Visions OF GLORY

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Director of Curriculum Resources: Alex Bauman

VISIONS OF GLORY: EZEKIEL
Adult Bible Study Leader's Guide
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How to Use *Life Design*



LIFE DESIGN: Bible Study Designed for the Life You Live. These Bible study materials are designed to engage adult learners in inductive Bible study and in applying the truths of that study to their daily lives.

As you prepare to teach these lessons, keep these two factors in mind:

- The FOCUS of productive adult Bible learning is the learner. The intent of teaching is not teaching, but learning—the learner's learning.
- The GOAL of productive adult Bible learning is an appropriate life-response to Biblical truth. You do not teach simply to impart information; you teach so that the Holy Spirit of God can use the truths of the Word of God to change the child of God into the image of the Son of God.

The Lesson Plan

Each *Life Design* lesson has three distinct parts. GETTING STARTED is the attention-getter. The questions and activities "set the table," as it were, for the Bible study. SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES is the heart of the lesson. A series of inductive Bible study questions leads the teacher and learners through the Biblical text. MAKING IT PERSONAL applies the truth to life.

As is true of any teaching experience, you can adapt the parts of the lesson to fit your particular class. You may choose to alter the beginning activities or change the focus of the application. You will find more material in the Bible study than you can cover in one class session. Ask God to help you as you tailor the lesson for your learners.

The Study Book

This leader's guide is designed to accompany the Bible study book. As the teacher, you will want a copy of the Bible study. Commit to working through the questions before you plan your lesson. We encourage you to distribute Bible study books to your learners. Urge them to complete the study before class. The more your learners have studied on their own, the better the class discussions will be. When a question in the leader's guide is picked up from the Bible study book, you will notice the question number in parentheses. The answers to the questions are usually in the lesson commentary. They are also grouped together in the back of this book.

Other Resources

If you want to use transparencies as you teach, a packet of sixteen full-color transparencies is available. If you prefer to use PowerPoint, the resource CD includes a PowerPoint presentation for each lesson.

Some teachers stay very close to the outline as they teach. If this is true of you, and if you want your learners to capture that outline, reproducible in-class worksheets are included on the CD. The same worksheets may be downloaded from the Web and photocopied for class members. Visit www.regularbaptistpress.org/downloads or www.rbpadultministries.org. Thank you for choosing *Life Design* teaching materials. May God richly bless you and your learners as you study and apply His Word.

Preface

The study of Ezekiel can help you understand God, avoid His judgment, and be encouraged in living for Him. Those benefits can be yours because God proclaimed three major themes through Ezekiel: God reveals Himself, God judges sin, and God restores His people. This study kaleidoscopes history, daily human life, spiritual reality, visions of God and His glory, governments with their power brokers, and the prophetic future.

Ezekiel seized the interest of his audience, and of us today, because God so frequently had him dramatize His messages as well as speak them. Haircuts, war games, cookouts, and other moving actions add excitement to this section of God's Word.

Graphic details of the future temple and its worship, which will enhance Jerusalem during Christ's coming Kingdom on earth, fill the final nine chapters of Ezekiel. We can hardly imagine what a glorious change it will be to have Jesus Christ ruling this world.

Before you begin to teach this fascinating and symbolic book of the Bible, consider several suggestions. First and foremost, remember that you are teaching the Bible, not this adult teacher book.

Second, familiarize yourself with Ezekiel before you try to teach it. A quick scan of the book at one sitting will help you grasp the big picture of what God was doing through this unique spokesman, Ezekiel.

Third, carefully study the passage for each lesson. Read it several times, gleaning the meat of the passage. Do a deliberate in-depth study, using tools to help understand the text in its setting.

Lastly, make full use of this teacher book. Look to it for help in interpretation and teaching methods. Select the teaching methods that would be most effective with your people. You probably will not have time to use all the methods presented.

As you study Ezekiel, and as you lead your class into the truth of the book, help them discover how to practice what they are learning. Christ's commission was to teach believers to observe all that He had commanded.

