BELONG

Starter Questions: What's the funniest or worst DIY fix you've ever seen someone attempt? Ask your students if they would like to share their highs and lows from the week.

Become Challenge Check-In: Last week, you were challenged to reach out to someone in your circle of impact who was going through a difficult time. Did you have an opportunity to encourage someone, pray with them, or remind them of God's promises? How did it go?

BELIEVE

Scripture: **Ezekiel 36:22–28**

Main Idea: **God changes us from the inside out.**

Focus Question: **Why isn't trying harder enough to change us?**

Context: (Share with students before reading Scripture.)

God had chosen Israel to be His people and to reveal His character to the nations. But generation after generation, His people turned away from Him, worshiped false gods, and disobeyed His commands. God repeatedly warned them through His prophets, but they continued in their sin. Eventually, God allowed the Babylonians to conquer Judah and take many of His people into exile, far from their homeland.

Their disobedience had consequences beyond their own suffering. The surrounding nations saw God's people defeated and scattered, which brought dishonor to His name. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God spoke to His people while they were in exile. They had repeatedly failed to remain faithful to Him, but God was not finished with them. As you read, pay attention to why God says He will act and what He promises to do.

Summary: (For leader reference only. Do not read aloud. Let students discover the meaning of the passage as they read.)

God promised to restore His people, not because they deserved it, but to demonstrate His holiness and faithfulness. He would bring them back from exile, cleanse them from sin, and replace their hardened hearts with new hearts. By giving them His Spirit, God would enable them to obey Him. His people needed more than another chance to try harder. They needed God to change them from the inside out. This promise points forward to the new life Jesus makes possible through His saving work and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Read Ezekiel 36:22–24

- God says He isn't acting because Israel deserves it. According to verses 22–23, why is He acting instead? What does that tell us about Him? *(God is acting for the sake of His holy name. By restoring His people, He will demonstrate His holiness and faithfulness to the nations, even though Israel has been unfaithful.)*

Read Ezekiel 36:25–28

- Look at everything God promises to do in these verses. Which promise stands out to you most, and why? *(God promises to cleanse His people, give them new hearts, put His Spirit within them, enable them to obey, and restore their relationship with Him. Encourage students to explain what caught their attention.)*

- God promised to remove His people's hearts of stone and give them hearts of flesh. What do you think that says about their relationship with Him? What might a hardened heart toward God look like in someone's life today? *(A heart of stone is resistant to God and unwilling to follow Him. Today, that might look like knowing what God says but ignoring it, making excuses for sin, or caring more about what others think than what God wants.)*
- Why isn't knowing what's right always enough to make us want to do it? What does verse 27 add to our understanding of how people change? *(Knowing what's right doesn't mean our hearts always desire it. Sin affects what we want, not just what we do. In verse 27, God promises to put His Spirit within His people and enable them to obey Him. We need God to change our hearts and desires, not simply give us more rules or another chance to try harder.)*

➜ **New Testament Connection Intro:** Have you ever promised yourself you were going to stop doing something, only to find yourself doing it again? You knew what needed to change, so why was it still so hard? Let's see what Titus says about where real change begins.

Read Titus 3:3–7.

- What connections do you see between God's promises in Ezekiel 36 and what Paul says in Titus 3? *(Both passages show that we need God to cleanse us from sin and give us new life. In Ezekiel, God promises to give His people new hearts and His Spirit. Titus explains that God saves us by His mercy, not our good works, and renews us through the Holy Spirit, whom He gives us through Jesus Christ.)*
- Why might someone think being a Christian is mostly about being a good person? How does this passage challenge that idea? *(People may associate Christianity with following rules, attending church, or making good choices. But Titus teaches that we cannot earn salvation through our good works. God saves us because of His mercy through Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit gives us new life.)*

Reflect

- Why is it sometimes easier to change how we act around other people than to deal with what's really going on in our hearts? *(It's possible to change our behavior to fit in, avoid consequences, or maintain a certain reputation without changing what we truly want or believe. We may even appear to follow Jesus while resisting Him privately. But God knows our hearts, and we need the transformation only He can bring through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.)*
- As you think about your own life, are you relying on appearing good enough, or have you trusted Jesus to give you new life? *(Give students a moment to reflect privately without pressuring them to answer aloud. Emphasize that appearing to follow Jesus isn't the same as having a personal relationship with Him. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and rose again. Salvation involves repentance, which means turning away from sin and turning to Jesus in faith as Savior and Lord. Invite students who have questions about where they stand with Jesus to talk with you.)*

BECOME

Circle of Impact Challenge: This week, think of someone in your circle of impact you could have a conversation with about faith. Ask what they believe about Jesus, and really listen to their answer. If the opportunity comes up, share what you learned this week: We can't earn salvation by being good enough. We need the forgiveness and new life God offers through faith in Jesus.