

RELEVANT • INSPIRED • PRACTICAL • LIFE CHANGING

WESLEY

ADULT STUDENT

.....
December 2025–February 2026
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WESLEY
BIBLE CURRICULUM

.....
*God's Plan Always
Prevails: God Leads
Godly Leaders*

WESLEY

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Success in Weakness

The story of human history, especially as recorded in Scripture, has always been in one form or another about man trying to wrestle power away from God in hopes of proving the myth that we are sovereign—as if we were the captains of our own fates. It’s a story as ancient as Adam and Eve and as current as your life history and mine.

It’s likewise the context of the Bible stories that we’ll be studying this quarter from the lives of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. They are people like us, following God through a world that often lies in direct opposition to anyone following him. It’s not enough that they won’t follow the One who is sovereign; they even will work very hard to prevent anyone else from following God. Often that’s because they not only want to be gods over their own lives, but they would have us believe they are gods over ours as well.

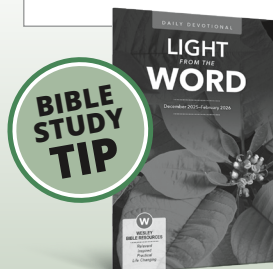
But the wonderful irony is repeated in the lives of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, and promised for ours as well. When we submit and follow—when we forfeit any claims to sovereignty—God’s power becomes greatest in our lives. When difficulties and threats stalked these biblical leaders, they found that their weakness was the ideal setting for God’s strength to reign.

As Charles Wesley penned in one of his great hymns, it is God alone “But Who Sufficient Is to Lead”:

The things impossible to men
Thou canst for thine own people do:
Thy strength be in our weakness seen;
Thy wisdom in our folly show!
Prevent, accompany, and bless,
And crown the whole with full success.

As we trace the histories of these fellow followers of our same God, let’s ask him to continually teach us how his strength can best be seen in our weaknesses. Then, just as in these great histories we’ll be studying, God can use us to accomplish his purposes.

Wesleyan Publishing House Editorial Team



You will deepen your reflection on these lessons by reading *Light from the Word* each day throughout the week. This helpful daily devotional follows the theme of each week’s lesson with a relevant, practical message aimed at sharpening your spiritual life. You’ll be immersed in these Scriptures and related passages every day.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

*By reading for fifteen minutes each day, you can
read every chapter of the Bible in one year. Begin anytime!*

december	1. Daniel 1–2	january	1. Genesis 1–3	february	1. Exodus 14–16
	2. Daniel 3–4		2. Genesis 4–7		2. Exodus 17–20
	3. Daniel 5–6		3. Genesis 8–11		3. Exodus 21–23
	4. Daniel 7–9		4. Genesis 12–16		4. Exodus 24–27
	5. Daniel 10–12		5. Genesis 17–19		5. Exodus 28–30
	6. Hosea 1–4		6. Genesis 20–23		6. Exodus 31–34
	7. Hosea 5–9		7. Genesis 24–25		7. Exodus 35–37
	8. Hosea 10–14		8. Genesis 26–28		8. Exodus 38–40
	9. Joel 1–3		9. Genesis 29–30		9. Mark 1–3
	10. Amos 1–3		10. Genesis 31–33		10. Mark 4–5
	11. Amos 4–6		11. Genesis 34–36		11. Mark 6–7
	12. Amos 7–9		12. Genesis 37–39		12. Mark 8–9
	13. Obadiah & Jonah		13. Genesis 40–42		13. Mark 10–11
	14. 1 John 1–5		14. Genesis 43–45		14. Mark 12–13
	15. Micah 1–4		15. Genesis 46–47		15. Mark 14–16
	16. Micah 5–7		16. Genesis 48–50		16. Leviticus 1–4
	17. Nahum 1–3		17. Matthew 1–4		17. Leviticus 5–7
	18. Habakkuk 1–3		18. Matthew 5–7		18. Leviticus 8–11
	19. Zephaniah 1–3		19. Matthew 8–9		19. Leviticus 12–14
	20. Haggai 1–2		20. Matthew 10–12		20. Leviticus 15–17
	21. 2, 3 John & Jude		21. Matthew 13–14		21. Leviticus 18–20
	22. Zechariah 1–6		22. Matthew 15–17		22. Leviticus 21–23
	23. Zechariah 7–10		23. Matthew 18–20		23. Leviticus 24–25
	24. Zechariah 11–14		24. Matthew 21–22		24. Leviticus 26–27
	25. Malachi 1–4		25. Matthew 23–24		25. Luke 1
	26. Revelation 1–3		26. Matthew 25–26		26. Luke 2–3
	27. Revelation 4–7		27. Matthew 27–28		27. Luke 4–5
	28. Revelation 8–12		28. Exodus 1–4		28. Luke 6–7
	29. Revelation 13–16		29. Exodus 5–7		
	30. Revelation 17–19		30. Exodus 8–10		
	31. Revelation 20–22		31. Exodus 11–13		

KEY VERSE

To fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah . . . everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD.