Resources for This Course

The transparency packet for this course (RBP0017) includes a transparency on which to record the summary statements from each lesson on Ezekiel. The transparency will help you track and review these lessons. Starting with lesson 1, use transparency 1 at the end of each lesson or at the beginning of the next lesson to record the summary statement for each lesson. You may use the suggestions in this leader's guide or ask your learners to suggest summary statements.

The Resource CD (RBP0018) for this course includes a PowerPoint presentation for each lesson. All of the transparencies are part of the PowerPoint presentation. The transparencies are also included on the CD as printable PDFs. If you would like to make your own transparencies or PowerPoint slides, the CD includes backgrounds ready for your own text.

To help in your promotion of this course, the CD includes a PowerPoint slide, posters, and a flyer. You can add your group's information to all of the promotional material.

The CD also provides in-class worksheets. Each in-class worksheet has a fill-in-the-blank outline that follows the corresponding outline in this leader's guide.

Other classroom resources on the CD include visuals and handouts. The leader's guide refers to each visual as a resource. Each resource is included in the corresponding PowerPoint presentation. Instructions on when to use the handouts are included in this leader's guide.

The CD also offers supplemental case studies. Each case study can be used as an in-class review, as material for a midweek Bible study, or as an e-mail attachment to your learners. E-mailing the case studies to your learners will emphasize living out the truth in daily life. You may want to enlist a learner to handle collecting e-mail addresses and e-mailing the case studies each week.

You will also find two supplemental application ideas on the CD. Use these ideas as handouts at the end of the appropriate lessons or as e-mail attachments. You may want to assign them to your learners and have them report on their experiences in completing them. Read through the ideas before you begin teaching this course so you can plan ahead how you will use them.

In addition, the CD includes a printable verse card for each lesson's key verse or verses. Blank verse cards are also included so you can enter different or additional verses for your learners to memorize. For your convenience, the verse cards are set for printing on Avery business cards. Use the Avery product number 8869 to avoid cutting apart the verse cards. You can find Avery business cards at avery.com. You could also simply print the verse cards on heavy paper and cut them apart using a paper cutter. Or you could e-mail the verse cards to your learners and have them print and cut their own.

LESSON 1

Lord, I Want to Know You

Scripture Focus

Overview of Ezekiel

Key Verses

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

Overview

The book of Ezekiel reveals truths about God's person and plan. To see these truths, we must understand where Ezekiel fits into Biblical history and why God brings the judgment and restoration that He does. Integrating into our lives a greater knowledge of our God will carry us through the most difficult of times. Ezekiel more fully equips us to live for Christ.

Topic

Knowing God

Theme

Studying God's Word draws us closer to Him.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will commit to studying Ezekiel to know God better.

Outline

I. God Reveals Himself (Ezekiel 1—3)
   A. In His Word
   B. By His Word
II. God Judges Sin (Ezekiel 4—33)
   A. The sin of Judah (4—24)
   B. The sin of the nations (25—33)
III. God Restores His People (Ezekiel 34—48)
   A. Because of His covenant
   B. For true worship

Materials

- **RBP transparencies 1–3**
- **Lesson 1 case study from resource CD**
- **Second Peter 1:3 verse card from resource CD**
- **Note cards**
- **Whiteboard and markers**

Getting Started

Complete the following activities to start your class.

Oh, the Pain

As learners enter the room, ask them to list on the board some of the

consequences of sin that they have experienced or have observed in others. Save their responses for later in the lesson.

Ask learners to identify some rewards for obedience. Write their responses across from the consequences of sin on the board. Save their responses for later in the lesson.

Class Survey

Distribute note cards to your learners. Ask them to write down a one- or two-word response to each of the following:

1. When you were a child, how did you feel when your parents repeatedly warned you about your behavior and then caught you in a major disobedience?

2. How do parents feel when they must discipline a disobedient child?

Collect the cards and share some of the responses with the class. Answers will highlight the rebellion, shame, and fear of the disobedient, along with the anger, frustration, and hope of the parent. (Questions 1, 2)

Disobedience and discipline, obedience and reward. These are part of everyday life, and they are part of a believer's relationship with the Heavenly Father. Knowing and obeying God was imperative for the Hebrews in Ezekiel's day, and it is still imperative for believers today. The book of Ezekiel reveals God to His people. In particular, the book covers three topics about God: God reveals Himself, God judges sin, and God restores His people.

