

Lesson 10 | May 8, 2022

Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision and Call

Study Text: Ezekiel 1:1 through 3:11

Central Truth: Jesus Christ calls all of His disciples to endure difficulties as they follow Him.

Key Verse: Ezekiel 2:2

The spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me (KJV).

The Spirit came into me as he spoke, and he set me on my feet. I listened carefully to his words (NLT).

Learning Objectives

- Students will understand the meaning and significance of Ezekiel's prophetic call.
- Students will actively seek the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.
- Students will consistently spend time focusing on God's Word and applying it to daily life.

Introducing the Lesson

Say: Today's study explores the beginnings of the prophetic ministry of Ezekiel, another Old Testament prophet who was called to endure difficult times and experiences because of his calling. Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, can give us an intimate glimpse into the motivations and self-understanding of these special prophets of God. They serve as examples to provide us with assurance that God will help us to do whatever He calls us to do.

Opening Activity—Difficult Instructions

Ask: *What's the most difficult thing a supervisor or someone else in authority over you has asked you to do? What training did they provide to help you succeed in that task?*

Say: Ezekiel is unique among the Old Testament prophets. No other prophet has visions as detailed and intriguing, and few prophets embody their message in a more personal and sacrificial way than he does. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The Air Force sent me to South Korea for a year. I ministered to children for the year but my family was not with me.

Earlier, we studied the call of the prophet Jeremiah and saw how God singled out this young man for a powerful yet difficult ministry at a crucial moment in the

history of God's people. In today's lesson we will study the calling of Ezekiel, who was a contemporary of Jeremiah. Their ministries were similar, but based in different locations. While Jeremiah was still preaching in Jerusalem, Ezekiel was ministering to God's people in exile. Like Jeremiah, he was confronted with difficulty and opposition, but was sustained by God's strength, and by his passion for the call of God on his life.

Part 1—Inaugural Vision

An Exiled Priest; a Vision of God

Ezekiel 1:1–4

[Eze 1:1-4 KJV] 1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth [month], in the fifth [day] of the month, as I [was] among the captives by the river of Chebar, [that] the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. 2 In the fifth [day] of the month, which [was] the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, 3 The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him. 4 And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness [was] about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

Say: Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel came from a priestly family. However, unlike Jeremiah, Ezekiel's family was still serving in the temple at the time of the Babylonian exile. Jeremiah's message began as a precursor to the exile, while Ezekiel's message began after the exile commenced. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar sent Judah's king, Jehoiachin, into exile in Babylon, along with 10,000 Jews from the upper classes of Jerusalem society (see 2 Kings 24:14). As was the usual practice, only the poor were left in the land. Among the exiles was a Zadokite priest named Ezekiel. The Babylonians (called Chaldeans in King James Version) settled this young priest in a village called Tel Abib, on the Kebar canal, about 200 miles north of the capital city (Ezekiel 3:15). When Ezekiel was thirty years old, God added the office of prophet to his priestly calling. As "the priest . . . in the land of the Chaldeans" (1:3, KJV), Ezekiel would be one to whom Jews in exile looked for guidance. And, as a godly priest and prophet, he would be interested in their spiritual welfare.

One day Ezekiel saw a vision of God approaching in the distance. God appeared in a form that was associated with His saving, delivering presence, an assurance that was much needed by the Judean exiles. It was an awe-inspiring sight. The Lord's presence was preceded by a great storm cloud "that flashed with

lightning” (verse 4, NLT). This was what is called a “storm theophany.” (A theophany is a visible or tangible manifestation of God.) Such a theophany is a familiar image in the Old Testament (e.g., Psalm 18:7–14 and Psalm 29). When God approaches in the storm cloud, His powerful presence routs the enemy and delivers His people. The sight of this cloud must have filled Ezekiel’s heart with hope and joy. God’s people were captive in exile, but God was in control, and mighty to deliver.

[Psa 18:7-14 KJV] 7 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. 8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. 9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness [was] under his feet. 10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. 11 He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him [were] dark waters [and] thick clouds of the skies. 12 At the brightness [that was] before him his thick clouds passed, hail [stones] and coals of fire. 13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail [stones] and coals of fire. 14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.

[Psa 29:1-11 KJV] 1 [[A Psalm of David.]] Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. 3 The voice of the LORD [is] upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD [is] upon many waters. 4 The voice of the LORD [is] powerful; the voice of the LORD [is] full of majesty. 5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. 6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. 7 The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire. 8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. 9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of [his] glory. 10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever. 11 The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.

Discuss

? Why do you think the Babylonians only deported the ruling class, and not the poor, of Judean society?