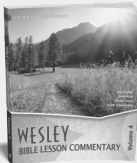
—Ezra 1:1, 5

SCRIPTURE

- Ezra 1:1–11; 2:64–70

LESSON FOCUS

God moves the hearts of people to fulfill his plan.



CHECK IT OUT

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 4 • Unit 2 • Lesson 1
Activity: God Is in Control

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage

Cyrus, king of Persia, gained great strength and power and, after unifying the Mede and Persian Empires, conquered Babylon in 539 BC. Unlike his predecessors, including Nebuchadnezzar, he had mercy on the aliens who had been forced to resettle in other lands. Though Cyrus was not a Jew, God moved his heart to free the Jews so they could return to their homeland and rebuild the temple. God also moved the hearts of his people, the Jews, and nearly fifty thousand returned. The number of people who returned to their homeland was a fraction of those families who were taken into captivity a generation earlier. Many Jews had adopted the culture and the ways of Babylon and chose to remain in the foreign land.

The all-knowing God has a master plan, and he moves people to fulfill his plan. Sometimes, he moves people in authority who do not even seek his will, and sometimes he uses us. How exciting it is to seek God's will and know that he is using you and me to accomplish his plan!

INTRODUCTION

examine

The Jews were captured and taken to Babylon seventy years prior to Cyrus' reign, and they lived under several kings. Two hundred years earlier, Isaiah (44:26–28) recorded the prophet Jeremiah's mention of Cyrus (by name) as the king who would free the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. Like many politicians through the ages, Cyrus may have believed

DECEMBER 7 | 1

GOD LEAVES NOTHING TO CHANCE

he personally could gain favor with the God of the Jews by doing good. Thus, he would send them back to their homeland to rebuild the temple to their God. The goodwill of the Jews and their God might help him retain or even strengthen his power in the region.

The omnipotent God will do his will with our world, our leaders, and us—and we will be blessed to be a part of it.

1 God moves the hearts of leaders to fulfill his plan (Ezra 1:1–4).

KJV

1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.

4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

NIV

1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

2 “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

“‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah.

3 Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them.

4 And in any locality where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.’”

The Lord stirred the heart of Cyrus to put this proclamation into writing and send it throughout his kingdom (v. 1). Although Cyrus was not a Jew, he felt kindly toward the captured Jews in his land. But giving them the freedom to return was also good politics.

Throughout the Scriptures, we are reminded that the Lord paves the way for his will to be done. He can cause wise people to give bad

advice (Isa. 44:25) to carry out the predictions of the prophets (Isa. 44:26), and he can stir the hearts of his children to do his will.

Cyrus' proclamation began much like most other kingly proclamations from that era. **This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The LORD, the God of heaven . . . has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah"** (v. 2). It was more of a statement of understanding and respect for all gods than a belief in the Jews' God.

Then, by allowing the exiles to go **up to Jerusalem . . . and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel** (v. 3), he seemed a more benevolent king who was sensitive to his people. Today, this would probably be considered a good political move. He may have been totally unaware of God's moving him in such a way.

Not only did God move Cyrus to allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple, he also provided the means. Cyrus ordered the neighbors of the exiled Jews to contribute to their expenses, by supplying silver and gold, supplies for the journey, livestock, and a freewill offering for the temple of God in Jerusalem (v. 4).

ONE

explore

1. Can secular, even nonreligious, leaders promote policies that are inspired by God? Give an example.
2. Do you pray for your government leaders? Your church leaders? Community leaders? Give examples.

It is easier to pray for leaders when we agree with their agenda.

2 God moves his people to fulfill his plan (Ezra 1:5–11).

KJV

5 Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.

6 And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.

NIV

5 Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.

6 All their neighbors assisted them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuable gifts, in addition to all the freewill offerings.

continued

KJV *continued*

7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods;

8 Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.

9 And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives,

10 Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand.

11 All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

NIV *continued*

7 Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god.

8 Cyrus king of Persia had them brought by Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

9 This was the inventory:

gold dishes	30
silver dishes	1,000
silver pans	29
10 gold bowls	30
matching silver bowls	410
other articles	1,000

11 In all, there were 5,400 articles of gold and of silver. Sheshbazzar brought all these along with the exiles when they came up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

God stirred the hearts of the priests and Levites and the leaders of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. For over seventy years, they had not been idle. They had settled into their new land and grown comfortable there. It took the stirring of their hearts by God for his people to move from what had become an acceptable existence back to their preferred life in Jerusalem and other nearby towns and villages in Judah.

