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Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Scripture: Daniel 3:1-30

Theme: God is with us even in the fire

1st-3rd Grade (Ages 6-8)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: "God's Love Never Fades" (The Exile , God Disciplines Those He Loves) Introduction (Engage): "Have you ever felt sad or scared because something bad happened? God loves us so much that sometimes He uses hard times to teach us how to trust Him better. Even when things look dark, remember: He has a plan for your future!" Scripture & Big Idea (Explain): God's people, Israel, were in trouble because they didn't follow Him. In 2 Kings, they faced hardship (like losing their home and family), and in Psalm 137, they cried out, "By the rivers of Babylon, we sat down... how shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" Their hearts were broken, but God promised to be with them. Even in exile, He had a plan to guide them back home and prepare them for His greatest gift, the Messiah! God doesn't always fix things immediately, but He shows His love through discipline (teaching, correcting, and protecting) when we need it. Key Lesson (Teach): "God doesn't abandon us when things get hard. He uses those times to show us how much He cares. Like Israel, sometimes we feel lost or alone, but God is right there, calling us back to Him. Just as He kept His promises to them, He keeps His promises to you!" Application (Connect): How can we apply this today? - When we feel sad or scared, remember: God's discipline is love. He may not fix everything right away, but He will guide us. - Pray for those in trouble, just like Israel prayed. God hears our hearts! - Trust that God has a plan, even when it's hard. One day, He'll lead us home to a fuller life with Him. Closing (Encourage): "You're never alone, even when life feels overwhelming. God's love is stronger than any hardship, let's thank Him for His promise to always be with us!" Teacher Tip: Use a simple visual (e.g., a map of Israel in exile, or a heart with a "plan" written inside). Encourage kids to share: "What's one way God has shown you love lately?" (Keep it short, focus on hope, not details!)

Bible Story

"God Loves Us Even When We Disobey" (From 2 Kings 24, 25 & Psalm 137)

Once, the kingdom of Judah, where the people lived under God's good rule, started falling into trouble. King Josiah had been good, but his sons and grandsons grew weak, and the leaders of the land made bad choices. They ignored God's laws and built idols instead of trusting Him. Even though they had been given many chances to turn back, they kept going their own way. The Bible doesn't tell us why they disobeyed, but we know that even when people stray, God still loves them and wants to guide them back. Just like a parent might discipline their child to teach them right from wrong, God used hard times to show Judah (and later Israel) that obedience was the way to stay close to Him.

The bad kings and leaders brought disaster: wars, famine, and captivity. The Babylonians, who had been God's punishment for other nations' sins, now invaded Judah. The city was destroyed, the temple was burned, and many people, including kings, priests, and wise men, were taken far away, far from home. Some of them cried and wondered how this could happen to them. The Bible tells us in Psalm 137 that they sang songs like, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down... How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" Their hearts were heavy because they'd lost everything. Even though God's people suffered, He never forgot them. He kept His promises to bring them back one day.

This story shows us that God doesn't always stop bad things from happening, even when people love Him. But He does promise to never leave or forget us (Deuteronomy 31:6). When Judah was exiled, many felt alone, but God gave them hope. He told them, "I will bring you back" (Jeremiah 29:11). Even in hard times, God's love is stronger than our mistakes. Just like a child who falls down and needs a hug, God wants to comfort us when life feels unfair.

Why This Story Matters: God doesn't punish us forever, but He does show us that when we choose wrong, the consequences can hurt us and others. But because He loves us, He always has a way to bring us back to Him, even when we're far away or feel lost. Today, we can ask God to help us listen to Him and obey, just like He did for Judah. And when we mess up, we can trust that He'll forgive us and hold us close, just like a parent does for their child.