Searching the Scriptures

I. God Reveals Himself (Ezekiel 1—3)

DISCUSS: What does it mean to "know" God? Why do we need to know God fully? (Questions 3, 4)

Gaining a greater knowledge of our God should be a powerful motivation for studying Ezekiel. He reveals Himself in interesting ways through Ezekiel's messages.

READ: Ezekiel 1:1–3. **ASK:** What do you learn about Ezekiel the man? How did God reveal His word and will to Ezekiel? (Questions 5, 6)

The timing (the beginning of Ezekiel's priesthood), the place (in captivity in Babylon), and the means of God's revelation to Ezekiel (visions)—these three elements provide the keys to effectively study the book of Ezekiel.

TRANSPARENCY: Display transparency 2. Note the locations of Israel and Babylon. Babylonian captives traveled about 700 miles to get from Judah to Babylon.

"The thirtieth year" most probably refers to Ezekiel's age. At this age, a man entered service as a priest (Num. 4:3).



A. In His Word

As he began his book, Ezekiel left no room for questioning the source of his prophecy. In verse 1, he stated that he had had visions of God, and Ezekiel unveiled his major theme: revealing God. In verse 3, he asserted that the hand of the Lord was upon him, and he revealed his authority to teach and preach. Ezekiel's words and actions resulted from God's work in his life. Ezekiel knew God personally.

ASK: How does personally knowing God affect you when you read the Bible, God's written revelation? (Question 7)

It is true that "the heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19:1). Creation reveals God's power and majesty in such a way that even those who are lost in their sins should see it (Rom. 1:18–20). The creation tells us that God exists.

However, the Word of God is special revelation. It reveals God's person. The Word moves us beyond knowledge that God exists to knowledge of the God Who exists.

The days of prophets and prophecy have passed. Now that the Scripture is complete, it is sufficient revelation for all the needs of our lives (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). We must simply obey the Word of God that we have received. We must go to the Word to learn about God.

Theologians make a distinction between general revelation and special revelation. General revelation is sufficient to show people that God exists, but special revelation is necessary to reveal God's desire and plan to save people.

B. By His Word

The Bible is the written Word of God and the revelation of God. What does the Word—which reveals God—reveal *about* Him?

The Bible shows that God is the ruling God. When Ezekiel wrote that he was "among the captives [exiles] by the river of Chebar," he revealed how God was working out His plan to purify Israel. God's people should have been in God's land, enjoying God's blessing. Instead, they were out of God's land, under God's judgment. This fact is essential to understanding the book of Ezekiel. How could such judgment take place? To find the answer, we must think through some central Old Testament truths.

BIBLE STUDY: Divide the learners into two groups, and assign each group one of these activities: (1) Read Genesis 12:1–3 and identify the three elements of God's covenant with Abraham. (2) Read Deuteronomy 7:6–11 and identify Israel's responsibility toward that covenant. (Allow up to five minutes for this activity.) (Questions 8, 9)

God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3) included three elements. First, God would give Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan. Second, He would make a great nation of Abraham. Third, He would bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham. God sealed this promise with an eternal covenant. The Old Testament details God's work with His people in light of the Abrahamic Covenant. In fact, His program here on earth focuses on the

fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham.

The book of Deuteronomy is the covenant that God made with Abraham's descendants, the nation of Israel. God's covenanted plan was clear. He had first loved the Children of Israel and chosen them so they could live in obedience to Him (Deut. 7:6–11).

However, in the event of hard-hearted disobedience, God's plan also included the possibility of terrible chastisement and judgment.

READ: Exodus 20:1–3. **ASK:** What is the first of the Ten Commandments? Why did God give that particular command? **DISCUSS:** Why is idolatry, or the worship of anyone or anything other than God, an offense to Him? **ASK:** How do you react when someone disobeys you? Skim through Deuteronomy 28:15–25, 32–37 and identify some of the things God said would happen if Israel disobeyed Him. (Questions 10–14)

The first of the Ten Commandments tells of the uniqueness and singularity of God. He is the only God, and therefore He must be the sole object of worship (Deut. 5:6–8). Idolatry amounts to rejection of God. It allows another to be in His rightful place. For such foolish disobedience, God promised to chastise His people (Deut. 28:15–68).

