

# The Teacher and Lesson Preparation

“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10, KJV).

## Objectives

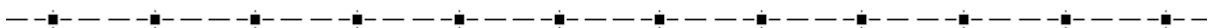
At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to . . .

1. Quote Ezra 7:10, with emphasis on each thing Ezra did. Throughout the lesson, (at noted intervals), the teacher will pause and give class (volunteers, selected groups –i.e. people wearing a blue shirt, etc.) chances to quote this verse.
2. Know and follow Ezra’s example of personal preparation, *then* teach.
  - ✓ Prepare your heart (involves separation from worldly ideas, determination to only follow God – be what He wants you to be)
  - ✓ Seek after God’s ways, thoughts, plan (study – involves knowing, understanding, head preparation)
  - ✓ Obey God’s law (show Him your love – do what God says is right – put your hands to work for Him)
3. Locate key verses that apply to each of the three points of personal preparation.
4. Prepare lessons following the example of Ezra: Knowing, Being, and Doing.
5. Teach a prepared lesson.

## Introduction

Long ago, a Japanese leader asked an artist to paint a bird. Months and years passed and still no painting was brought to the palace. Finally, the emperor became so frustrated that he went to the painter’s home and demanded for an explanation. The artist quickly placed a blank canvas on the stand. In less than an hour, he completed the painting which became a treasured masterpiece. When the emperor asked the reason for the long delay, the painter produced lots of drawings of feathers, wings, heads, and feet. He explained that all of his research and study had been necessary to complete his brilliant masterpiece. (*Our Daily Bread*)

Great lessons do not quickly happen. They take lots of preparation.

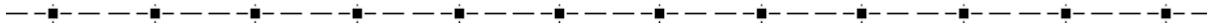


**ACTIVITY:** Instructor calls out one clue at a time, giving a short interval for students to respond before going to the next clue. Person who guesses correctly first is the winner.

1. His father’s name was Seraiah.
2. Bible scholars say he wrote at least four books of the Bible (I & II Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah.)
3. According to tradition, he founded the Great Synagogue in Jerusalem.

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4. Tradition says he collected all the Old Testament books together as a unit.
5. He prepared his heart.
6. He sought the Law of the Lord.
7. He obeyed God’s Law.
8. He was a priest . . . descendant of Aaron.
9. He believed Moses’ Law was from God and obeyed.
10. He was a scribe.



### *What can a teacher learn from Ezra?*

**Who Was He?** When we meet Ezra, he is ready to lead the second group of Jews back to Jerusalem. They have been in exile for seventy long years. Jeremiah wrote they would return to Jerusalem years before it happened (Jeremiah 29:10-14), and Ezra is one of the chosen (prepared) ones who are part of that fulfillment of prophecy.

Ezra prepared his heart to seek God’s Word, know God’s plan, and obey it. Ezra’s determination to follow God, gave him distinction and honor to this very day.

Ezra was a man with a mission – he prepared his heart and fulfilled that mission by making sure God’s Word was the foundation for the remnant of God’s people who survived the Babylonian exile.

Ezra truly believed God’s Word was the final authority for everything Israel was supposed to do. He believed it was true, never changing, and for all time. Ezra did not just believe – he acted on what he believed (Ezra 7:6; Nehemiah 8:14).

#### **Quote Ezra 7:10**

**What Did He Do?** What did he do?

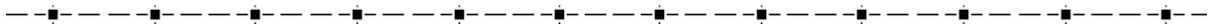
Ezra chapter 7 outlines Ezra’s genealogy – all the way back to Aaron, the high priest. Many of the priests failed to lead Israel to obey God’s law. That was one reason the nation was in exile in a foreign land. Ezra chose God’s plan for his life. That plan included leading the people in three ways:

1. A revival of worship (Ezra 7:11-27)
2. A commitment to God’s Word (Nehemiah chapter 8)
3. Repentance for unfaithfulness to God (Ezra 9:1-15; 10:1-17)

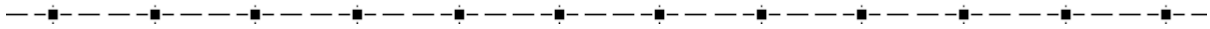
God always blesses and helps people who earnestly seek Him, living with loyalty and faithfulness to His Word. This is not some secret formula to God’s blessing, but a promise for anyone who wants to follow Ezra’s example.

