

THE RETURN HOME

TEACHER INSIGHT

Personal Preparation for the Study:

The most effective way to prepare is to experience the study first as a participant. Each of the studies center on Bible stories that have rich meaning that can have an impact on your life in deep ways.

Take at least an hour to go through the exercises as a participant. Make sure you spend time watching the videos, doing the reading, and engaging in the response activities. Write down your answers to the discussion questions. Try hard to not let your mind wander to how you will teach this! This will be an important time for you to discover your own insights and will help you anticipate your groups responses.

Leading this Study:

After you go through the study for your own growth, then go through it from a teacher's perspective. Note activities and options that you feel will work well with you group, and ones you want to change or omit.

As always, continue to encourage your students to give their full attention while engaging with this story. Remind them that discussion outside of the parameters of the story is for another time. Encourage students that if they engage the story like a movie, allowing themselves to enter it, they will learn things they never have before.

In Chapter 19, the Israelites begin to return from captivity in Babylon to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. While there is not a lot of "drama" that happens in the story, there are several themes that should emerge for fruitful group discussion. Also, there are more characters than usual in this week's StoryReaders, and none of which should be very familiar. You may need to help your students by reviewing "who's who" and clarifying any other story details before beginning your group discussion.

"The Return Home" can be found in: Ezra 1-6; Haggai 1-2; Zechariah 1; 8

TELL A STORY AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE!

Address the material by using narrative examples from "real life."

Your students grasp and remember stories--stories from their own lives, stories they heard at school, stories from their favorite TV shows, movies, and websites. When your group discussion seems stagnant, or if you feel it beneficial to address a question from another angle, use a story. Share an episode or observation from your own life, or ask the students if they have an example from their own lives of a story that parallels a theme or event from the part of The Story that you're discussing.

Connecting your discussion to these narrative "images" will help your students embed the story of scripture within the stories that already make up their own lives, rather than just learning the "right answers" to seemingly unconnected concepts.

TEACHER PLANNING

SUPPLIES:

- Copies for every participant of the **Chapter 19 Handout: The Return Home** (on curriculum DVD).
- 10-12 Copies of the **StoryReaders Script** for your storytellers (on curriculum DVD). See the StoryReaders Assignment section below for details. Make extra copies for students that would like to read along.
- Copies of the *Join the Story* Sections of this guide for **Small Group Leaders**.
- Show the **Daniel in Exile Recap video** and **The Return Home video** from the curriculum DVD.
- **Join the Story Activity:** Extra paper, pens, markers, paints, and clay for participants to create an imaginative response.
- **Creative Option:** Popular used magazines and newspapers (1-2 per participant), one large piece of paper or poster board for every 3-4 participants, scissors, glue OR tap.
- **Optional:** THE STORY FOR TEENS—a Bible that corresponds with this study published by Zondervan.

StoryReaders Assignment:

Give out StoryReader Scripts (from curriculum DVD) to student and adult volunteers as far in advance as you can. Ask for volunteers who are comfortable with and skilled at reading aloud. **Never force a student to read!** Mix this up and use different people each week. Often the best storytellers are those who have some dramatic training.

The StoryReader scripts are segments of scripture taken directly from Zondervan's THE STORY BIBLE FOR TEENS (TNIV). Each script takes 10 minutes or less to be read aloud. These segments have been formatted into a *Readers' Theater*. A Readers' Theater is an activity in which a few participants are asked to read directly from a script, with the intent of telling a story in a lively manner. Readers are **not expected to memorize or improvise** from the script, but use voice inflection and some gestures appropriate to their characters actions and words in order to bring the story to life.

ADDITIONAL STORYTELLING OPTIONS:

1. TWO LENSES

- Using copies of the StoryReaders scripts (or the actual passages from the Bible), have students read the selection quietly on their own. Have them read it with this particular question in mind: *What stands out to you as most important or most unusual in this story?*
- When they finish, have the students read the story again. This time, have them focus on the question: *What does this story mean for your life?*
- Encourage students to take notes of things that stood out to them during each reading.

2. RE-TELLING THE STORY

- Divide students into 2-3 groups, depending on the length/complexity of the story and size of your group. Assign a different part of the story to each group. Have each group read their part of the story amongst themselves.
- After 3-5 minutes, have members from each group re-tell what happened in their section of the story in front of the rest of the large group. Encourage them to recount as many details from the story as they can.