? How might a storm symbolize God’s power?

Four Cherubim and the Throne of God

Ezekiel 1:5–28

[Eze 1:5-28 NKJV] 5 Also from within it [came] the likeness of four living creatures. And this [was] their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. 6 Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings. 7 Their legs

[were] straight, and the soles of their feet [were] like the soles of calves' feet. They sparkled like the color of burnished bronze. 8 The hands of a man [were] under their wings on their four sides; and each of the four had faces and wings. 9 Their wings touched one another. [The creatures] did not turn when they went, but each one went straight forward. 10 As for the likeness of their faces, [each] had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle. 11 Thus [were] their faces. Their wings stretched upward; two [wings] of each one touched one another, and two covered their bodies. 12 And each one went straight forward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went. 13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance [was] like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning. 14 And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning. 15 Now as I looked at the living creatures, behold, a wheel [was] on the earth beside each living creature with its four faces. 16 The appearance of the wheels and their workings [was] like the color of beryl, and all four had the same likeness. The appearance of their workings [was], as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel. 17 When they moved, they went toward any one of four directions; they did not turn aside when they went. 18 As for their rims, they were so high they were awesome; and their rims [were] full of eyes, all around the four of them. 19 When the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. 20 Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, [because] there the spirit went; and the wheels were lifted together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures [was] in the wheels. 21 When those went, [these] went; when those stood, [these] stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures [was] in the wheels. 22 The likeness of the firmament above the heads of the living creatures [was] like the color of an awesome crystal, stretched out over their heads. 23 And under the firmament their wings [spread out] straight, one toward another. Each one had two which covered one side, and each one had two which covered the other side of the body. 24 When they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a tumult like the noise of an army; and when they stood still, they let down their wings. 25 A

voice came from above the firmament that [was] over their heads; whenever they stood, they let down their wings. 26 And above the firmament over their heads [was] the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne [was] a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. 27 Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. 28 Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so [was] the appearance of the brightness all around it. This [was] the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. So when I saw [it], I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.

[Eze 1:5-28 NLT] 5 From the center of the cloud came four living beings that looked human, 6 except that each had four faces and four wings. 7 Their legs were straight, and their feet had hooves like those of a calf and shone like burnished bronze. 8 Under each of their four wings I could see human hands. So each of the four beings had four faces and four wings. 9 The wings of each living being touched the wings of the beings beside it. Each one moved straight forward in any direction without turning around. 10 Each had a human face in the front, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle at the back. 11 Each had two pairs of outstretched wings--one pair stretched out to touch the wings of the living beings on either side of it, and the other pair covered its body. 12 They went in whatever direction the spirit chose, and they moved straight forward in any direction without turning around. 13 The living beings looked like bright coals of fire or brilliant torches, and lightning seemed to flash back and forth among them. 14 And the living beings darted to and fro like flashes of lightning. 15 As I looked at these beings, I saw four wheels touching the ground beside them, one wheel belonging to each. 16 The wheels sparkled as if made of beryl. All four wheels looked alike and were made the same; each wheel had a second wheel turning crosswise within it. 17 The beings could move in any of the four directions they faced, without turning as they moved. 18 The rims of the four wheels were tall and frightening, and they were covered with eyes all around. 19 When the living beings moved, the wheels moved with them. When they flew upward, the wheels went up, too. 20 The spirit of the living beings was in the wheels. So wherever the spirit went, the wheels and the living beings also went. 21 When the beings moved, the wheels moved. When the

beings stopped, the wheels stopped. When the beings flew upward, the wheels rose up, for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels. 22 Spread out above them was a surface like the sky, glittering like crystal. 23 Beneath this surface the wings of each living being stretched out to touch the others' wings, and each had two wings covering its body. 24 As they flew, their wings sounded to me like waves crashing against the shore or like the voice of the Almighty or like the shouting of a mighty army. When they stopped, they let down their wings. 25 As they stood with wings lowered, a voice spoke from beyond the crystal surface above them. 26 Above this surface was something that looked like a throne made of blue lapis lazuli. And on this throne high above was a figure whose appearance resembled a man. 27 From what appeared to be his waist up, he looked like gleaming amber, flickering like a fire. And from his waist down, he looked like a burning flame, shining with splendor. 28 All around him was a glowing halo, like a rainbow shining in the clouds on a rainy day. This is what the glory of the LORD looked like to me. When I saw it, I fell face down on the ground, and I heard someone's voice speaking to me.