#### **How Did He Prepare?**

**Step 1: Ezra Prepared His Heart** – he determined to do things God’s way only, making a firm commitment, and a solemn promise. This is the first step anyone takes. How is this possible?



**ACTIVITY:** Begin with the references given in the Introduction, and use a concordance to find at least five verses from Old and New Testaments that explain how to prepare your heart.



The Book of Nehemiah gives more insight about “heart preparation” for God’s people.

“They swore a curse on themselves if they failed to obey the Law of God as issued by his servant Moses. They solemnly promised to carefully follow all the commands, regulations, and decrees of the LORD our LORD:” (Nehemiah 10:29, NLT).

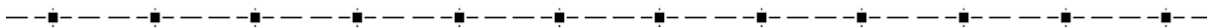
According to the Full Life Study Bible-KJV notes on Nehemiah 10:29 (p. 735), the people made a firm commitment to obey God’s will by dedicating themselves to:

- 1) Serve the Lord in faithfulness to His commandments (v. 29);
- 2) Keep themselves separated from the world (vv. 30-31); and
- 3) Support the work of God with their time, money, and possessions (vv. 32-39).

All this “heart preparation was a direct result of the revival brought about by Ezra’s commitment to helping the people hear and understand God’s Word. This type of commitment is what David meant in Psalm 57:7: “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise” (NLT).

What did Ezra do next? Since heart preparation means getting rid of anything that keeps you from following what God declares is right, the next step is simple:

**Step 2: Ezra Sought God’s Ways** – this literally means “seek” God’s ways, thoughts, and plans for all of life. We do not read of all Ezra did before he left Babylon, but when King Cyrus gave the edict for those to return to Jerusalem who wanted to go, Ezra was ready. He already had his mind made up, and a list of things he needed to take with him. He already knew what was required. He had spent his time wisely in captivity – studying God’s Law, and seeking God’s plan.



**ACTIVITY:**

- ✓ Begin with Introduction references, and use a concordance to find at least five verses from Old and New Testaments that explain how to study (literally “seek”) God’s ways.
- ✓ Give students five minutes to find more references.
- ✓ Call a representative from each group to present their verses to the whole class.
- ✓ As verses are called out, put a check beside the ones already found in your group.
- ✓ Each group has a chance to mention any verse not yet called out.
- ✓ Volunteer will write the list of verses on the board, as students copy them down.
- ✓ Play “catch” with the verses listed on the board/chart by throwing a ball (can use a wadded up paper, small block, or other light-weight toy) into the audience.
- ✓ Whoever catches the ball will read the first verse called out.
- ✓ That student will throw the ball to someone else, who will read the following verse, and so on.
- ✓ Do not spend more than ten more minutes on these verses, but encourage students to write down any verses not listed in their group and look them up outside of class time.

Knowing God's ways, thoughts, and plans is essential. What next?

**Step 3: Ezra Obeyed God's Law** – The books of Ezra and Nehemiah give many examples of obedience to what Ezra discovered in God's Law.

It is sad that some of the things Ezra read to the people were things they had never heard before. This was, after all, the Law God had given His people when He chose them out of every tribe, nation, kindred and tongue. Somewhere, the ones responsible for making sure the Law was obeyed, had stopped reading the Law themselves. They did not know it, had not heard it, and did not practice it.

**ACTIVITY:** Begin with the references listed in the Introduction, and use a concordance to find at least five (5) verses from Old and New Testaments that explain how to obey God's law.

Ezra's mission was much like ours today – a re-commitment to God's Word as the guide for all of life. As Bible school instructors, we have a grave task, but God's Word supplies everything we need to see the job finished.

Now that you are separated and determined (*heart is fixed*), with the knowledge of God's plan (*head understands*) it is time to live the things you know. This involves obedience, and becoming the character of God (*hands do what God's Word says is right*).

#### Quote Ezra 7:10

**Why Did He Do It?** There was a reason why Ezra "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it." Ezra was not bored, looking for something to occupy his time. He was not job hunting, trying to find work that would pay his bills. He was born into a family with God's call on His life. Even so, there was a special purpose in Ezra's personal preparation. He prepared his heart, found out what God's law said, and obeyed it – all so he would be qualified to "teach in Israel statutes and judgments."