Key Verse

Daniel 3:17

A Cozy Promise from God God loves you more than anything! He made this promise to Jeremiah, and now He's telling you the same thing. The verse says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." This means God has a special, good plan just for you, like a gentle hug and a warm cup of tea! God wants to help you grow, just like a seed needs sunlight to become a big, strong tree. He doesn't want you to feel scared or left out. Instead, He's preparing something wonderful for your future, maybe new friends, fun adventures, or even just knowing He's there to catch you if you fall. Even when things feel tricky, remember this: God is always watching over you, like a kind guardian! What Can We Do? When you feel worried about tomorrow or unsure about what comes next, ask God to remind you of His promise. You can whisper to Him, "I trust You, God!" and let Him wrap your heart in His love. Maybe you'll make a little prayer journal or draw a picture of your favorite thing to show God how much you love Him in return. He's not just waiting for you to grow, He's already giving you a big, bright future to enjoy! God's plan is always good, even if it's not exactly what you hoped for. Think of it like a story where the ending is full of joy and kindness. You might not see all the details right now, but you can trust that God is working in ways you won't understand yet. One day, you'll look back and smile, because you'll know He was there! A Little Challenge for You Imagine you have a favorite toy or game. Now, imagine God is like the creator of that toy, giving you a special version of it just for you. That's how God feels about you! Today, try to think of one thing you're excited about, maybe learning to ride a bike, helping your family, or exploring nature. God wants you to see how His love fills your heart, so you can keep growing with courage!

Activities

Activity 1:

This hands-on craft helps kids visualize the heartbreak of Psalm 137 while learning that God still cares for His people, even during hard times. By creating "broken cup" art, students explore how God's discipline can lead to

freedom, just as He did for the Israelites in exile.

1. Start with a Story (2 min): Share the short version of Israel's exile from Judah (2 Kings 24, 25) and Psalm 137, emphasizing that God's discipline always leads back to love. Ask: "Why do you think the Israelites cried so much?"
2. Craft Time (7 min):
3. Give each child a half-paper cup and glue it to a larger sheet (or use a whole cup). Have them tear tissue paper into jagged shapes and glue them on to mimic broken pieces.
4. As they glue, say: "Like this cup is broken, God let Judah's people suffer so they could remember to trust Him again."
5. Connect to God's Love (3 min): Show the printed Psalm 137 verse. Ask: "What does verse 5 say? How can we cry to God today, even when things feel broken?" Let them add a sentence to their cup with markers.
6. Share & Reflect (3 min): Have students hold up their cups and say one thing they learned about God's love through discipline. End with a prayer thanking God for keeping His promises.

Activity 2:

Kids map the exile's journey using a simple "journey board" to see how God's plans for Israel's return were hidden in the past. They'll learn that God doesn't abandon us, even in hard times, He's still working!

1. Introduce the Map (3 min): Say, "Imagine you're in Jerusalem during the exile. God didn't forget about you, He had a plan!" Hand out printed excerpts to read aloud, highlighting:
2. Babylon's attack (2 Kings 25:21, 27).
3. God's promise to restore Jerusalem (Jeremiah 29:11).
4. Ask: "How do you think the Israelites felt? How can we trust God's promises, even when things look broken?"
5. Create the Board (5 min):
6. Fold a paper plate in half. On the open side, draw a simple map of Jerusalem with a "river" (Red Sea) and Babylon in the distance.
7. Use push pins to mark key events: "Here, the city fell!" (2 Kings 25:1, 2) or "Here, God gave them hope!" (Jeremiah 29:11).
8. Let kids add their own pins with crayons for extra creativity.
9. Connect to Today (5 min):
10. Show a verse like Jeremiah 29:11: "I know what I'm doing... to give you a future and hope."
11. Ask: "If God knows what's next, how can we trust Him, even when things feel scary?" Have them write/draw one way they can pray for others today.
12. Wrap-Up Prayer (2 min): End with a group prayer thanking God for His promises and asking for faith to trust Him through trials.
13. Key Takeaway for Both Activities:
14. Use simple language to reinforce: "God doesn't abandon us, He disciplines us so we'll learn to trust Him more. Just like the Israelites cried, we can cry to God, and He'll always answer." Encourage kids to share one way they'll trust God this week!

