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EZEKIEL

An 8-Week Group Bible Study

By Greg and Kayla Gibson

WEEK 1 OF 8 • GENERAL / MIXED GROUP EDITION

The Heavens Were Opened — Ezekiel 1:1–3:27

Scripture Scope: Ezekiel 1:1–3:27 (ESV) • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

LEADER GUIDE EDITION

Complete Participant Text + Interleaved Pacing, Hebrew Word Studies, Facilitation Probes & Pitfalls

Ezekiel — 8-Week Group Bible Study (Leader Guide Edition)

Week 1: The Heavens Were Opened (Ezekiel 1:1–3:27)

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- **The prophet:** Ezekiel son of Buzi was a priest. In 597 BC he was taken to Babylon with King Jehoiachin and thousands of Jerusalem's leaders (2 Kings 24:10–16). In the fifth year of that exile (593 BC), by the Chebar canal, he received his call, and he prophesied for more than twenty years.
- **His setting:** While Jeremiah warned Jerusalem from inside the city, Ezekiel spoke to the exiles in Babylon, who hoped for a quick return home. Daniel, taken to Babylon a few years earlier, served in the king's court at the same time, and Ezekiel likely names him (14:14; 28:3).
- **The book's great arc:** God's glory is present, even in exile (1–3); the glory departs from the temple (8–11); judgment falls on Jerusalem (4–24) and the nations (25–32); the city falls and the watchman turns to hope (33); God promises a good shepherd, a new heart, and dry bones that live (34–39); a new temple is measured and the glory returns (40–48).
- **The structure:**
  - The call of the prophet (1–3).
  - Judgment on Jerusalem and Judah (4–24).
  - Words against the nations (25–32).
  - The watchman, the shepherd, and restoration (33–39).
  - The new temple and the renewed land (40–48).
- **Key refrain:** "They will know that I am the LORD," repeated more than sixty times.
- **Why it matters:** Ezekiel shows a God whose glory cannot be confined to one building or one land, whose holiness will not ignore sin, and whose grace promises what his people could never produce: a new heart, a new spirit, new life, and his own presence among them forever. The book ends with a city whose name is "The LORD Is There."

How This 8-Week Study Works

Designed for weekly small groups, mini-churches, and community gatherings (75–90 minutes per session) rather than daily homework checklists, this study follows Ezekiel's 48 chapters in eight weeks. Ezekiel is long, so each week reads a few focal passages closely and retells the chapters between them, following the book's great arc from glory present, to glory departing, to glory returning. Each week moves through six repeatable sections:

- **Section X.1 — Opening:** Sets the scene, the Week at a Glance, Head, Heart, and Hands objectives, the Opening Frame, and the Opening Entry Question.
- **Section X.2 — Historical & Literary Context:** Places the week's chapters inside the structure of Ezekiel and the ancient Near Eastern world.
- **Section X.3 — Movement 1:** The week's first guided passage: Guided Scripture Reading, Anchor Verses, Teaching Narrative, and Group Discussion Questions.
- **Section X.4 — Movement 2:** The week's second guided passage, following the same flow.
- **Section X.5 — Canonical Horizon:** Traces how the passage echoes across Scripture and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

- **Section X.6 — Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer:** Moves the week's study into everyday life, previews next week, and closes in prayer.

Key anchor verses are printed in each section for quick reference. Longer focal passages are read aloud together from the ESV.

Choosing a Bible Translation: Top 5 Translations Compared

Every English Bible translation falls along a spectrum between two primary approaches: word-for-word translation (formal equivalence, which prioritizes literal accuracy to the original phrasing and sentence structure) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes immediate modern readability by translating idioms and ideas into natural contemporary expressions). Here is how five widely used English translations compare:

- **ESV (English Standard Version) — Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Follows the wording and sentence structure of the original Hebrew and Greek closely while using modern English; well suited to close study.
  - Cons: Because it tracks the original sentence structure, some phrasing can feel more formal than everyday speech.
- **NIV (New International Version) — Balanced (Between Word-for-Word and Thought-for-Thought)**
  - Pros: Widely read; balances accuracy to the original languages with natural, everyday readability.
  - Cons: Because some idioms are rendered as modern expressions, a few literal wordplays or technical terms can be less visible.
- **NLT (New Living Translation) — Thought-for-Thought**
  - Pros: Warm and conversational; reads smoothly aloud and helps readers follow the big picture of long passages.
  - Cons: Because it prioritizes meaning over literal phrasing, it can be harder to use for close word study.
- **CSB (Christian Standard Bible) — Optimal Equivalence (Balanced)**
  - Pros: Stays close to the original words where possible while smoothing awkward phrasing into natural modern English.
  - Cons: Because it is a newer translation, some well-known verses may sound different from the wording many readers remember.
- **KJV / NKJV (King James Version & New King James Version) — Traditional Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Historic cadence that shaped English literature and church history; the NKJV updates archaic pronouns ("thee/thou") while keeping the classic rhythm.
  - Cons: Often reads like older English poetry, with complex sentences and archaic or formal vocabulary that can be harder for modern readers to follow.

