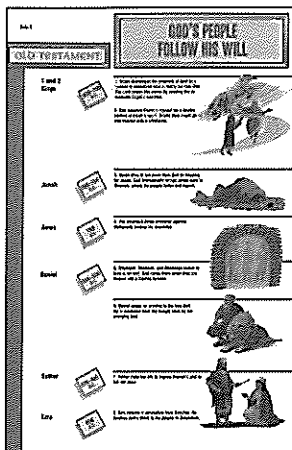


STEP 2

Bible Learning
(15–20 minutes)

Bible Basis:

Ezra accepts the challenge to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:6-10, 21-28).



Objective: That your students will learn from the study of Ezra that God wants us to be willing to help carry out His plans.

Materials

- ☐ Bible Adventures pp. 2-3
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ "God's People Follow His Will" Teaching Aid time line
- ☐ Whiteboard, marker, eraser

Direct students' attention to "God's People Follow His Will" time line, Paragraph 8. Esther became a coworker with God in saving the Jews and her own life. At that time she probably had no idea that her influence would eventually extend beyond that crisis and reach out to aid the return of Ezra and the Jewish people to Jerusalem. In the years after Queen Esther lived, Persian kings permitted groups of Jews to return to Jerusalem. Thousands of Jews returned, and they began rebuilding their ruined city and temple. However, troubles arose with unfriendly neighbors, and much of the work was forgotten. About 80 years later, the wall still was not repaired. The temple had been rebuilt, but it was being neglected. Meanwhile, some Jews who remained in Persia worked as scribes. One of these scribes was Ezra.

Bible Study

Distribute *Bible Adventures* and have students turn to pages 2 and 3. Ask students to locate Ezra 7. Ask a volunteer to read the introduction on page 2. Point out the margin notes that give additional details about the study. Choose a student to read Ezra 7:6-7.

- ❶ **Why did King Artaxerxes grant Ezra what he asked?** (Because God's hand was on Ezra. God had influenced the king to think well of Ezra. That's why the king gave Ezra permission to leave and take others with him. The king also provided everything needed for the trip and for restarting worship in Jerusalem. God was using Ezra and the king to accomplish His plans.)

- ❷ **Who also returned to Jerusalem with Ezra?** (Priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, and temple servants.)

- ❸ **Why do you think this was important?** (These people would be used to reestablish temple worship in Jerusalem. This would be important for all the Jews who returned home.)

Choose someone to read verses 8-10.

- ❹ **What had Ezra done in Babylon that helped the Jews?** (Ezra served as a scribe or teacher in Babylon, and he devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord.)

- ❺ **How did this help the people once they got back to Jerusalem?** (Ezra knew how temple worship should be carried out. Since he had studied God's Word for many years, Ezra could teach the Scriptures once the people arrived in Jerusalem.)

Have your students read the next paragraph explaining the letter to Ezra from King Artaxerxes. Choose two volunteers to read the Scripture

BIBLE STUDY FROM EZRA 7:6-10, 21-28

A PLAN FOR THE PEOPLE

The nation of Judah had been in captivity for many years. In the years after Queen Esther lived, Persian kings permitted groups of Jews to return to Jerusalem.

Thousands of Jews returned, and they began rebuilding their ruined city and temple. But troubles arose with unfriendly neighbors, and much of the work was forgotten. Meanwhile, some Jews who remained in Persia worked as scribes.¹ One scribe, Ezra, who led the Jews in Persia, was allowed by King Artaxerxes² to return to Jerusalem. The king honored Ezra and permitted some Jews, including priests and other temple workers,³ to return with him.⁴

¹Scribes were important religious leaders during the captivity. They taught the law of Moses to the Jews and made copies of Old Testament writings.

²Pronounced ar-tu-ZER-ax-es.

Read Ezra 7:6-7. Why did King Artaxerxes grant Ezra what he asked? Who also returned to Jerusalem with Ezra? Why do you think this was important?

³Priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, and temple servants were used in temple worship. Ezra used them to reestablish temple worship for the Israelites who returned.

Read verses 8-10. What had Ezra done in Babylon that helped the Jews? How did this help the people once they got back to Jerusalem?

King Artaxerxes gave a letter to Ezra explaining how the Israelites would be governed in Jerusalem.



