

Issue 58 Bible Study

Evangelism Empowered by Prayer

Note: This Bible study is formatted for small group open discussion. If you use this study by yourself, we suggest you journal your answers to the discussion questions. Also, please use suggested translations where indicated. Biblegateway.com is an excellent source for translations you may not have on hand.

True confession: Ezekiel is not my favorite book of the Bible. Sure, it has some mind-blowing visuals and quotable passages. But overall, when I read Ezekiel, I'm usually more puzzled and confused than uplifted. So, when my pastor asked me to lead a group discussion on the book, I agreed out of deference to him more than enthusiasm for the opportunity.

My church encourages parishioners to read the Bible together. We follow a reading plan that enables us to read through the entire Bible in two years. Once a month, a group of fellow readers gathers to discuss our readings for that month. June was the month for Ezekiel, and our discussion was to take place on Father's Day.

I studied up, consulting commentaries and notes in different study Bibles. I watched hours of the Bible Project's excellent 29-session class on Ezekiel. I was ready to talk about weird prophetic acts, the disturbing imagery of chapter 16, the symbolism of the king of Tyre, the new temple, and more. I even had some thoughts about "Ezekiel Bread."

But our discussion on Father's Day didn't go to any of those places. Instead, it went toward the fatherly heart of God for the lost. It turns out, most of the group had adult children who are not walking with God. Some of our grown kids had just

gradually slipped away so that faith has little meaning for them anymore. Others of these much-loved sons and daughters are blatantly rejecting and rebelling against Christ. Like the Israelites in Ezekiel's time, all these young men and women had known the truth, had been trained by it—but they are now living far from God.

When this came to the surface, it became clear that we wouldn't need to spend as much time talking about the enigmas of Ezekiel as I'd anticipated. Instead, we turned to God. We exchanged first names of the individuals whose hearts we longed for God to soften. And we prayed words and promises from Ezekiel for them. We left that time encouraged, knowing that God has as much desire and power to turn our loved ones back to Him today as He did the dry bones of Ezekiel's time.

Discussion Questions

Print out a copy of this study. Then, on your own or taking turns in your group, read aloud the questions and the suggested Scriptures.

What hope for the lost do the following verses offer?

Ezekiel 33:11: _____

Ezekiel 18:32: _____

Ezekiel 20:44: _____

Sometimes people reject God because of how the church and other religious people have acted. Do any of the people you intercede for fit into this category? Read Ezekiel 34:1–16. Try to picture it in your imagination. How does God feel about those who have been wounded by religious people, and what will He do about it? Can you picture Him doing this for the ones you are concerned about?

Some people seem to be so deep in sin that it's hard to imagine them ever being saved. But what does Ezekiel 33:14–16 say about that?

We know from Scripture and our own experience that no one has the power to change his or her own heart. What does God say about that in the following verses?

Ezekiel 11:19: _____

Ezekiel 36:25: _____

Ezekiel 36:27: _____

Action Steps

As you pray for the people you long for God to save, which of the Scriptures you read and discussed resonated with you? Personalize that passage and write it out so that you can return to it and pray it regularly. You might decide to pray it every day. Or you may choose to intercede for the salvation of the lost on a certain day of the week, every week. Just find a regular time and jump in.

God commanded Ezekiel to perform a prophetic act that brought life to souls that were dead. Read about it in Ezekiel 37:1–14. What might God be inviting you to speak over the people you know who need to “hear the word of the Lord”?

Go ahead and speak it. Say it loudly and boldly. Invite the breath of God to enter the dead souls of those you long to see

saved.

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