This study quotes the ESV.

Greg & Kayla's Recommended Study Bibles

Having a trusted study Bible on hand is one of the best ways to go deeper as you read through Ezekiel:

- **Greg's Favorite Study Bible:** The MacArthur Study Bible (ESV), which contains extensive explanatory notes beneath almost every verse, ideal for detailed study.
- **Kayla's Favorite Study Bible:** The ESV Study Bible, containing over 20,000 study notes, articles, and explanations.

The 8-Week Ezekiel Study at a Glance

Week	Title & Passage	Movement 1 / Movement 2	Canonical Horizon
1	**The Heavens Were Opened** (1:1–3:27)	The Vision of God's Glory (1:1–28) / The Scroll and the Watchman (2:1–3:27)	The glory of God in the face of Christ; the Son of Man
2	**The Glory Departs** (4:1–11:25)	Signs of the Coming Siege (4:1–7:27) / Abominations and the Departing Glory (8:1–11:25)	The glory returns in Jesus; the people God marks as his own
3	**Judgment on a Rebellious House** (12:1–24:27)	False Hopes and Faithless Covenant (12:1–17:24) / Turn and Live, and the Fall Announced (18:1–24:27)	The God who wants the wicked to live; Christ who stood in the breach
4	**The City Has Fallen** (25:1–33:33)	The Nations Will Know (25:1–32:32) / The Watchman and the News of the Fall (33:1–33)	Christ the King over the nations; the watchman's message of life
5	**A New Heart** (34:1–36:38)	The Good Shepherd (34:1–31) / A New Heart and a New Spirit (35:1–36:38)	Jesus the Good Shepherd; the new heart by the Spirit
6	**Dry Bones Live** (37:1–39:29)	Can These Bones Live? (37:1–28) / Gog and the God Who Defends His People (38:1–39:29)	The Spirit who gives life; the resurrection
7	**The Glory Returns** (40:1–44:31)	Measuring the New Temple (40:1–42:20) / The Glory Returns to the House (43:1–44:31)	Jesus the true temple
8	**The LORD Is There** (45:1–48:35)	Worship and Land Renewed (45:1–46:24) / The River and the City: The LORD Is There (47:1–48:35)	The river of life and the city where God dwells

How to Use This Leader Guide Edition

This **Leader Guide Edition** is built on a synchronized two-edition architecture so you never have to juggle two separate books during your small group or mini-church gathering:

1. 100% Word-for-Word Participant Text Included: Every section, Scripture reading prompt, verbatim ESV anchor verse callout, teaching narrative, table, and discussion or reflection prompt appears here **word-for-word identical** to what your group members see in their Participant Study Edition. Section numbers and question labels match exactly, so leaders and participants can stay on the same page.

2. Interleaved `[LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY]` Blocks: Immediately following each section, you will find a dedicated leader block containing:

- **Pacing & Time Targets** calibrated for a 75–90 minute session. Pacing targets appear in every Leader section header. If time runs short, shorten the Teaching Narratives rather than the discussion.
- **Hebrew Word Study & Ancient Near Eastern Research Quick-References** so you can explain terms naturally without lecturing, when they add something useful.
- **Question-by-Question Facilitation Probes** listed in question order, designed to move conversation past polite answers into honest reflection.
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around** so you can gently redirect common rabbit trails back to the biblical text.
- **Additional Research Notes** appear when they add something useful.

3. Leader Flags: Numbered in reading order, they mark passages that need pastoral care or tend to raise hard questions. Ezekiel contains siege horrors, scenes of slaughter, and two chapters (16 and 23) that use explicit sexual imagery for Jerusalem's unfaithfulness. In this study those scenes are retold briefly and reverently, never printed as anchors and never read aloud in full. Some members carry trauma, abuse, grief, or the loss of a spouse (24:15–18), and some will hear their own heaviness in Ezekiel's seven silent days (3:15). If someone discloses abuse, exploitation, trafficking, coercion, or immediate danger, listen without interrogation, take the disclosure seriously, help the person reach safety, and follow applicable law and your organization's safeguarding and reporting procedures. If someone expresses current thoughts of suicide or self-harm, ask directly whether there is immediate danger, intent, a plan, or access to means. Do not leave the person alone when imminent risk is present. In the United States, call or text 988 (the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), and call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department for immediate danger. Outside the United States, use the appropriate local crisis or emergency service. Inform the appropriate pastor or safeguarding leader while prioritizing immediate safety.

