Tape or glue to the ends of your paper tube. Look at your heart. What's at the end of your tunnel?



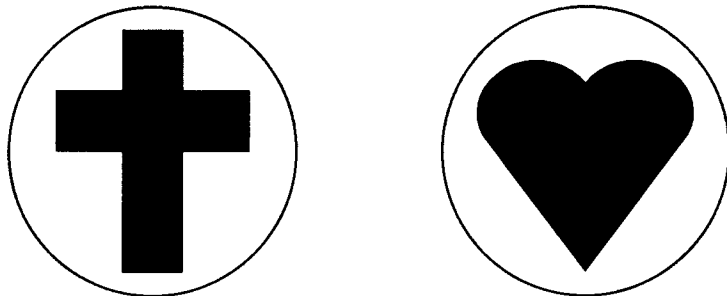
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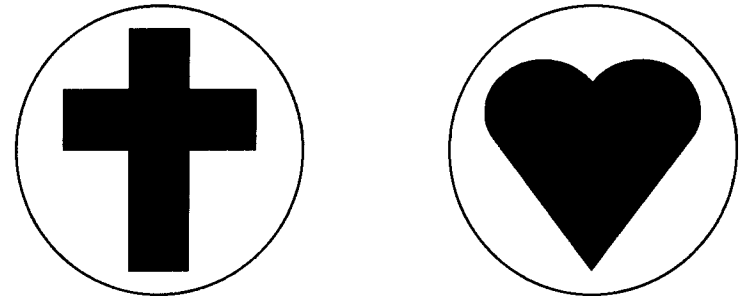
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The Long Dark Tunnel

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FRIDAY

Read Ezra 9:3 - 6.

Why do you think Ezra was so upset over the sin of the people? Do you think God gets upset when you sin?

WEDNESDAY

Read Ezra 9:1 & 2, 10:2.

What was the sin of the Israelites? Why was this wrong? Read Deut. 7:3.

MONDAY

Read Ezra 7:10.

What 3 things did Ezra devote himself to do concerning God's word?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

TUESDAY

Read Ezra 7:27 & Proverbs 21:1.

What or who made King Artaxerxes give so much to Ezra and the Israelites?

FRIDAY

Read Ezra 10:10 -11.

In verse 10:11 Ezra asked the people to do several things. What were they?

What sin do you need to be separated from? Be honest!

SATURDAY

PRAY

FOR YOUR PARENTS!

FOR A SPECIAL FRIEND!

FOR YOUR TEACHERS!

FOR THE TEACHING PASTOR!

FOR THE MAYOR!

DAILY WALK



FBC ORIGINAL 3EZR42.GF9

Unequally Yoked