Say: Ezekiel's vision is the clearest physical description of cherubim (plural of cherub) in the Bible. They bear aloft the throne of God, transforming it into a war chariot. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Within the cloud, Ezekiel saw four fantastic creatures with both human and animal features. The basic form of each creature was human, but each one had four faces—that of a man, a lion, an eagle, and an ox. In addition, each creature had hooves like a calf, human hands, and four wings, two of which were raised high, touching the wing of its neighbor (Ezekiel 1:5–10). Later, Ezekiel revealed that these creatures were cherubim (10:1). The seraphim, which appear in Isaiah's call narrative (Isaiah 6:1–4) are similar in some ways (the seraphim have six wings, whereas Ezekiel's cherubim have four), but are described in less detail. One thing is clear: The pagan conception of a cherub as a cute, chubby baby with wings is far from accurate.

Cherubim are often associated with the throne of God, as they are in this passage. Perhaps the most familiar instance of this is the ark of the covenant, which was flanked by cherubim on both ends with their wings extended and touching above the atonement cover. The ark represented the throne of God, which the wings of the cherubim supported aloft. Several times in the Old Testament, God is said to be enthroned between the cherubim, no doubt alluding to the ark of the covenant (see 1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Kings 19:15; Psalm 80:1; 99:1). **Many scholars believe that the purpose of cherubim was to guard God's throne and other sacred places, as, for instance, the entrance to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24).**

The true focus of Ezekiel’s vision was not the cherubim, but the throne of God, and the One who sat upon it. From this throne radiated the glory of God, which is one of the central themes of the Book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel went on to describe God’s throne, which the cherubim supported from below. The throne had four wheels, each of which was intersected by another wheel, probably at right angles. These intersecting wheels enabled the cherubim to move the throne forward or sideways “like flashes of lightning” in any direction without turning (verses 14–21). The throne sat on a surface made of crystal resembling the sky (verses 22–25). It appeared to be made of a deep blue, precious gemstone known as lapis lazuli (verse 26), which was often used by ancient sovereigns for decorative purposes. God himself was seated on the throne. He was human in appearance (verses 26–27), and looked like glowing amber from the torso upward and like a flaming fire from the loins downward. The divine glory surrounded the throne, having the appearance of a rainbow (verse 28).

The fact that God’s throne could appear in a distant land indicated that God’s sovereignty extended to all the earth and was not confined to the temple. Thus, God showed Ezekiel that He was just as present with His exiled people as He was with those still in Jerusalem, and He was appointing Ezekiel as His messenger to summon them to faithfulness. While Jeremiah was preaching in Jerusalem, keeping God’s people accountable to the covenant, Ezekiel would be preaching the same message in Babylon. God will always speak, and will entrust His message to faithful servants.

Resource Packet Item 1: The Throne of God in Ezekiel and Revelation

Divide the class into groups of three or four and distribute the work sheet. Give them time to read the two passages and fill out the chart. Then reassemble the class and compare responses.

Discuss

? Compare Ezekiel’s call narrative with that of Isaiah (see Isaiah 6:1–13). How are they similar? How are they different?

? What is the symbolic significance of a throne? Why would the throne have been significant to Ezekiel and the Judean exiles?

Part 2—Call to Prophetic Ministry Filled With the Spirit

Ezekiel 2:1–5

[Eze 2:1-5 KJV] 1 And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. 2 And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. 3 And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, [even] unto this very day. 4 For [they are] impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD. 5 And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they [are] a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

Say: Organizational or political leaders often have a spokesperson who is authorized to speak on their behalf. When God chose Ezekiel as His spokesperson, He put His Spirit within Ezekiel. **To be an effective instrument in God’s hand, we need to realize that only when we are anointed with the Spirit can we be fit for service.** (Share your highlights from the following text.)

God addressed Ezekiel as “son of man” (Ezekiel 2:1,3; note that this phrase appears more than ninety times in the Book of Ezekiel). Some may equate this to the title “Son of Man” as it is applied to Jesus in the Gospels (e.g., Mark 2:10; note that the phrase appears more than eighty times in the Gospels). However, such a conclusion would be mistaken. **The title “Son of Man,” as applied to Jesus, has messianic implications; the term as applied to Ezekiel emphasized his humanity. More specifically, God was emphasizing Ezekiel’s frailty and need for divine strength and empowerment. Ezekiel explained that at the moment when God spoke to him, “the Spirit came into me . . . and he set me on my feet” (Ezekiel 2:2, NLT). Filling the prophet with the Spirit and standing him on his feet indicates that God was preparing him for action and enabling him to perform the task to which he was called.**

In the Old Testament, as in the Book of Acts, the bestowal of the Spirit indicates power for service. Furthermore, in the Old Testament, prophecy is specifically tied to the operation of the Spirit. Moses stated, “I wish that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them all!” (Numbers 11:29, NLT). The prophet Joel foresaw a day when the Lord would pour out His Spirit on all people, and “your sons and daughters will prophesy” (Joel 2:28, NLT). The prophet Micah stated, “But as for me, I am filled with power—with the Spirit of the Lord. I am filled with justice and strength” (Micah 3:8, NLT). Pentecostal believers today still expect the empowerment of the Spirit and anticipate God’s anointing for service.