4. Reading aloud: Assign readers ahead of time for the Guided Scripture Reading. Printed anchor verses are for quick reference; read the longer focal passages from an open ESV. Passages marked "in brief" are summarized or retold by the leader rather than read.

5. Facilitating well: Ask the printed question, wait, and let silence work. Use the probes to deepen, not to lecture. Aim for every voice to be heard at least once each session.

Week 1 Session Pacing at a Glance (75–90 Minutes)

Section	Focus	Time Target
Section 1.1	Opening: The Heavens Were Opened (Ezekiel 1:1–3:27) (1.1 Q1)	**10 mins**
Section 1.2	Historical & Literary Context: Glory Among the Exiles (1.2 Q1–Q3)	**12 mins**
Section 1.3	Movement 1: The Vision of God's Glory (Ezekiel 1:1–28) (1.3 Q1–Q5)	**22 mins**
Section 1.4	Movement 2: The Scroll and the Watchman (Ezekiel 2:1–3:27) (1.4 Q1–Q5)	**20 mins**
Section 1.5	Canonical Horizon: The Glory of God in the Face of Christ, the Son of Man (1.5 Q1–Q3)	**12 mins**
Section 1.6	Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer (1.6 Q1–Q3)	**9 mins**
Total	**Full Week 1 Group Session**	**75–90 mins**

WEEK 1 OF 8

WEEK 1 SESSION GUIDE · EZEKIEL 1:1–3:27

Week 1: The Heavens Were Opened

Scripture Scope: Ezekiel 1:1–3:27 (ESV) • Focal Passages: Ezekiel 1:1–5; 1:22–28; 2:1–3:3; 3:10–21 • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

Section 1.1

Opening: The Heavens Were Opened (Ezekiel 1:1–3:27)

Passage Ezekiel 1:1–3:27

Opening

A young priest sits among exiles beside a canal in Babylon, hundreds of miles from the temple he was trained to serve. He is likely thirty, the age a priest would begin his service, but there is no temple here, only a foreign land and a people who hope to go home soon. Then the heavens open. A storm rolls in from the north, full of fire and brightness. Four living creatures move with wheels full of eyes, and above them, on a throne like sapphire, sits a figure like a man, gleaming with fire and surrounded by brightness like a rainbow.

It is the glory of the LORD, and Ezekiel falls on his face. A voice calls him "son of man," the Spirit sets him on his feet, and God sends him to a rebellious people, whether they listen or not. He eats a scroll of lament that tastes as sweet as honey, sits overwhelmed for seven days, and is appointed a watchman to warn God's people.

Week 1 At a Glance

Scripture Scope	Ezekiel 1:1–3:27 (the opened heavens by the Chebar canal, the living creatures and wheels, the throne and the glory of the LORD, the commission to a rebellious house, the scroll, the hard forehead, seven overwhelmed days, the watchman, and the prophet made mute)
Focal Passages	Ezekiel 1:1–5; 1:22–28; 2:1–3:3; 3:10–21
Literary & Structural Anchor	Ezekiel dates his visions precisely and piles up words like "likeness" and "appearance" because God's glory can be truly seen but never fully described. The Spirit moves the creatures, enters the prophet, and lifts him. God calls Ezekiel "son of man," stressing that he is a mortal standing before glory. The week sets the first point of the book's arc: God's glory is present, even in Babylon.
Big Idea	The glorious God is not confined to one place; he meets his people in exile and sends a faithful messenger with his word.

Week 1 Learning Objectives (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD **Know the Glory:** Learn the setting of Ezekiel's call, the meaning of the vision of God's glory, and the watchman's task.

HEART **Behold Christ:** See that the glory Ezekiel glimpsed shines in the face of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man.

HANDS **Speak Faithfully:** Take one step to receive God's word in your heart and to speak it faithfully, leaving the results to God.

