

Katie



EZEKIEL 8 IDOLATRY

Scripture: Ezekiel 4

Open: Greet, Praises, Requests, Pray

Supplies: Prepared sandwich, balloons with phrases written on them.

Ask

Pull out the prepared sandwich. Have the leader explain that their mom/dad/husband/wife (whatever) made them this sandwich. Take a bite. Start to "praise" the sandwich. "Oh sandwich, you're so good! Thank you for being such a delicious sandwich! Sandwich I'm so happy to have you. Thank you sandwich!" Really go over the top with it. Then ask the kids if that seemed normal. Why was it weird? (possible answers, you're talking to a sandwich, it's just a sandwich, etc.)

Explain

This is a little bit like idolatry. In the story in Ezekiel that we're going to read today, we're going to learn why the people of Israel were being punished by God. The main reason was for their idolatry. Idolatry is when we put anything in God's place. When I was talking to the sandwich about how wonderful it was, I was giving the sandwich credit that belonged to the person who made it. I was honoring the created thing over its creator. This is what the Israelites were doing. They were worshiping a fake god called Tammuz who was supposed to be the god of agriculture. They would worship the sun and the moon, things created by God, rather than worshiping the Creator.

Read

Ezekiel 8. This is a long and hard passage. Divide it up as you see necessary to help the kids understand. Explain that this was a vision God gave Ezekiel. To help the kids stay engaged, have them move from place to place in the room for each section.

Vs 5-6: Ezekiel saw an altar that was not being used to worship God, but fake gods.

Vs 7-13: Inside the Temple, Ezekiel is shown that even the elders are committing idolatry. These are supposed to be leading men, but they are leading poorly because they don't believe God sees their actions.

Vs 14-18: God shows more idolatry. It has invaded the entire Temple and the land, and God is not pleased.

Explain

Maybe you feel like this sounds a bit harsh, but you need to understand that God warned the people beforehand. In Deuteronomy 4:25-31, God warns the people that if they bow down to idols, if they worship things other than him, they will be removed from the land and punished severely. God is not surprising his people by this punishment. They were well aware that what they were doing was wrong and had consequences. But they determined that God couldn't see or care.

What we do has consequences, too. You may not be bowing down to idols or worshipping creation, but we can all have different idols in our hearts. We can all have things that we put in place of God. Perhaps rather than reading your Bible, you decide to watch a little more TV. Maybe instead of doing something God asked you to do, you fill your time doing something different.

God longs for people to worship him alone because he knows that he is the only one who brings life. He is the only one who can make us into the people we were made to be. All else is false and will fail.

Game:

Things like TV and activities aren't bad, they're only bad when we place them in front of God. Let's play a game to remind us to keep God first.

Have a large amount of balloons divided into five places in the room with phrases written on them (if kids cannot read yet, have the balloons divided throughout the room and as they run from one space to the next, read out a phrase). If the phrase represents an idol that is being placed in front of God, the kids need to pop the balloons. If not, they need to run on to the next group of balloons. Go until all the idols are smashed.

Example Phrases:

You know you should go to church, but you decide to stay home and watch your favorite cartoon (idol).

You read your favorite book, but make sure you spend time reading the Bible too (not idol).

You choose to watch TV and decide to go to bed without praying because you already stayed up too late (idol).

You worship the moon (idol).

You love music, but you always make sure to use your music gift to honor God (not idol).

Etc.

Main Point:

God sees us. He knows our hearts and he knows what we are doing and why. We will all make mistakes. We will all put things in place of God. But when he shows us what we're doing, we need to ask him to help us smash the idols in our life. Sometimes that means giving them up completely. Sometimes that means taking a break from those things for a while so you can spend time focusing on God being in his rightful place. Sometimes that means asking for self-control, or making sure you spend time with God before you do anything else. God helps us when we're weak. And he forgives us when we mess up, but nothing is hidden from him. So let's confess our sins and ask God to help us put him first in our lives.

Memorize Ezekiel 8:12**Close in Prayer**