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for early elementary students (ages 6, 8) about The Exile from 2 Kings 24, 25 and Psalm 137, designed to help them explore the story and its lessons in a simple, engaging way:
- God's Love in Hard Times
- The Bible tells us that God loves us even when we make mistakes, just like a parent might comfort a child who falls down. In the story, the people of Judah disobeyed God, and He allowed them to be taken away as prisoners. How do you think God feels when we do wrong? Have you ever done something you regretted? What made you

feel sorry, and how did you feel when you asked for forgiveness?

- Application: Think of a time you hurt someone or made a bad choice. How could you show God you love Him back by asking for help or doing something kind?
- Why Does God Allow Hard Things to Happen?
- Sometimes in life, things go wrong, like when someone gets hurt, a family loses something, or friends don't play together anymore. In the story, God let the people suffer, but He also promised to protect them later. How do you think God is using these hard times in the story? Do you think He is teaching them something important, or just punishing them?
- Application: Have you ever faced a big challenge at school or home? What did you learn from it? How can you trust God that He will help you grow from it?
- Singing in the Dark
- In Psalm 137, the people were exiled in a far-away land and wrote a song about their sadness. The song says, "By the rivers of Babylon, we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion." Even though they were sad, they still chose to trust God. How do you think it feels to sing or pray when things are hard? Do you ever feel like God is far away, or do you think He's always listening?
- Application: Think of a time you felt lonely or scared. What helped you remember God was there? Can you share one way you can praise God today, even if you don't feel happy?
- What Can We Learn from the Exiles?
- The people in the story were in a strange place, but they still worshiped God. Even when they were far away, they remembered their promises. How can we be like them in our lives? Sometimes we might feel stuck or lost, but God doesn't always fix things right away. What can you do to keep trusting Him when things don't go your way?
- Application: Imagine you're playing a game and your friend keeps making the same mistake. How would you handle it? What would make you feel like God is patient and kind, like He is with you when you mess up?
- These questions encourage deep thinking while keeping the conversation age-appropriate. Would you like any adjustments to fit a specific lesson plan?

Prayer Focus

Prayer Focus for Early Elementary (Ages 6-8): "Dear God, Thank You for being our Heavenly Father, always loving us even when we make mistakes. Sometimes, like in the Bible story, people you care about may face hard times, like being taken away far from home. But remember, God is with them, and He will help them get through it. Help us to trust You, even when things feel tough or unfair. Teach us to be kind and patient, just like You are to us."

Lesson Connection (for the teacher): Begin by reading 2 Kings 24, 25 (the exile story) and Psalm 137 (longing for home). Ask kids: "Why do you think God allowed this to happen to Judah? How does it make you feel when you're far from someone you love?" Then, guide them in praying with their hands on their hearts: Pray Together: "Lord, You know we love You and want to obey You. Sometimes, like Judah, we feel lonely or sad when things go wrong. But You never stop loving us! Help us to trust You when life feels hard. Remind us to ask for Your help and to be patient, just like You are patient with us. Amen!" Simple Application: End by discussing: "If you felt taken away from home, what would make you feel closer to God?" Let them share ideas (e.g., praying at night, drawing pictures of home, sharing with a friend). Remind them: "No matter where we are, God is always with us!" Why It Works: - Uses personal connection ("Heavenly Father," "trust You"). - Emphasizes God's love (contrasts with Judah's hardship). - Gives action (praying + reflecting). - Ties to Psalm 137's "By the rivers of Babylon" theme, kids can imagine praying for others in hard places. Extend: Write a short prayer together to send to a child at school or in class who might feel left out.

>> Missions Spotlight

The Jewish diaspora, scattered across the world for 2,000 years, is one of history's most remarkable stories of preservation. Today, Jewish communities on every continent are encountering their Messiah, Jesus, fulfilling God's promise to bring His people back.

-> To the Cross

God's people were taken into exile because of their sin. It was painful, but God didn't abandon them. He promised to bring them back. At the cross, Jesus experienced the ultimate exile, separated from the Father, so that we would never be exiled from God's love.