Opening Frame: The Heavens Were Opened

Lamentations left us in the ruins of Jerusalem, grieving and asking whether God had utterly rejected his people. Ezekiel answers from an unexpected place: not from the rubble of the temple but from a canal in Babylon, where the heavens open and the glory of God appears to exiles. Ezekiel was a priest taken to Babylon with King Jehoiachin, years before Jerusalem fell. His book follows a great arc: the glory present, the glory departing, and the glory returning. This is an 8–week study; each week we will read a few focal passages closely and hear the chapters between them retold. The question for this week: what does it mean that God meets his people even in exile? Before we read together, take a moment to share with the group:

Opening Entry Question (Icebreaker)

1.1 Q1 (Opening Entry Question): Describe a sight, such as a storm, a mountain, or a night sky, that was too big for words to capture.

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.1 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 10 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 10 minutes. Opening and At a Glance, 3 minutes; Head, Heart, Hands, 2 minutes; Opening Frame, 2 minutes; Opening Entry Question, 3 minutes.
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Briefly walk through the front matter before 1.1, especially the book's great arc and the eight-week table. Keep the icebreaker light; it prepares the group for a prophet who strains for words to describe God's glory.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.1 Q1**: What did you see? How did you try to describe it? How did it make you feel?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not let the icebreaker become a long storytelling time; keep each answer to a sentence or two.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Ezekiel follows Jeremiah and Lamentations in this series and comes before Daniel. The book's refrain, "they will know that I am the LORD," gives the reason for both judgment and restoration: that God would be known as he truly is.

Section 1.2

Historical & Literary Context: Glory Among the Exiles (Ezekiel 1:1–3:27)

Passage **Ezekiel 1:1–3:27**

Entering the World of Glory Among the Exiles

1. Historical Background

In 597 BC Nebuchadnezzar took King Jehoiachin and thousands of Jerusalem's leaders to Babylon (2 Kings 24:10–16; 2 Chronicles 36:9–10). Ezekiel was among them. The exiles were settled in communities such as Tel-abib beside the Chebar, an irrigation canal in Babylonia. Jerusalem still stood, and many hoped to return soon; Jeremiah wrote to them to settle in for a long stay (Jeremiah 29).

2. Cultural Setting

Many ancient peoples tied their gods to a land and a temple. To lose the land seemed to mean losing God. Ezekiel sees the glory of the LORD in Babylon, far from Jerusalem. Babylonian palaces were guarded by colossal winged guardian figures (lamassu) combining human, bull or lion, and eagle features; Ezekiel's four-faced living creatures serve the true King on a mobile throne.

3. Literary Structure of Ezekiel 1:1–3:27

- **Heaven opened** (1:1–3)
- **The storm, the creatures, and the wheels** (1:4–21)
- **The expanse, the throne, and the glory** (1:22–28)
- **The commission** (2:1–7)
- **The scroll** (2:8–3:3)
- **The hard forehead** (3:4–11)
- **Lifted by the Spirit and overwhelmed** (3:12–15)
- **The watchman** (3:16–21)
- **Bound and mute** (3:22–27)

4. Key Themes

God's glory and sovereignty; the Spirit who empowers; a mortal messenger; a rebellious house; faithfulness without guaranteed results.

5. Theological Considerations

Ezekiel's careful words ("likeness," "appearance") guard God's holiness. He truly sees God's glory, yet he never claims to capture God himself.

6. Relevant Scholarly Insights

"The thirtieth year" (1:1) is most likely Ezekiel's age, the age at which priests began their service (Numbers 4:3). Cut off from the temple, he is commissioned as a prophet instead.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.2)

> **1.2 Q1:** Many ancient people believed their gods stayed in their own land. What would it have meant for exiles in Babylon to see the glory of the LORD there?

1.2 Q2: Ezekiel was a priest trained for temple service, but he lived far from the temple. How might God use a season when our plans or roles are taken away?

1.2 Q3: Ezekiel keeps saying "likeness" and "appearance" when he describes what he saw. Why do you think he chose his words so carefully?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.2 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 12 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 12 minutes. Context summary, 5 minutes; discussion, 7 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Help the group feel the exiles' situation before reading the vision: far from home, the temple still standing but out of reach, and many voices promising a quick return.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q1**: What did exile seem to say about God? What did the vision say? How would that change their hope?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q2**: What did Ezekiel lose? What did God give him instead? Where have you seen that pattern?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q3**: What words does he repeat? What do they protect? How should we speak of God?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not spend the context time on dates alone; keep the focus on what exile meant for faith.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Ezekiel's commission follows other throne visions in Scripture (Exodus 24:9–11; 1 Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1–4; Daniel 7:9–10). The glory that filled the tabernacle and Solomon's temple (Exodus 40:34–35; 1 Kings 8:10–11) now appears to exiles.
- **Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes:** Babylonian ration tablets record provisions for "Jehoiachin, king of Judah," confirming the exiled king's presence in Babylon (compare 2 Kings 25:27–30). Throne-chariot imagery expressed royal power; Ezekiel's mobile throne shows God's sovereignty in every place.