"Now I, King Artaxerxes, decree that all the treasurers of Trans-Euphrates are to provide with diligence whatever Ezra the priest, the teacher of the Law of the God of heaven, may ask of you. Whatever the God of heaven has prescribed, let it be done with diligence for the temple of the God of heaven. Why should his wrath fall on the realm of the king and

of his sons? You are also to know that you have no authority to impose taxes, tribute or duty on any of the priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, temple servants or other workers at this house of God. And you, Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God, which you possess, appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice to all the people of Trans-Euphrates—all who know the laws of your God. And you are to teach any who do not know them. Whoever does not obey the law of your God and the law of the king must surely be punished by death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment."

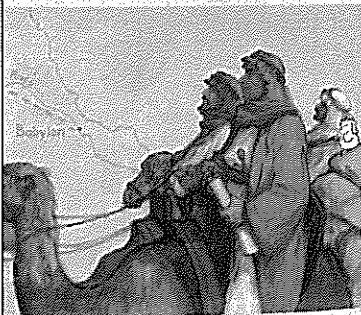
Name the things the king told Ezra to do. How did the king seem to feel about Ezra's God?

Read Ezra 7:27-28. Why do you think Ezra praised God? How had God used Ezra to accomplish His plans?



"Ezra's trip back to Jerusalem probably took about four months."

"Trans-you-FRAY-tees. An area of Persia. To the Persians it was the land west of the Euphrates River where the Jews' homeland was."



3

Spotlight (Ezra 7:21, 23-26).

- 1 Name the things the king told Ezra to do. Have students underline or circle their answers. (Appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice; teach God's laws to anyone who doesn't know them; punish those who don't obey the law of God and the law of the king.)

Ask the next question, not in Bible Adventures.

- 2 Why were these things needed? (The people were returning to their city after 70 years, and they would need to know the laws of God.) The people were driven out of their land because they forgot God's laws, and so God had allowed foreign kings to take the Israelites into captivity.

- 3 How did the king seem to feel about Ezra's God? (King Artaxerxes seemed to have a strong and deep respect for Ezra's God.)

Have another volunteer read Ezra 7:27-28.

- 4 Why do you think Ezra praised God? (Ezra was thankful God let him and the people return to Jerusalem after years in a foreign country. God used the king to extend favor to him.)

- 5 How had God used Ezra to accomplish His plans? (Ezra often used the term "hand of the LORD" to show that he felt it was God's power and wisdom that would enable him to accomplish the task that God wanted him to do. Ezra's name means "the Lord helps." He is often called the second Moses because he reintroduced God's law.)

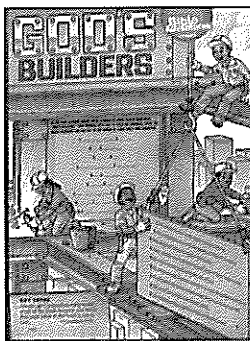
Bible Review

Have students turn to page 1 in Bible Adventures. Read the directions at the top of the page together. Give students time to fill in the blanks using the clues. Give help as needed. If time is short, the page could be done together. The answers are: 1. Mordecai; 2. Jonah; 3. Amos; 4. Disciples; 5. Jesus; 6. Ezra; 7. Elisha; 8. Esther; 9. Elijah.

Take time to review the answers as a group. As you talk about these Bible people, discuss how each one cooperated with God to carry out His plans. You could also examine some of the steps each person took in helping build God's kingdom through cooperation with the Lord.

Memory Work

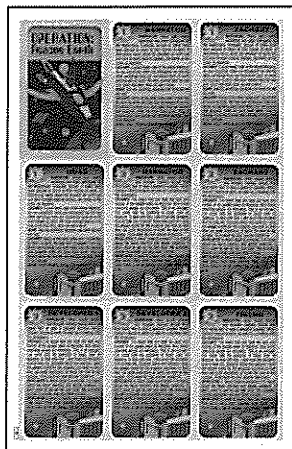
Read the Key Verse together. The last half of this verse explains what motivated these people to always give themselves fully to the work of the Lord. Their labor was not in vain because God is eternal and everlasting, nothing we do to build God's kingdom is wasted. Help students memorize the verse. Write the verse on the whiteboard. Read it together several times. Then erase two key phrases such as: "give yourselves fully" and "your labor in the Lord." Recite the verse, filling in the missing phrases. Next erase the phrases: "to the work of the Lord" and "is not in vain." Recite the verse again supplying the missing phrases from memory.