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ADDITIONAL STORYTELLING OPTIONS

For each lesson, three additional storytelling options have been suggested, in order to provide some optional variety to your students' experience of the scripture. You may use them to either supplement or replace the Readers Theater experience. For each of the three options, you may either use the StoryReaders script provided or have students read directly from scripture. (Scripture references are noted at the top of the StoryReaders script.)

NOTE: Additional Storytelling Options may take longer than the allotted 10 minutes, depending on the type of exercise and number of students.

ANOTHER CREATIVE OPTION

A story-specific idea for an additional creative exercise has also been provided with this lesson. You may use and adjust the instructions for the exercise (see the "Creative Option" sidebar under the "JOIN THE STORY" section of the Teacher Lesson Script) to fit the needs of your group.

(Please note that additional materials may be required for this exercise, and the exercise may take longer than the allotted time for the JOIN THE STORY section, given the type of activity and the size of your group.)

ADDITIONAL STORYTELLING OPTIONS CONTINUED

- **OPTIONAL:** Encourage group members to act out what happens while the story is being re-told. For a fun element, limit re-tellings to 1 minute each, so that students are forced to do a fast-paced reenactment.

3. STORYBOARD

- Divide students into groups of 3-4. Have each group read through the StoryReaders script within their groups.
- At the front of the room, hang 6-8 large pieces of paper. After 10 minutes, have one volunteer at a time (one from each group) come up and draw a major "scene" from the story on each large piece of paper. (Encourage students to use stick figures--just enough to represent what is happening in the scene.)
- When the storyboard outline is complete, review the series of events and ask the students to share if they feel that any major events from the story have been left out.

LESSON OUTLINE

Curriculum Outline for a session that is approximately 75 minutes:

PART ONE: REWIND THE STORY (<i>large or small group</i>)	5 minutes
Introduction and prayer	1 minutes
<i>Daniel in Exile Recap</i> Video	2 minute
Brief responses to video	2 minutes
PART TWO: SEE THE STORY (<i>large or small group</i>)	10 minutes
Explanation and handouts	1 minute
<i>The Return Home</i> Video	3 minutes
Creating symbols for the story	2 minutes
Sharing about our symbols	4 minutes
PART THREE: HEAR THE STORY (<i>large or small group</i>)	25 minutes
Explanation	1 minute
StoryReaders scripture telling	12 minutes
Response to scripture	7 minutes
<i>BREAK: teens move to small groups</i>	5 minutes
PART FOUR: JOIN THE STORY (<i>small group</i>)	35 minutes
Discussion	15 minutes
Create responses to the story	10 minutes
Sharing responses to the story	5 minutes
Closing prayer	1 minute

TEACHER LESSON SCRIPT

PART ONE: REWIND THE STORY

(LARGE OR SMALL GROUP)

5 MINUTES

Teacher Script (please personalize this):

Hello, everyone! I'd like to welcome you back for what I hope is going to be another great week together. Whether this is your first time with us or you have been here throughout the story thus far, I hope that we will all get something new out of our time together. As usual, we have plenty to get to today, so let's pray before we begin:

God, We are so happy to be back together this week--thank you for allowing us this time and space to regularly talk about you and your incredible story. I pray that--no matter what is going on at home, at school, or in the rest of our relationships--you would calm our hearts and allow us to learn something new about you and your love for your own people. Amen.

In today's story, we're picking up where we left off last week. But before we do, let's take a look back at what happened last in the story. As always, this recap will move pretty fast, so be sure to watch and listen carefully.

[CUE: Play the *Daniel in Exile Recap* video from the curriculum DVD (2 minutes)]

Teacher Script (please personalize this):

So what did you think of that video? What parts stood out to you? Was there anything that you had forgotten about?

[Get a few quick responses to these questions, don't spend more than a minute or two discussing.]

PART TWO: SEE THE STORY

(LARGE OR SMALL GROUP)

10 MINUTES

Teacher Script (please personalize this):

Hopefully, this video has helped to remind you of what last happened in the story, or to fill you in if you weren't with us. I have another video that will give us a quick look at where our new story will take us this week. After the video we will take a moment to respond using these handouts.

Now, let's watch this week's video, *The Return Home*. As always, the video will move pretty quickly, so you'll have you pay attention--you won't want to miss anything. Ready?

[CUE: Play *The Return Home Video* from the curriculum DVD (3 minutes)]

[CUE: Give each student the *Chapter 19: The Return Home* handout found on the curriculum DVD]

Teacher SCRIPT (please personalize this):

Get with a partner. The SEE the Story area in the upper left corner with the EYE on it is where you and a partner will now create an image or symbol for this story. It can be something simple, but put some thought into how it represents the story. In a couple of minutes we will share our creations.

