

Week 4: Title/Topic: The Homecoming (A Promised Home For God's People)

Bible: *Ezekiel 37: 24-28 NLT*

“My servant David will be their king, and they will have only one shepherd. They will obey my regulations and be careful to keep my decrees. 25 They will live in the land I gave my servant Jacob, the land where their ancestors lived. They and their children and their grandchildren after them will live there forever, generation after generation. And my servant David will be their prince forever. 26 And **I will make a covenant of peace with them**, an everlasting covenant. **I will give them their land and increase their numbers, and I will put my Temple among them forever.** 27 ***I will make my home among them. I will be their God***, and they will be my people. 28 And when my Temple is among them forever, *the nations will know that I am the Lord, who makes Israel holy.*”

Overview: Home is meant to be a safe place of rest and peace. God’s original home, a garden, was exactly that. His home was filled with his children that He walked and talked with every day. Unfortunately, this perfect unity between God and man would come to an end because God had rules to his home and his children didn’t listen. So, this led to a separation between God and his people. The Good News is that God wasn’t satisfied with this separation, so he created a plan for a better home in order for us to be reunited with our Father always and forever. ***God doesn’t live in a physical building; He lives in the hearts of those who welcome Him in.***

Big Idea: God makes His home with us so that we can worship Him alone.

How does God plan to restore His home back to his people:

1. **God promises to reunite His people back to himself. V.24**

→ At one point or another, all of us have wandered off a path or two in our lives. Whether that is a physical path, like a trail in a forest preserve or a path that isn’t so visible like trying to honor God with the decisions we make (or don’t make) in our lives.

→ **Illustration:** I remember the one time I wandered off a hiking trail in the National Forest looking for a waterfall. [**LEADER NOTE:** Consider using a time you may have gotten lost. **WHAT** was the cause of your wandering?]

→ *Sheep* are animals that are often recognized as not being so smart. Sheep are not the brightest but they are the most mentioned animal in the bible. Over 500 times to be exact. Whenever God mentions sheep, it is often in direct correlation to people. Yes,

God is comparing us to sheep. So *what about these stubborn fluffy creatures should we be paying attention to?*

- **Characteristics of Sheep:** 1) Sheep have no sense of direction. 2) Sheep are defenseless 3) Sheep can't get up without help 4) Sheep are emotional 5) Sheep will settle for less 6) Sheep are vulnerable 7) Sheep cannot care for themselves when they're wounded

| Any of this sound familiar? |

- Here's one of the biggest characteristics about sheep to notice:
 - No matter how far sheep wander, their master, the Shepard, comes looking for them and calls out to them. ***They recognize his voice*** when he speaks and they find their way back.
 - **"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." John 10:27 NLT**
 - WE naturally pursue the things we recognize. For example, think of your favorite place to eat. You go back over and over because you're familiar with the food and environment. The more you go, the more familiar it becomes.
 - **The more time you spend with God, the more familiar His voice will be in your life.**
 - *Do you know God's voice enough that if you ever got lost you can find your way back to Him?*
 - **Illustration:** When I was a kid I remember getting lost at JC Penny when my mom was shopping for clothes. [Leader Note: Drive this point home! Think of a time you got lost but found your way back because of a recognizable voice or something recognizable]
 - Whenever you're lost, remember God is calling out to you, just listen for his voice.
 - ◆ It's very easy to leave God's path if I never seek it to begin with. God knows the desires of my heart but so does the enemy. The enemy cannot make me wander away from God, but he can lay enough traps, like a fish to bait, to get me to willfully walk away from God. If we're not careful to guard our hearts, we can become easily lured away from unity with God. How? By the desires in our lives.

1 Thessalonians 2:3 So you can see we were not preaching with any **deceit** or impure motives or trickery.

→ **Deceit** = *Dolos Gk.* – “Bait” or “a Trap”

- ◆ The beautiful reminder about v.24 is that God promises that David who was found as a servant would move always to the high position of a King. God allowed David to become King because David loved God. He was known as “A man after God’s own heart.” This means David desired what God desired. But he didn’t always pursue what God wanted, he was human and sinned against God too.

→ **David, like you and I, fell for the devil’s traps many times. But here is the thing that God loved about David, is that whenever he did mess up, he never stopped coming back to God. His heart was pointed towards God. *He was able to do this because he knew God’s voice by knowing God’s heart.***

→ Our wandering is limited when we desire what God desires because His ways are pure and trustworthy. Being a child of God means obeying God to the best of our ability by submitting to his desires over our own preferences.

Big Idea: God makes His home with us so that we can worship Him alone.

Transition: God in turn, blesses those who obey Him.

2. **God promises to give us a home that He will fill with His peace forever.** V.25-26

→ God promises that after his people have been united, purified, and established under God’s rule through a deliverer that there will *everlasting peace*.

→ God’s people, Israel, were often in battles either defending themselves or fighting to take over new land God was ready to give them. Because of their constant fighting, peace was something they were not very familiar with. And if it wasn’t other nations attacking them, their own rebellion against God would cause them to live unpeacefully. God saw His childrens fighting and decided to step in.

- ◆ Rather than fighting **for** peace, God was prepping them to **rest in His** peace.

→ **If we’re honest, not everybody lives in a physical home that is peaceful all the time.** Fighting for our own happiness or version of peace can be really exhausting. But here is

the good news about God's plan for peace – He the one who does the work. Look at how many times He says "I will" in one verse (v.26) – **3x's!**

- ◆ "I will make a covenant of peace..."
- ◆ "I will give them their land and increase their numbers..."
- ◆ "I will put my temple among them forever..."

Peace is *certainty* that God will work on your behalf.

Quote: "There Cannot be peace where there is uncertainty." – DL Moody

→ **Uncertainty (worry) is satans bait, it will rob your peace if you fall for it.**

- ◆ In God's house, there is no worry. In God's house, there is no lack of peace.

→ God is a gentle Father who loves his children. He would never lie or harm those He loves.

Big Idea: God makes His home with us so that we can worship Him alone.

Transition: God plants his flag on physical land as a symbol of His residence.

3. **God promises a permanent stay.** V. 27-28

→ God is all powerful and cannot be confined to one place. BUT He does choose to create a home base here on Earth with His people in the nation of Israel.

Illustration: [Leader Note: Consider showing Israel on a map on a slide or picture of the nation itself so students can deeper connect with God's land.]

→ God originally chose to dwell among his people Israel in a temple. But God doesn't stay there. God desires not just to dwell in one land or with one people – **He desires to live in all the lives that love Him.**

- ◆ God **makes** the home; God **chooses** to be our God (stubborn sheep) and He **chooses** to claim us as His own.

→ No matter how far you feel from God or how far you've walked away from Him, He still pursues you and claims you as His own. God's strength is greater than our own and He has made a physical temple nobody can destroy – in our hearts.

Gospel

[Leader note: you can add this section anywhere you see fit in the message and word it how you'd like.] Each week of this series, we're exploring more of the Big Picture of God's story and how he is calling us home. It's like we're putting together a big puzzle. The little pieces by themselves might not make much sense, but as you put the pieces together, the big picture starts to become clear. So each week we're going to add some pieces to our puzzle to see what God has in store for us. Here's how we left our puzzle last week. [Show first image below]. Let's add a couple pieces from week 3! [Show image two below]

Image #1



Image #2