STEP 3

Bible Application

(5–10 minutes)



Objective: That your students will continue a story to discover what is needed to carry out a plan successfully.

Materials

- "Operation: Rescue Earth" Teaching Aid—used in Life Need

Hand out the cards for part two of the story from the "Operation: Rescue Earth" Teaching Aid. Assign students to read the parts.

Let's look again at Zachary's situation in the story we read earlier. Zachary had choices about how to handle the situation.

Have your students find a partner with whom to discuss the following questions. If you have a larger group, you could have small discussion groups instead. If your group is smaller, you may want to discuss these questions in a whole group.

- ▶ **Would you have turned for help to Quad, as Zachary did?** (Some students might say yes, because Quad was very powerful. Others might say no because they would be afraid Quad would say no to them.)
- ▶ **Were you surprised that Quad helped Zachary reach his goal?** (Again, answers will vary. Since Quad was very powerful, he certainly had the means to help. But at the same time, he had little to gain by helping Zachary. He didn't have to help Zachary, but he chose to because Zachary had worked hard for him.)
- ▶ **Have you ever had a situation like this one in which you were helped by someone you would not expect to help you?** (Allow students to share any experiences. They might talk about a time when someone they didn't think liked them or who seemed to oppose them did something kind.)

Zachary prayed and trusted God instead of trusting in his own power.

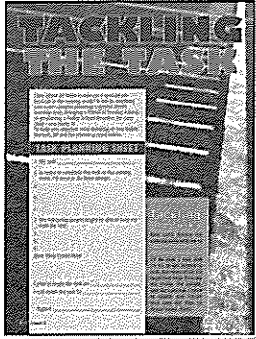
God may call on you to help accomplish His plans. There are many things that a person just can't do with his own strength. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can do God's work.

STEP 4

Life Response
(5–10 minutes)

Bible Truth:

God desires that people be willing to help Him do His work.



Objective: That your students will plan how they can accomplish a task for God.

Materials

□ *Bible Adventures* p. 4, pencils

Page 4 in *Bible Adventures* will help students focus on one thing they can accomplish on a short-term basis.

Tackling a special job for God doesn't need to be an unpleasant task. You can select your task by thinking of things you like to do. If you enjoy singing, perhaps the task you select might be to teach the class a favorite Christian song. If one of you has a friend you are concerned about, you may want to plan a special time with that person and invite her to Sunday school.

Upper-elementary students can get carried away with enthusiasm and plan too difficult a task. Help them to think realistically about the job they pick. It should be something they can handle and accomplish during the coming week.

❶ **What materials do you need to accomplish the task? Do you need books or other resource materials? Can you get them easily, or do you need money to buy them? In what order do you need them?**

Remind them that, after Ezra learned of the problem in Jerusalem, he didn't leap right in and go directly to the king. He spent time praying to God and preparing himself spiritually first. Then he thought about all the aspects of the job.

❷ **Who could help you with the task? Would parents or teachers help? What about friends or family members?**

Perhaps you need to contact someone who has a particular specialty such as playing the piano or using a computer program. Ezra thought about who he needed to help him and what each one could do.

❸ **How long is it going to take to accomplish your task? Can you do it in a week's time?**

Ezra thought about how long it would take to travel to Jerusalem and how long it would take to get the people together and reintroduce God's laws to them. Each step in a person's plan is important. No step can be left out and still get the job done properly.

Your prayer for tackling the task should be honest. In what areas do you feel a weakness or lack? These are the areas where you especially need God's power to accomplish the job. Allow time for your students to fill in the task planning sheet.

Closing Activities

Close class with a prayer for God's help that each student might be able to accomplish his/her task for God this week. You may use the prayer on page 4 of *Bible Adventures*.

Optional Activity

The activity on page 4 of *Bible Adventures* will take the place of a prayer journal assignment for this week.