[CUE: DISCUSS – After two minutes, ask a few students to share a briefly about the symbol they created. Ask them to explain the thoughts behind what they were drawing. After three or four minutes of sharing, go to the next part.]

PART THREE: HEAR THE STORY

(LARGE OR SMALL GROUP)

25 MINUTES**Teacher SCRIPT** (please personalize this):

As usual, there's a lot to take in from this story. We want to spend some time diving deeper into it, so I have asked a few of you to help us as *StoryReaders*.

While the story is being read, I encourage you to draw or write key events that stand out to you in the HEAR the Story section on your handout.

[CUE: Have preassigned student and adult volunteers read the *StoryReaders* script all the way through without stopping. (10 minutes) NOTE: For alternate ways of interacting with the text, see the "Additional Storytelling Options" section under *TEACHER PLANNING*.]

Teacher SCRIPT (please personalize this):

Take the next minute to answer the questions in the HEAR section on your handout.

[CUE: DISCUSS –After two minutes, ask a few students to share their responses with the entire group. Allow 5 to 7 minutes for sharing. Use these questions from the handout as a guide:]

–What were the key events from the story?

–What was most meaningful to you from this story?

Teacher SCRIPT (please personalize this):

Right now we are going to explore the story a bit further in small groups.

[CUE: send students into **small groups.** Make sure the discussion leaders have copies of the JOIN THE STORY segment of this study.]

PART FOUR: JOIN THE STORY**35 MINUTES**

[CUE: DISCUSS – Adjust questions as needed and don't feel like your group must answer all of them.]

- Not all of you got to share your responses from the HEAR the Story handout. Would anyone like to share what you came up with?
- Why do you think God rescued the Israelites again from their enemies?
- In what ways have you seen or experienced the rescuing power of God?
- What did the Israelites do to deserve the mercy they received?
- Have you ever felt God's presence in a place or a situation? How did you know it was God?
- The Jews returned home to rebuild the temple, the dwelling place of God on earth. Why was it important for them to do this?
- Where does God dwell on earth today?

Teacher Script:

Pick ONE of the following questions and create a response: (questions are also on handout)

- *Which character or part of the story did you see yourself in?*
- *When has God stirred your heart to accomplish something?*
- *How did this story challenge or inspire you to live differently?*

Create a sketch, collage, poem, prayer, journal entry, song or whatever you can come up with in the next 10 minutes!

I hope one of these questions will give you something to think about and create. If you're having trouble coming up with something, try choosing a method of responding that you haven't tried before. Sometimes it helps to mix it up and respond to God in new ways! In a few minutes, we will talk about your responses. I am really excited to see what you come up with!

[While students are working on their responses, walk around and encourage them. Also, ask adult leaders to participate in this activity.]

[CUE: SHARE – Ask a few students who are willing to share their response to the story. After 9 or 10 minutes of sharing, move to the closing prayer.]

CREATIVE OPTION:

Give each participant 2 index cards and a pen. Tell them that they are going to have an opportunity to do something a little different--and very meaningful. Say something like:

"In this story, God speaks through his prophets to encourage the Israelites in the face of fear and apathy. God reassures them by telling them, 'I am with you.' Today, we are going to have a chance to encourage one another here. With your two index cards, you will write two messages: one to the person sitting to your right, and one to the person on your left. For each message, write something thoughtful that compliments or encourages that person--(if you don't know their name, find out!) Somewhere in your note, include the words 'I am with you,' as a reminder of God's promise. Remember to make these thoughtful! You'll have about 10 minutes. Ready? Go!"

After about 10 minutes, have the students fold the index cards and deliver them. OPTIONAL: Have each student write his/her phone number or e-mail address on each card before exchanging. Once they have gotten their two messages of encouragement, invite the students to send each person who gave them a card a thoughtful text message or email sometime during the coming week.

Teacher Script (please personalize this):

Great job, everyone! I'm always impressed by the things you come up with in response to these questions. Thank you so much for opening up and sharing your thoughts with the rest of us. Keep it up! I wish we had more time to continue our sharing, but we can look forward to the next part of our story next week!

Let's pray as we end our time:

God, We thank you for being faithful to stir our hearts when we are complacent, weary, or afraid. Please help us to recognize our gift of mercy in our lives every day, and remind us that it is available to us, no matter what we've done or how far from home we've gotten. As we go from here, help us to hear your voice each day, wherever we go, saying "I am with you." Thank you for never leaving us. Amen.