Having filled the prophet with His Spirit, God commissioned him. Ezekiel reported, “I heard him that spake to me” (Ezekiel 2:2, KJV). Ezekiel’s call came from God, who said, “I am sending you” (verse 3, NLT). **Ezekiel was not self-appointed; he was a man**

sent from God. He was not like the false prophets about whom the Lord said, “I have not sent these prophets, yet they run around claiming to speak for me. I have given them no message, yet they go on prophesying” (Jeremiah 23:21, NLT).

Discuss

? How has the baptism in the Holy Spirit helped you hear the voice of God?

? Why is it vital for believers to recall their constant need for God’s enablement?

Speaking Without Fear

Ezekiel 2:6–8

[Eze 2:6-8 KJV] 6 And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns [be] with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they [be] a rebellious house. 7 And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they [are] most rebellious. 8 But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.

Say: Even when we have the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we sometimes wonder how the message that God has given us will be received by our hearers. As we look at the sin and rebellion around us, we may question if anything we say or do could possibly make a difference. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In being commissioned to speak God’s message, Ezekiel would face ridicule, persecution, discouragement, and rebellion. In light of this, God warned the prophet not to let those things distract him from his mission (Ezekiel 2:6).

Having obeyed God’s command to go, Ezekiel was to “give them my messages” (verse 7, NLT), meaning that **Ezekiel’s mission was to speak God’s words and not his own.** As God’s messenger, he possessed no independent authority. He was to deliver God’s Word without addition, subtraction, or distortion.

We, too, are called to proclaim God’s message, not our own opinions or ideas. While we are not prophets like Ezekiel, we do have a sure Word from God—the Holy Scriptures. As God’s faithful messengers, we must be careful not to alter His words, or substitute our own. We are sent to a world that is dying for lack of the truth that we possess. **Our role is simply to deliver God’s saving message to those in need of it.**

Discuss

- ? What fears or other distractions may keep people from speaking God's Word?
- ? What are some ways in which people may misrepresent God by adding to or subtracting from His Word?

Part 3—Difficult Ministry Forewarned

“Eat This Scroll!”

Ezekiel 2:9 through 3:3

[Eze 2:9-10 KJV] 9 And when I looked, behold, an hand [was] sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book [was] therein; 10 And he spread it before me; and it [was] written within and without: and [there was] written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

[Eze 3:1-3 KJV] 1 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. 2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. 3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat [it]; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

Say: Most of us have had our elders admonish us not to talk with our mouths full, but in this passage God commands Ezekiel to fill his mouth so that he can speak God's words and not his own. We, too, are commanded to fill our very beings with the Word of God. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

After giving Ezekiel his prophetic commission, God showed him another vision, a hand extended toward him grasping a scroll (Ezekiel 2:9). In Ezekiel's day, most scrolls were written on papyrus (although leather/parchment scrolls were also used). Normally, such scrolls were only written on the side on which the fibers of the papyrus pulp ran horizontally. The back side of a papyrus sheet, where the fibers ran vertically, was rarely used. The fact that this scroll had writing on both sides indicates that the message it contained was extensive. Indeed, it consisted of “funeral songs, words of sorrow, and pronouncements of doom” (2:10, NLT). **These gloomy prophecies were probably predictions of judgment directed toward the kingdom of Judah, which was facing imminent destruction and exile.**

Resource Packet Item 2: Papyrus: How It's Made

Distribute the information sheet. Briefly review the process of producing papyrus. Note the difficulty of producing writing products in Bible times compared to today, whether papyrus or parchment (animal skins: sheep, calves, and goats). Explain that the scroll presented to Ezekiel in his vision was likely made from papyrus.

Ezekiel was told to eat the scroll, which contained the essence of his message to the nation (Ezekiel 3:1; see also Jeremiah 15:16; Revelation 10:8–11). By eating it, Ezekiel would be internalizing its message, making it a part of his very being.

Christians today are also called to “ingest” the Word of God so that it will transform us and become a part of the fabric of our being. Though Ezekiel’s message was harsh, and it would be a bitter pill for his hearers to swallow, “it tasted as sweet as honey in [his] mouth” (Ezekiel 3:3). The sweetness of God prepared the prophet for the bitterness of opposition and rejection, and enabled him to endure. We, too, are sometimes called to proclaim messages that may seem offensive to the hearers, but we can speak them because of the sweetness of God’s presence that accompanies us.