GOD'S BUILDERS

Bible
Adventures

LESSON 8

IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, WE'VE LEARNED OF MANY PEOPLE WHO WERE "GOD'S BUILDERS." THEY WORKED WITH GOD TO BUILD HIS KINGDOM. USING THE CLUES PROVIDED, CAN YOU FILL IN THE NAMES OF THESE BIBLE-TIME BUILDERS?

1. _____ C _____

2. _____ O _____

3. _____ O _____

4. _____ P _____

5. _____ E _____

6. _____ R _____

7. _____ A _____

8. _____ T _____

9. E _____

KEY VERSE

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:58

1. He refused to bow to the prime minister, Haman.
2. His assignment was to tell the people of Nineveh to repent.
3. This shepherd preached against dishonesty.
4. Their mission was to spread the good news of Jesus' resurrection.
5. He rose from the dead and is the Son of God.
6. He returned from Persia to Jerusalem to teach the people God's laws.
7. God blinded the Syrian soldiers when they tried to capture him.
8. She saved her people from Haman's hate.
8. He challenged the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel.



A PLAN FOR THE PEOPLE

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¹Scribes were important religious leaders during the captivity.

They taught the law of Moses to the Jews and made copies of Old Testament writings.

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forgotten. Meanwhile,

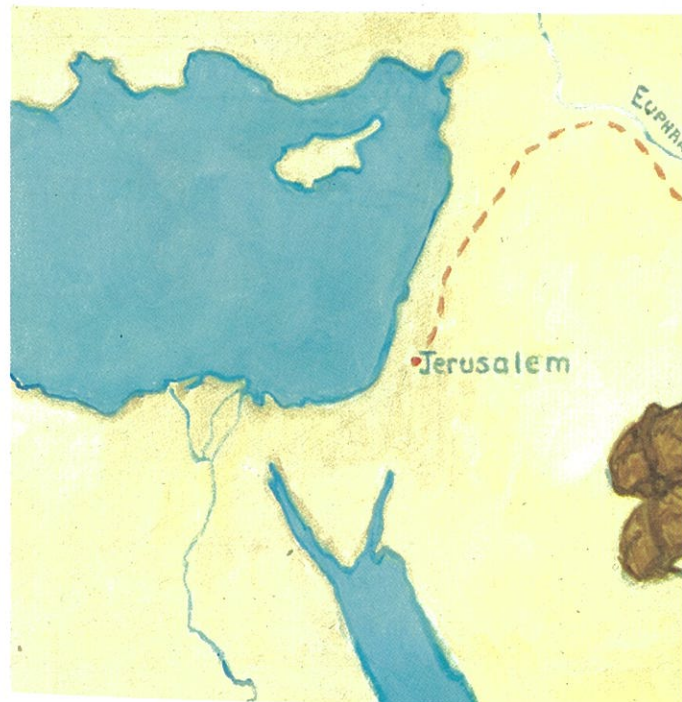
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³Priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, and temple servants were used in temple worship. Ezra used them to reestablish temple worship for the Israelites who returned.



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Ezra 7:21, 23-26

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of Trans-Euphrates⁵ are to provide with diligence whatever Ezra the priest, the teacher of the Law of the God of heaven, may ask of you. Whatever the God of heaven has prescribed, let it be done with diligence for the temple of the God of heaven. Why should his wrath fall on the realm of the king and

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Name the things the king told Ezra to do. How did the king seem to feel about Ezra's God?

Read Ezra 7:27-28. Why do you think Ezra praised God? How had God used Ezra to accomplish His plans?



TACKLING THE TASK

How about it? Want to take on a special job for God in the coming week? It can be anything you want—maybe planning a special family worship time, bringing a friend to Sunday school, or preparing a Sunday school devotion for your class—you name it!

To help you organize your thinking as you tackle the task, fill out the planning sheet below.

TASK PLANNING SHEET

1. My task: _____

2. In order to complete this task in the coming week, I'll need to do these things:

a.

b.

c.

3. The following people might be able to help me with the task.

a.

b.

c.

How They Could Help:

I plan to begin the task on _____

I will finish the task by _____

Signed _____

A PRAYER FOR TACKLING THE TASK:

Dear Lord, during the coming week help me to

I'll do what I can, and I'll try to get others to help, but most of all, I'll need Your help. Give me the skills, the people, and the courage I need to tackle and finish this task for You. In Jesus' name. Amen.