Section 1.3

Movement 1: The Vision of God's Glory (Ezekiel 1:1–28)

Passage **Ezekiel 1:1–28**

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: Ezekiel 1:1–5** (focal passage) — In the thirtieth year, by the Chebar canal, the heavens open and Ezekiel sees visions of God; the hand of the LORD is on him; a stormy wind comes from the north, a great cloud with flashing fire, and in it the likeness of four living creatures.
- **Leader summary of Ezekiel 1:6–21** — Each creature has four faces (a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle) and four wings; they go straight forward wherever the Spirit goes; beside them are wheels, a wheel within a wheel, their rims full of eyes, moving with the creatures in every direction.
- **Reader 2: Ezekiel 1:22–28** (focal passage) — Over the creatures is an expanse shining like crystal; the sound of their wings is like many waters; above the expanse is the likeness of a throne like sapphire, and on it a likeness with a human appearance, gleaming like fire, with brightness like a rainbow all around: the likeness of the glory of the LORD; Ezekiel falls on his face and hears a voice.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **Ezekiel 1:1:** In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.
>
> **Ezekiel 1:28:** Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

Teaching Narrative: The Vision of God's Glory

1. Heaven Opened in Exile (Ezekiel 1:1–3)

A dated vision in a foreign land; the hand of the LORD is on Ezekiel.

2. The Storm and the Living Creatures (Ezekiel 1:4–14)

Fire, brightness, and four-faced creatures moving wherever the Spirit goes.

3. The Wheels (Ezekiel 1:15–21)

Retold briefly. Wheels full of eyes that move in every direction: God sees all and goes anywhere.

4. The Throne Above (Ezekiel 1:22–27)

The expanse, the sound of many waters, and a figure like a man on a throne.

5. The Likeness of the Glory (Ezekiel 1:28)

Ezekiel's careful words, and his response: face down, listening.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.3)

> **1.3 Q1:** "The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God" (1:1). What does it mean to you that God revealed himself to Ezekiel in exile, far from the temple?

1.3 Q2: The creatures went "wherever the spirit would go" (1:12), and the wheels moved in every direction. What do these details suggest about God's power and presence?

1.3 Q3: The rims of the wheels were "full of eyes all around" (1:18). How does it comfort or challenge you that God sees everything?

1.3 Q4: Ezekiel saw "the likeness of the glory of the LORD" (1:28). What is the difference between seeing God's glory truly and understanding God completely?

1.3 Q5: "When I saw it, I fell on my face" (1:28). What does a right response to God's glory look like in our worship today?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.3 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 22 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 22 minutes. Guided Scripture Reading with brief retelling, 6 minutes; Anchor Verses and Teaching Narrative, 5 minutes; discussion, 11 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Have readers take 1:1–5 and 1:22–28. Summarize 1:6–21 yourself in a few sentences, naming the four faces and the wheels without decoding every detail.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q1**: Where was Ezekiel? Why does the place matter? Where do you need to know God is present?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q2**: Who directs the creatures? What can stop them? What does that say about God?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q3**: What do the eyes picture? Where is that comforting? Where is it sobering?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q4**: What did Ezekiel see? What did he not claim? How does that shape our speech about God?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q5**: What did Ezekiel do? What does reverence look like now? How might it change Sunday?
- **LEADER FLAG 1: The strange vision (1:4–28)**
  - Members may find the imagery bewildering or want to decode every part. Keep the focus on what the vision shows: God's glory, his holiness, his presence beyond Jerusalem, and his sovereign sight and movement. Avoid speculative readings of the wheels or creatures (for example, as machines or spacecraft); the symbolism points to God, not to technology.

- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not let the details of chapter 1 swallow the session; the climax is 1:28 and Ezekiel's response.
- **Additional Research Notes:** The four faces (man, lion, ox, eagle) represent the noblest creatures, all serving God. Revelation 4:6–8 gives four living creatures with similar faces around God's throne. The rainbow (1:28) recalls God's covenant mercy after the flood (Genesis 9:13–16).
- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Kavod (כָּבוֹד), "glory," in 1:28. Literally "weight," it names the visible splendor of God's presence. In this movement the glory that once filled the tabernacle and temple appears by a canal in Babylon, the first point of the book's arc.
  - Demut (דְּמוּת) and mar'eh (מַרְאֶה), "likeness" and "appearance," in 1:5, 26–28. In this movement Ezekiel stacks the words ("the appearance of the likeness of the glory") because God's glory can be truly seen but never fully put into words.
  - Ruach (רוּחַ), "spirit," "wind," or "breath," in 1:4, 12, 20. In this movement it is the stormy wind from the north and the spirit directing the creatures; the same word will enter Ezekiel in 2:2.