The Bible also shows that God would graciously turn from judgment and restore His people when they repented. However, stiff-necked resistance to God would bring about the worst chastisement—captivity in a foreign land. The ten tribes that made up the Northern Kingdom of Israel had already been scattered in God's judgment (2 Kings 17:7–23).

ASK: If you had lived in the Southern Kingdom, would the captivity of the Northern Kingdom have taught you anything? If so, what? Why? **DISCUSS:** Why is it so hard for us to obey God's commands, especially when we see the consequences of others' disobedience? (Questions 15, 16)

The Southern Kingdom, Judah, had not learned from the chastisement of the Northern Kingdom. Their sins brought them to captivity too (2 Kings 25). Thus we find Ezekiel in exile among them in Babylon by the Chebar River.

The only God—Who has revealed Himself in His Word—had fulfilled His Word by judging His people. His judgment was in accord with His Word, yet He did not abandon His people. He ministered His Word to them through His prophet. The God Who judges is also the God Who longs to restore His people if only they will submit to Him.

II. God Judges Sin (Ezekiel 4—33)

ASK: Do you agree that God always punishes sin? Why or why not? (Question 17)

A. The sin of Judah (4—24)

Although God judges sin, He is gracious and gives repeated warnings before He judges. Ezekiel recounted God's gracious work with sinners. He both spoke and exemplified God's word. Ezekiel himself was actually one of the communication tools that God used to present His love and grace to needy sinners.

The truth that we worship a God Who is willing to judge sin is sobering. On the one hand, God's judgment calls lost sinners to repent. On the other, it calls God's people to purity. According to 1 Peter 4:17, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

For those who have trusted Christ for salvation, God's judgment does not carry the threat of Hell. The believer's sins have been fully dealt with at the cross (Rom. 8:1). However, believers may be chastised by God for sin.

READ: Hebrews 12:5–15. **ASK:** Why does God chasten His children? How should a believer respond to God's chastening? What is the goal of God's chastening? What profit comes from this loving chastening? (Questions 18–21)

This would be an excellent time to share the gospel. Some learners may be Christians in name only. Perhaps they have a "denominational heritage" that is a substitute for salvation in Christ.

Ezekiel was a righteous man, but he still had to live through the judgment that God brought on the unbelieving nation. This judgment, though painful, drew him closer to God.

B. The sin of the nations (25—33)

The nations around Israel knew about God because of their involvement with Israel. They should have submitted to Him, but they did not. Ezekiel preached God's plans for judgment on the nations, first on those closest to Judah and then on those at a distance.



Transparency: Display transparency 2. Point out the countries that lay between Israel and Babylon.

In each case—whether the nation was close to or far from Israel—God revealed their people's need to repent of specific sins. God's judgment does not come in a general, vague way. God knew the situation of each sinning group and called them to repentance based on their offenses.

ASK: Which of the consequences of sin listed on the board at the beginning of our lesson might God allow a nation to suffer? **DISCUSS:** Is our country experiencing any of these consequences? Is our country exempt from God's judgment?

Though sinners bear the responsibility for their behavior, Ezekiel revealed that the Devil is God's adversary and the moving force behind the nations who oppose God's plan. Three times Jesus referred to Satan as "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). John recorded Jesus' words and also served as God's instrument to reveal that "the whole world lieth in wickedness," or

in the grip of the wicked one (1 John 5:19).

III. God Restores His People (Ezekiel 34—48)

A. Because of His covenant

Both the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom succumbed to wickedness. Judgment followed. But Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel prophesied the promise of restoration based on God's unconditional covenant with Abraham. God will bring all the promises of the covenant to fulfillment in His way and in His time. Even though His people were in exile (1:1–3), He could present the promise of restoration to them.

ASK: Which of the rewards for obedience listed on the board at the beginning of our class might God impart to a nation? **DISCUSS:** Is our country experiencing any of these blessings? Can a country lose God's blessing?