The departing exiles received many gifts of **silver and gold**, supplies for the journey, and **livestock** . . . in addition to the **freewill offerings** (v. 6).

Unlike many leaders in similar circumstances, Cyrus not only directed his people to give gifts to the Jews as they left Babylon, but he affirmed his edict by returning the valuable items looted from the temple under King Nebuchadnezzar's reign. In all, **5,400 articles of gold and of silver** were turned over to **Sheshbazzar** to take back to Jerusalem when the exiles left Babylon (v. 11).

TWO

explore

1. Have you ever been unwillingly removed from a relationship, home, or job?
2. Given the opportunity, would you go back to try to rebuild your old life? What would be some considerations?
3. What should be the deciding factor in making difficult life decisions?

3 God provides an exciting opportunity to be part of his plan (Ezra 2:64–70).

KJV

64 The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore,

65 Beside their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and there were among them two hundred singing men and singing women.

66 Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five;

67 Their camels, four hundred thirty and five; their asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

68 And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place:

69 They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, and one hundred priests' garments.

70 So the priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

NIV

64 The whole company numbered 42,360,

65 besides their 7,337 male and female slaves; and they also had 200 male and female singers.

66 They had 736 horses, 245 mules, **67** 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys.

68 When they arrived at the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, some of the heads of the families gave freewill offerings toward the rebuilding of the house of God on its site.

69 According to their ability they gave to the treasury for this work 61,000 darics of gold, 5,000 minas of silver and 100 priestly garments.

70 The priests, the Levites, the musicians, the gatekeepers and the temple servants settled in their own towns, along with some of the other people, and the rest of the Israelites settled in their towns.

A total of **42,360** people returned to Judah in addition to servants, singers, and livestock (vv. 64–65). Many of these people had been born and lived in Babylon all their lives. For them, “returning” to Judah was going to a new land. Perhaps while not their preferred lifestyle, many Jews had become comfortable with a familiar one. At least, living with the known was easier than facing the challenges of the unknown. For some, stories of the glorious past were not enough to move a new generation from life as aliens in Babylon.

When they arrived at the temple in Jerusalem, they took an offering. Some of the family leaders gave generously toward the building of God’s temple on its original site, and each leader gave as much as he could (vv. 68–69). The offerings were substantial, and in addition to gold and silver, the people included one hundred robes for the priests.

After taking the offering, the people looked for places to live. Those who were directly involved in the day-to-day operation of the temple settled in and around Jerusalem. So the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, temple servants, and some of the common people settled in villages near Jerusalem. The rest returned to the other towns of Judah from which they had come (v. 70).

The stage was set. God’s will was being done. Everything was in place for the building of his temple. Did everyone in this wonderful story know they were being used of God? No! Did everyone in this story take advantage of the opportunities God provided? No!

THREE

- explore
1. Can you think of a time when you passed up an opportunity to participate in God’s plan? How do you know you bypassed an opportunity?
 2. Share a time when you felt certain God had stirred your heart and caused you to do something you would not have otherwise done.

By diligently seeking God’s will for our lives, we become willing participants in his plan. How exciting to know that you are in the center of his will!

LIFE APPLICATION

exercise

The omnipotent, sovereign God will do his will in the world. He uses whom he chooses, but how wonderful when he uses his willing children!

Do you pray for your leaders? Do you pray for God to use you to fulfill his plan? Evaluate yourself: Is pleasing God and being used of him your top desire?

On a scale of one to ten, how open are you to being used by God to go anywhere, do anything, give anything?

Circle one:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

After taking a serious look at your “willingness scale,” pray silently for God to stir your heart to do some specific act or service. A thought to consider comes from a line in a song: “If you can use anything, Lord, you can use me.” Continue to pray throughout the week. The next time you meet, share with your class how the Holy Spirit is leading you to be used by him.

WESLEY

BIBLE CURRICULUM

***** (ADULT) *****

Scope and Sequence with coordinating Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary

	UNIT 1: Fall	UNIT 2: Winter	UNIT 3: Spring	UNIT 4: Summer
Volume 1 2029-2030	Revelation	Minor Prophets	1-2 Peter Jude	Life Issues Holiness Evangelism
Volume 2 2030-2031	Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel	Matthew	James	1-2 Samuel 1-2 Kings 1-2 Chronicles
Volume 3 2024-2025	Romans	Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians Philemon	Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Call to Holiness: Dynamic Life from Spiritual Disciplines
Volume 4 2025-2026	John	Ezra Nehemiah Esther	1-2 Thessalonians	1-2 Timothy Titus
Volume 5 2026-2027	Hebrews	Exodus	Joshua Judges Ruth	Spiritual Heritage Stewardship Social Issues
Volume 6 2027-2028	Mark	Isaiah	1-3 John	Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs
Volume 7 2028-2029	Genesis	Luke	Acts	1-2 Corinthians

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