Section 1.4

Movement 2: The Scroll and the Watchman (Ezekiel 2:1–3:27)

Passage **Ezekiel 2:1–3:27**

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: Ezekiel 2:1–3:3** (focal passage) — God calls Ezekiel "son of man" and tells him to stand; the Spirit enters him and sets him on his feet; God sends him to rebellious Israel, whether they hear or refuse; he is not to fear them, though he lives among briers and scorpions; a hand holds out a scroll written on both sides with lamentation, mourning, and woe; Ezekiel eats it, and it is as sweet as honey.
- **Leader summary of Ezekiel 3:4–9** — Foreign peoples would have listened, but Israel will not, for they have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart; God makes Ezekiel's forehead harder than flint.
- **Reader 2: Ezekiel 3:10–21** (focal passage) — God tells Ezekiel to receive his words in his heart; the Spirit lifts him, and he hears the sound of the glory; he goes in bitterness and sits overwhelmed among the exiles at Tel-abib for seven days; then God makes him a watchman for the house of Israel, responsible to warn the wicked and the righteous.
- **Leader summary of Ezekiel 3:22–27** — On the plain Ezekiel again sees the glory and falls on his face; he is to shut himself in his house, and God will make him mute, opening his mouth only when God has a word to speak.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **Ezekiel 2:3:** And he said to me, “Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day.
>
> **Ezekiel 2:7:** And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house.
>
> **Ezekiel 3:10:** Moreover, he said to me, “Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears.

> **Ezekiel 3:17:** “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.

Teaching Narrative: The Scroll and the Watchman

1. Son of Man, Stand Up (Ezekiel 2:1–2)

A mortal before glory, raised by the Spirit.

2. Sent to a Rebellious House (Ezekiel 2:3–7)

Speak whether they hear or refuse; do not be afraid.

3. The Scroll Eaten (Ezekiel 2:8–3:3)

Words of woe that taste sweet, because they are God's words.

4. Harder Than Flint (Ezekiel 3:4–9)

Retold briefly. God strengthens his servant against hard hearts.

5. Received and Overwhelmed (Ezekiel 3:10–15)

Taking God's words into the heart, and seven silent days among the exiles.

6. The Watchman (Ezekiel 3:16–21)

Warning the wicked and the righteous.

7. Bound and Mute (Ezekiel 3:22–27)

Retold briefly. The prophet speaks only when God speaks.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.4)

> **1.4 Q1:** God called Ezekiel "son of man" and then "the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet" (2:2). How does God's Spirit enable weak people to do what he calls them to do?

> **1.4 Q2:** "And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear" (2:7). How does this free us from measuring faithfulness by results?

> **1.4 Q3:** The scroll was full of "lamentation and mourning and woe" (2:10), yet it was "as sweet as honey" (3:3) to Ezekiel. How can hard words from God still be sweet?

1.4 Q4: "All my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears" (3:10). Why does God want his word in Ezekiel's heart before it is in his mouth?