Discuss

? Share a time when God’s Word became “as sweet as honey” for you.

? How does internalizing God’s Word help you live for Christ daily?

Resource Packet Item 3: “Word” Pictures

Distribute the work sheet and have students complete it individually or in small groups. Briefly discuss their “Word” pictures and the question that follows.

A Stubborn Prophet

Ezekiel 3:4–11

[Eze 3:4-11 KJV] 4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. 5 For thou [art] not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, [but] to the house of Israel; 6 Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. 7 But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel [are] impudent and hardhearted. 8 Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. 9 As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they [be] a rebellious house. 10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. 11 And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

Say: Stubbornness is almost always regarded as a negative trait. However, sometimes we need to exercise our backbone—especially when we are contending for a righteous cause. God gave Ezekiel a special gift of endurance that might, in another context, be considered stubbornness. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The Lord warned Ezekiel that his message would be resisted by his countrymen: “I am not sending you to a foreign people whose language you cannot understand. No, I am not sending you to people with strange and difficult speech. If I did, they would listen” (Ezekiel 3:5–6, NLT). **Similarly, Jesus testified that “a prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his relatives and his own family” (Mark 6:4, NLT). Often it is difficult for people to receive instruction from someone with whom they are familiar, especially if they are not accustomed to seeing that person as someone with authority. Ezekiel was being treated like Jesus would be treated later, as One who “came to his own people, and even they rejected him” (John 1:11, NLT).**

Because Ezekiel’s message would fall on deaf ears and hard hearts, God warned him: “The people of Israel won’t listen to you any more than they listen to me! For the whole lot of them are hard-hearted and stubborn” (Ezekiel 3:7, NLT).

Stubborn people required a stubborn prophet: “I [God] have made you as obstinate and hard-hearted as they are. I have made your forehead as hard as the hardest rock!” (verses 8–9, NLT). A prophet must care about the people he is called to reach, rather than about how they will respond to him. While the people would repent in time, Ezekiel did not experience affirmation during his lifetime. Those who serve the Lord today must understand that they may receive no reward or recognition for their obedience until they get to heaven. Yet in the end they can know that God will say, “Well done.”

Discuss

? Ezekiel’s name means “God strengthens.” How did the prophet live up to his name in this book?

? How do you think Ezekiel felt when he was told at the outset of his ministry that his message would be rejected?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: Though we will never experience the amazing visions that marked Ezekiel’s call to prophetic ministry, our service is no less important. Like Ezekiel, we must feed on God’s Word and be filled with the Holy Spirit, resolving not to be daunted by the scorn of the world. We must obey God’s plan in good times and bad times. God will not abandon us, but will strengthen and empower us.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Make a list of people in your life who need Jesus Christ.
- Choose one or more persons from the list and resolve to reach out to them with the love of God and the truth of the gospel.
- Determine to love and pray for each of these people even if they resist your efforts to reach out.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Call of First Disciples.

Luke 5:1–11

[Luk 5:1-11 KJV] 1 And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, **2** And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing [their] nets. **3** And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. **4** Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. **5** And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. **6** And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. **7** And they beckoned unto [their] partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. **8** When Simon Peter saw [it], he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. **9** For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: **10** And so [was] also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. **11** And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

Tuesday:

Call of More Disciples.

John 1:43–51

[Jhn 1:43-51 KJV] 43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. **44** Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. **45** Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. **46** And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. **47** Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! **48** Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. **49** Nathanael answered and saith unto him,

Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. 50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. 51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Wednesday:

Call to the Weary.
Matthew 11:25–30

[Mat 11:25-30 KJV] 25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. 26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. 27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and [he] to whomsoever the Son will reveal [him]. 28 Come unto me, all [ye] that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke [is] easy, and my burden is light.

Thursday:

Call to Salvation.
Acts 2:36–41

[Act 2:36-41 KJV] 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. 37 Now when they heard [this], they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men [and] brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, [even] as many as the Lord our God shall call. 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added [unto them] about three thousand souls.

Friday:

Call of Paul Recounted.
Acts 22:6–16

[Act 22:6-16 KJV] 6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. 7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. 9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard

not the voice of him that spake to me. 10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. 11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. 12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt [there], 13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. 14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. 15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. 16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Saturday:

Call to Faithful Ministry.

1 Timothy 4:6–16

[1Ti 4:6-16 KJV] 6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. 7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself [rather] unto godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 9 This [is] a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation. 10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. 11 These things command and teach. 12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. 15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. 16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.