

Getting Ready for the Story

A COMFORTING MESSAGE

***This week's story is Jeremiah 31:7-14.
The theme is Comfort.***

WHAT ARE SOME DOORS INTO THIS STORY?

After you read the Bible text for this week's story, try one or more of these ways to enter the story further and prepare yourself to share it with kids.

Coming Home

"Don't be sad! God will lead you home from far away!" Jeremiah promised the people. They held on to the hope of his promise until it came to fruition. Put yourself at least a tiny bit in the mindset of God's people in this story. Take a long walk and notice how it feels to come back home. Look around and notice how your home feels like the Promised Land to you.

Comfort May Not Be Comfortable

Another word for the verb *comfort* is *console*. St. Ignatius, founder of the Jesuit order in the 1500s, spoke of the consolations that God provides for us, some of which may not necessarily be pleasant. For example, recognizing God's love for us, even as sinners, can remind us painfully of our own unworthiness. Coming close to God is always our consolation and comfort, even as we realize that loving God includes discomfort and costs. Take some time in silent prayer to contemplate all these ideas.

Search for Good News

We live in a media-saturated society where it is almost impossible to turn off all the news feeds. This story reminds us of God's good news in the midst of the news feeds. God is at work every day in the mess of life, comforting people and accompanying them back home. Where do you go to discover that God has comforted people? Spend some time bookmarking sites that bring you real news of God's presence in the messiness.

WHY DOES THIS STORY OR THEME MATTER TO KIDS?

Read about these ways to view the story and today's theme through a kid lens to help inspire you as you prepare for Sunday school.

What Would You Miss about Your Church? (PreK–Grade 2)

The people living in exile in today's story had lost their place of worship. Young kids are still getting used to their church and worship spaces. They may not even realize how much these places are becoming "home" to them. Helping kids name the things they treasure about church can help bring them back more often. Undoubtedly, what they treasure most are their church friends!

Discomfort/Comfort (Grades 3–6)

When do we willingly or unwillingly leave our comfort zones? Older kids can begin to answer this question. They have enough life experience to have changed classroom teachers, coaches, and leaders. Help kids identify the risks they have willingly taken to try new things and get out of their comfort zone, as well as the resilience they have gained from enduring unexpected moves.

Contrast (All Kids)

Who doesn't love a dramatic story with a happy ending? Kids understand and have life experience with things falling apart and things coming back together. Kids will root for the ways God can turn things around, comforting vulnerable people who just want to go home.

PRAYER

Think about the specific places at home where you like to pray. Is God calling you to find new places of comfort, or even discomfort, for prayer? Maybe there's a patch of sun on the living room rug, a cozy place next to your dog, or a spot outside to which God is inviting you. Leave your comfort zone this week and try a new prayer place.

REMEMBER TO PREP

Read through your leader guide, check your supplies, and make sure you have enough leaflets for the kids in your class.