1.4 Q5: "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel" (3:17). In what ways might God be calling you to lovingly warn or encourage someone?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.4 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 20 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 20 minutes. Guided Scripture Reading with brief retellings, 6 minutes; Anchor Verses and Teaching Narrative, 4 minutes; discussion, 10 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Have readers take 2:1–3:3 and 3:10–21. Summarize 3:4–9 and 3:22–27 yourself. Move steadily; this movement has slightly less time than Movement 1.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q1**: What could Ezekiel do on his own? What did the Spirit do? Where do you need that help?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q2**: What was Ezekiel responsible for? What was not his job? Whose faithfulness do you need to stop measuring?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q3**: What was written on the scroll? Why was it sweet? When has a hard word from God done you good?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q4**: What comes first? Why? How do you receive God's word in your heart?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q5**: Who comes to mind? What would loving words sound like? What would make it hard?
- **LEADER FLAG 2: Ministry to people who will not listen (2:3–7)**
  - Members with unresponsive family members, prodigal children, or discouraging ministries may relate deeply. Emphasize faithfulness over results; God told Ezekiel in advance that many would not listen. The images of briers and scorpions (2:6) describe hostility, not a call to stay in abusive situations.
- **LEADER FLAG 3: Overwhelmed for seven days (3:14–15)**
  - Ezekiel went "in bitterness in the heat of my spirit" and sat overwhelmed for seven days. Members experiencing grief, trauma, or depression may identify with him. Affirm that God meets people in heaviness and that silence is not failure. If someone expresses current thoughts of suicide or self-harm, ask directly whether there is immediate danger, intent, a plan, or access to means, do not leave the person alone when imminent risk is present, and in the United States call or text 988 (or call 911 / go to the nearest emergency department for immediate danger), outside the United States use the appropriate local crisis or emergency service, and inform the appropriate pastor or safeguarding leader while prioritizing immediate safety.
- **LEADER FLAG 4: The watchman's responsibility (3:16–21)**
  - The language of blood on the watchman's hands (3:18, 20) can stir guilt in members who feel they failed to warn a loved one, especially someone who has died. Clarify that this was Ezekiel's unique prophetic commission, that the passage does not teach that anyone's salvation is lost through another's silence, and that God's grace covers our failures in Christ.
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not turn the watchman passage into a guilt-driven program of confrontation; the call is to speak God's word faithfully and lovingly.

- **Additional Research Notes:** Jeremiah also found God's words a joy when he ate them (Jeremiah 15:16), and the psalmist calls God's words "sweeter also than honey" (Psalm 19:10). Ezekiel's watchman commission is repeated almost word for word in 33:1–9, where it opens the book's turn toward hope.
- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Ben-'adam (בֶּן־אָדָם), "son of man," in 2:1, 3; 3:10, 17. It means "human being," stressing Ezekiel's frailty before the glory of chapter 1. In this movement a mere mortal is sent with God's words; in Daniel 7:13 the phrase takes on a heavenly meaning that Jesus claims for himself.
  - Ruach (רוּחַ), "Spirit," in 2:2 and 3:12, 14, 24. In this movement the same Spirit who moved the living creatures enters Ezekiel, sets him on his feet, and lifts him, anticipating the new spirit promised in 36:26.
  - Chazaq (חָזָק), "hard" or "strong," in 2:4 and 3:7–9. Ezekiel's own name means "God strengthens." In this movement God answers a hard-hearted people by strengthening his messenger to stand.
  - Tsofeh (צֹפֶה), "watchman," in 3:17. A sentry on a city wall who warns of danger. In this movement it defines the prophet's task: warn faithfully and leave the response to God.

Section 1.5

Canonical Horizon: The Glory of God in the Face of Christ, the Son of Man

Passage **Ezekiel 1:28**

Tracing the Thread Across Scripture

The figure with the likeness of a human being on the throne points to Jesus, the Son of Man, and the glory Ezekiel saw shines for us "in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). Turn to each passage as the connections are traced.

1. Glory in a Face (2 Corinthians 4:6; John 1:14)

The glory Ezekiel glimpsed as "a likeness with a human appearance" (1:26) shines in the face of Jesus Christ. The Word became flesh, and his glory was seen.

2. The Son of Man (Mark 10:45; 14:62; Daniel 7:13)

In Ezekiel, "son of man" (ben-'adam) highlights the prophet's mortal humanity before God's glory; Jesus' primary messianic title draws directly on Daniel 7:13's heavenly "one like a son of man," while sharing Ezekiel's emphasis on true humanity and humble service.

3. The Throne Seen Again (Revelation 4:2–8; 10:9–10)

John sees a throne, a rainbow, and four living creatures, and he eats a scroll that is sweet in the mouth and bitter in the stomach.

4. Spirit-empowered Witnesses (Acts 1:8; 20:26–27)

The Spirit who set Ezekiel on his feet empowers the church's witness. Paul, like a faithful watchman, declared the whole counsel of God.

5. God Not Bound to One Place (John 4:21–24)

Jesus says true worshipers will worship in spirit and truth, not only on one mountain or in one city.

Anchor Verse (ESV)

> **Ezekiel 1:28:** Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.5)

1.5 Q1: Paul speaks of "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). How does Jesus show us the glory Ezekiel could only describe as a "likeness"?

1.5 Q2: Jesus said, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). How does Jesus' use of "Son of Man"—rooted primarily in Daniel 7:13—differ from and deepen Ezekiel's ordinary human title "son of man"?

