

EZEKIEL AND THE VISION

by Casey Rohrer and Carol Duerksen

KEY VERSE:

Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking. (Ezekiel 1:28)

FAITH STORY:

Ezekiel 1

FAITH FOCUS:

God gave Ezekiel a vision in hopes that he would pass on to the Jews the message that God can be worshiped anywhere, and that God is a God of all people, not just the Jews.

SESSION GOAL:

To help students see that God can be worshiped anywhere.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

Help students understand the meaning of this unusual passage and apply it to their lives.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Bibles for everyone.
- 2 White poster paper and colored markers
- 3 Scissors
- 4 String, leather or yarn to make hangers for poster pieces in Respond activity.

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5–7 minutes)

Ask all students to all get into a bodily position that represents “worship” to them, and to remain in that position as you go around the class and discuss it. Are there some positions that are “typical” worship positions? Kneeling? Standing with arms raised? Are there others that don’t seem to be worshipful? Is anyone standing on a chair? Standing on their head? Dancing?

Discuss: *How did they decide what was a worshipful position?*

CONNECT: (10 minutes)

Ask students to think about how they would complete this sentence:

The time and place I feel the closest to God is _____. Go around the group and ask for their responses, allowing for students to “pass” if they don’t want to answer.

Discuss: What is the difference between “feeling close to God” and “worshipping God?” Is

there a difference? Do you feel close to God more often when you are alone or when you are with other Christians?

Transition Statement: *The Jews had a favorite place to worship but during the exile to Babylon the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple where they worshiped. God called on Ezekiel to challenge the Jews that God can be worshiped everywhere.*

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (20 minutes)

Go around the room asking persons to read two or three versus of Ezekiel Chapter 1 until the chapter is read in full. Then break the class into groups of 3-4, give them poster paper and markers, and ask each group to draw what they think Ezekiel is depicting. Share the illustrations.

Ask: *Why do you think Ezekiel had this vision?*

Share the reason as explained in the Insights from Scripture.

APPLY: (10 minutes)

Make plans as a class to meet somewhere for a worship experience other than in the setting they are accustomed to. Encourage the class to be creative and actually plan to do this next Sunday or in the near future. Some ideas: an outdoor setting, or with another denomination that worships differently from your congregation, or with another faith entirely. Or how about the mall—meet in the food court and offer prayers to God for the people you see! The possibilities are as endless as the strange vision of Ezekiel!

RESPOND: (7–10 minutes)

Ask each group to gather with their poster. Each person should cut out a small part of the poster that they would like to take home with them as a reminder that God is everywhere, and to encourage them to be creative and open in their worship of God. Students may use their piece of the poster as a bookmark or make it into something that hangs from the rearview mirror of their car or in their room.

When each person has their poster piece, close with a prayer asking God to give visions for new and creative worship to each one .

INSIGHTS FROM THE SCRIPTURE:

In 597 B.C.E., King Nebuchadnezzar exiled Ezekiel to Babylon with the rest of the Jews. This is where God calls on Ezekiel to be a prophet to the exiled Jews. This was a very low point for the Jews because not only were they exiled from their country, but they also witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem and their holy temple. This hit them hard because the temple in Jerusalem was the only place they felt they could worship God. It was actually questionable during this time if their faith in God will survive. God called on Ezekiel to help the Jews understand that God is not centralized in one area but is present everywhere, and that God is a God of people and persons, not just of a nation-state (Israel). The Jews experienced a lot of change during this time period of their history. They went from worshiping in the temple to worshiping in synagogues. They went from being altar-centered to being book-centered (Torah). They went from being called Israelites to being called Jews. This helps us see the

confusion these people felt after the exile. They just didn't know which side was up! It wasn't until this teaching from Ezekiel that the Jews understood that God is everywhere.

God gave Ezekiel this vision in the hope that he would pass it on to the Jews that God can be worshiped all over the place and that God is a God of all people not just the Jews. Ezekiel saw two different visions. The wheel vision is part of the vision of the living creatures. He sees this contraption or vision move in all directions, which communicates to him that it can move in every which way. Ezekiel then realized that this was the appearance of the Lord, so he fell face down to the ground. After understanding that this vision was from God about where God can be, Ezekiel realized God was telling him that God is not a God that can be placed in a box, so to speak.

WORKS CITED:

Bontrager, Marion. **An Introduction to Biblical Literature.** Hesston College.

New Revised Standard Version Reference Bible with the Apocrypha. Grand Rapids: Zondervan: 1993.