

# EXILE AND RETURN

**Bible Text:** Ezekiel 5:5-8; 36:22-32; Zechariah 1:1-6

**Lesson Focus:** Even when we feel separated, God always welcomes us back.

**Big Question:** How can I be sure that God is really with me?

**Key Words:** EXILE, BABYLON, JERUSALEM, FAITHFULNESS, PROPHET

## BIBLE CONNECTION

- ] Exile means being removed, being banished, or fleeing from one’s native country. Being in exile is generally not considered a good time.
- ] The people of Judah were exiled from their land for about 60 years (2 Kings 25:21).
- ] Being exiled challenges your identity—a lot. The Exile was a turning point in the history of God’s people, reshaping them for new life with God (1 Peter 1:17-20).
- ] During the Exile, the prophets regularly reminded Israel of God’s presence, power, and mercy. These are excellent reminders for us that when we’re struggling in life, God is present to help see us through.
- ] The prophet Ezekiel emphasized God’s presence among the people through all events, good and bad, and reminded them to dedicate their lives to God (Ezekiel 20:41-42).
- ] Ezra, a priest, and Nehemiah, a political leader, worked together to help God’s returning people make a positive impact on their part of the world.
- ] After the Exile, the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi reassured Israel that although they were in exile and being oppressed, God had not forgotten or forsaken them.

## CARTOON CONNECTION

- ] What other sorts of exile do we face today?
- ] In what ways has God provided inxile for you? Based on the cartoon, create a definition of “inxile” that reflects what you’ve learned today.
- ] Read Zechariah 1:1-6. What do you think God meant by the words in verse 3, “Return to me . . . and I will return to you”? How does Zechariah 8:14-23 describe ways we can “return” to God today?



## STUDENT BOOK CONNECTION

Here We Stand Student Book page 46: Ten Important Things that Happened between the Old and New Testaments

- ] How are these things a reminder of today’s lesson?

Here We Stand Student Book page 242: How to Receive God’s Grace Daily

- ] Why is it sometimes hard to receive God’s grace when we feel hopeless or separated from God?

## LIFE CONNECTION

Identify someone you know who is in some kind of exile. Write the person’s name on a sticky note and place it in your Bible. Like the prophets of old, your challenge is to be the voice of God’s hope. How can you bring hope to others? Pick two ways to bring hope to the person on your sticky note this week.

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## Word Search

U R S D D E D L M L O X N N C  
K O E H K W A L Z P E Z E Y T  
X P R P X P R I E S T B R Y F  
G M U I E B O E S Q U U A K C  
F M X I D N S J K C S S B F G  
G O N B S E T P H M J M O S E  
Z W B Y Y O T A N A N O R T N  
P Z P J G L D A Z Y O Q F E M  
P Q X M K N A N R L A P O H G  
M Z T R E T O R L A O J R P H  
G I U Z D L T F C N P A T O E  
J P Z F Y S T S L M D E Y R O  
A A S B S H T B H A P S S P C  
R L A C I T I L O P N O S W E  
V B M C D F S M W R M T T K L

BABYLON  
LAW  
PRIEST  
REPENT

SEPARATED  
CYRUS  
FORTY

NEBUCHADNEZZAR  
POLITICAL  
PROPHETS

1. Men and women who warned God's people of wrongdoing and asked them to change on behalf of God were \_\_\_\_\_.
2. King \_\_\_\_\_ initiated the Exile (Ezra 2:1).
3. During the Exile, God's people lived in \_\_\_\_\_ (Ezra 2:1).
4. Nehemiah was a \_\_\_\_\_ leader.
5. Ezra was a \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The people of Judah were in exile for \_\_\_\_\_ years.
7. Even when we feel \_\_\_\_\_, God always welcomes us back.
8. Ezra thought it was really important to study, understand, and follow God's \_\_\_\_\_ (Ezra 7:10).
9. God moved King \_\_\_\_\_ of Persia to set God's people free from exile (Ezra 1:1).
10. Zechariah calls the people to \_\_\_\_\_, or return to God so God can also return to them (Zechariah 1:1-6).

Answers: 1. prophets 2. Nebuchadnezzar 3. Babylon 4. political 5. priest 6. forty 7. separated 8. law 9. Cyrus 10. repent