1.5 Q3: Paul told the Ephesian elders, "I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). How does the Spirit help believers today to speak God's word with courage?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.5 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 12 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 12 minutes. Canonical Horizon teaching, 5 minutes; discussion, 7 minutes.
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Assign participants to look up 2 Corinthians 4:6; John 1:14; Mark 10:45; Revelation 4:2–8; and Acts 20:26–27 ahead of time.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q1**: What did Ezekiel see? What did the disciples see in Jesus? Where do you see his glory now?
  - Follow-up probe for 1.5 Q2: How does Ezekiel's human title "son of man" differ from Daniel 7:13's heavenly Son of Man that Jesus claimed?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q3**: What did Paul refuse to hold back? Where are you tempted to hold back? What would courage look like?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not claim that Ezekiel saw Jesus in a simple one-to-one way; let the New Testament show how the glory he glimpsed is fully revealed in Christ.

- **Additional Research Notes:** John 1:14 says, "We have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." At his trial Jesus said the high priest would see "the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62), joining Ezekiel's title to Daniel 7:13.

Personal & Group Application (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	God's glory is not confined to one place; he met Ezekiel in exile, strengthened him by his Spirit, and made him a watchman to speak God's word whether people listened or not.
HEART	The glory Ezekiel glimpsed shines in the face of Jesus, the Son of Man who served and gave his life.
HANDS	Faith worships God with reverence, receives his word in the heart, and speaks it faithfully and lovingly, leaving the results to God.

Section 1.6

Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer

Application

Take a few minutes to move this week's study into everyday life. Discuss these three questions together and write down what you want to remember:

1.6 Q1: How does Ezekiel 1 reassure believers who feel disoriented or far from familiar rhythms that God's presence is not confined to one place? (Personal reflection may remain private.)

1.6 Q2: What steady habit helps a believer receive God's word thoughtfully into the heart before speaking to others? (Personal plans may remain private.)

1.6 Q3: How can believers speak God's word in truth and love while faithfully leaving the outcome to God rather than forcing results? (Personal application may remain private.)

Looking Ahead to Next Week

Recap: In Week 1, we saw the heavens opened in exile, the likeness of the glory of the LORD, and Ezekiel's call as a messenger and watchman to a rebellious house.

Transition: Next week Ezekiel acts out the siege of Jerusalem, is shown what is happening inside the temple, and watches the glory of the LORD leave the city.

Week 2 Overview — The Glory Departs (Ezekiel 4:1–11:25): Movement 1, Signs of the Coming Siege (4:1–7:27), covers Ezekiel's acted-out warnings and the announcement that the end has come. Movement 2, Abominations and the Departing Glory (8:1–11:25), covers the temple vision, the mark on the faithful, the glory leaving, and the promise of a new heart. The Canonical Horizon traces the glory returning in Jesus and the people God marks as his own.

Focal Readings to Preview

- Ezekiel 4:1–8
- Ezekiel 8:1–18
- Ezekiel 9:1–6
- Ezekiel 10:1–5, 18–19
- Ezekiel 11:14–25

My One Concrete Step for the Week Ahead

Write down or name aloud the specific rhythm, boundary, or conversation you want to practice before next week's gathering:

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting each person to share a one-sentence takeaway or prayer request, then pray together along these lines:

Closing Group Prayer

God of glory, your throne is above every throne, and you are present even in exile. Thank you that you speak to weak people and fill them with your Spirit. We pray for those who feel far from home or overwhelmed. We confess hard hearts that refuse to hear. Give us courage to speak your word in love, whether others listen or not. Thank you for Jesus, the Son of Man, in whose face your glory shines. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.6 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 9 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 9 minutes. Application and questions, 5 minutes; Looking Ahead and Focal Readings, 2 minutes; Concrete Step and Closing Prayer, 2 minutes.
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Encourage members to read the focal readings before Week 2. Mention that next week includes hard scenes from the siege of Jerusalem that will be retold briefly, not read in full.
  - Follow-up probe for 1.6 Q1: What did God show Ezekiel in Babylon, and why did that matter for exiles? (Permit silent reflection.)
  - Follow-up probe for 1.6 Q2: Why does 3:10 place receiving in the heart before speaking? (Permit a pass.)
  - Follow-up probe for 1.6 Q3: What frees a faithful witness from trying to control another person's response? (Do not ask anyone to name individuals aloud.)
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not end by pressuring members to confront others this week; 1.6 Q3 is about loving words, not confrontation.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Next week the glory Ezekiel saw by the Chebar canal appears in the temple and then departs (10:18–19; 11:23), setting up the book's great promise that it will one day return (43:1–5).