God, the Giver of life, promised life to Israel in one of the most memorable pictures of conversion in the whole Bible. Beginning with only skeletons, He constructed living people (Ezek. 37) who came to life through the preaching of the Word of God. At a future time, Israel will come to life as well.

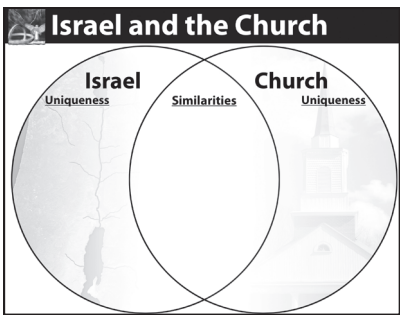
When Israel comes to genuine spiritual life, she can be fully restored to the land and receive the promises of God's covenant. God will defeat the enemies of His redeemed people prior to the reign of God's Messiah over God's kingdom.

B. For true worship

As a redeemed people, Israelites will be able to "worship [God] in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). A rebuilt temple will provide a place for the people to offer memorial offerings. In this way they will celebrate and remember God's great work on their behalf.

Worship ought to be the result of a true knowledge of God. The "Godward" focus of Israel's worship in the Millennium provides a thought-provoking guide for the church. True worship turns attention from the individual and exults in God.

Ezekiel's writing is part of God's plan to thoroughly furnish us unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:17). However, we are God's church, not Israel, so we must apply Ezekiel in a way that is consistent with our dispensation.



TRANSPARENCY: Display transparency 3. **DISCUSS:** How are both the church and the nation of Israel unique? How are they similar to each other? (Record learners' answers on the transparency. Use the following commentary, as needed, to complete the discussion.) (Question 22)

We can identify a number of similarities between our situation and Ezekiel's. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob came to God by faith, just as we do. Their sins were washed away by the blood of Christ, just as ours are

(Rom. 3:23–26). They lived with a goal of holiness and were sustained and guided by the Word of God. In reading favorite psalms such as Psalm 1, 15, and 23, it is clear that they enjoyed a rich spiritual life. In these and other ways, Israel's life parallels the church's life.

However, similarity is not identity. The land of Israel was the setting in which God developed holiness in the lives of His people. In that specific geographic locale, the Hebrews obeyed the promises of God's Word. His promises of blessing or chastisement pertain to that land. Blessing manifested itself physically in the weather of their land and in the crops it produced. Their relationships with other nations also reflected the "blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience" pattern. When they obeyed, no nation could stand before them.

The church is not Israel. It is made up of people living around the world from all nations and races. We do not share the genetic code of Abraham to tie us together. Instead, we are a part of the Body of Christ, related to the Head of the Body, Jesus Christ (Col. 1:18–20).

In each geographic locality, the local church manifests the Body of Christ to the world. As each member uses his or her spiritual gift, the body functions and God's people grow toward maturity. The New Testament Scripture is our detailed plan for ministry in the Body. The Old Testament is both a guide and an encouragement.

As we apply the book of Ezekiel to ourselves, we cannot join Israel in claiming the national promises, but we can grow in holiness. We can learn the incomparability of God from the first three chapters. God's judgment of sin should convict our hearts, identifying needs in our own lives.

The restoration reveals two truths for us. First, we have the opportunity of renewed fellowship with God on the personal level after we confess our sin. This wonderful prospect is available today. Second, we will also have the opportunity to rule with the Lord Jesus in His future Kingdom.

Making It Personal

Committed Study Time

Ask: Will you commit to studying the book of Ezekiel regularly? If so, set an appointment (or as many as needed) and record it/them where you normally record your appointments. Be sure not to miss your appointments with God in Ezekiel. (Question 23)

No Idols

Ask: Do you have any idols—things that replace God in your affections, time, spending, etc.? Write a prayer, confessing your idolatry and asking God to reveal Himself to you through Ezekiel in ways that will help you put Him first. (Question 24)

Use the case study for lesson 1 as desired.



Review Transparency

Use transparency 1 to review the Glorious Lesson for this lesson: Seek God in His Word.

Memory Verse

Distribute copies of the 2 Peter 1:3 verse card from the resource CD. Encourage the learners to memorize the verse.