Why all of this preparation just to teach? Because teaching God's Word will preserve the truth, show people what is right, and keep God's Word alive in future generations.

### How do teachers prepare?

- A. Prepare your heart (I Samuel 7:3; II Timothy 2:21).
- B. Prepare your mind by seeking and studying (Psalm 119:9-11; Luke 11:9).
- C. Prepare through obedience/actions. Do not merely practice what you teach. Teach what you practice (Jeremiah 42:6; Luke 11:28; James 1:22).
- D. Prepare through example (Nehemiah chapters 8-10; Ezra 7:6-28; 8:15-36).
- E. Prepare the lesson (II Timothy 2:15; II Timothy 2:2).

**Prepare Your Heart.** All teachers should begin lesson preparation with personal preparation. This requires personal discipline, and involves TIME. The best source of every lesson is extensive Bible reading. Who has the time to sit down and read the whole Bible without stopping or getting up? Few have ever done that.

As with every other large task, the best way to do it is one step at a time. Heart preparation begins with the first step of Bible study – observation. What do you see when you read God’s Word? How much time do you have to spend just reading your Bible every day? Do you have minutes: ten, fifteen, thirty, or sixty? Or do you only read your Bible in preparation for a particular message, to answer a question, or to complete an assignment? How much time do you think it would take every day for you to be able to read your Bible through – from Genesis through Revelation – in one year? (Give time for responses – but the correct answer is fifteen minutes a day, following a schedule of chapters and verses.)

- 1) There are Bibles available that have already divided God’s Word into portions (segments that take a certain amount of time). These “Daily Bibles” have dated all the chapters and verses of the Bible so that within one year, you will read every chapter and verse in God’s Word.

There are also Bible reading charts available that do the same thing. Some Bibles have these in the back, Other Bible reading charts are available from the Sunday School Department of UPCI in St. Louis, Missouri.

As teachers of the Word of God, we have to “make time” for listening to God’s voice. God’s Word is straight from His mouth to my ears.






We cannot teach – no matter how skilled or how many resources we have – unless we spend lots of time with God. It is like “investing” in a bank. Every minute listening to Him is a valuable deposit. When someone unexpectedly asks you to speak, testify, or give input in a discussion, you can withdraw from your bank of deposits, and God will bless. However, if you have no deposits invested, you will have little to share.

Make time with God the number one priority in your life. This means **read your Bible** – just to listen to God – and **pray** – just to talk to Him and hear His voice. Without this personal discipline, your teaching will never be what God meant it to be. When you read something that convicts your heart, talk to God – right then and there – and make sure you correct your mistake. This heart preparation is for all time – every day of your life.

#### Quote Ezra 7:10

**Prepare Your Mind (head).** Reading your Bible (listening to God’s voice) is not the same thing as studying God’s Word (seeking His will). The foundation of all Bible study is observation. Observation is about how you read. If you read well, you have conquered the most difficult part of Bible study.

As with most anything else you study, one of the best ways to learn is **repetition**. So, read your Bible repeatedly. That can mean different things. Here are a few suggestions:




-  Read your Bible aloud.
-  Have someone read the Bible aloud to you.
-  Listen to audio recordings of someone reading the Bible.
-  Read the Bible in different translations.
-  Read the Bible in a different setting. If you normally read your Bible sitting in your room, go outside and walk around the compound (on familiar ground) as you read.

This is only one of the many ways to read your Bible. However you do it, be sure you read daily (consistently), and with a desire to hear what God is saying.

**What version/translation of the Bible should you read?** There are many Bible translations available today. Most are designed for easy reading, but be careful. These can change the meaning of what the original author intended when writing what God spoke.

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Here are some categories for Bible translations (*bring as many examples as possible for students to look at*):

-  **Literal** – as close as possible to the original: King James Version is the example.
-  **Free** – eliminates historical and cultural “barriers” by putting verses in modern terms (sometimes called “paraphrase”): The Message and The Living Bible are examples.
-  **Dynamic Equivalence** – translates words, cultural phrases, and grammatical construction of the original language into “precise equivalents” or thought for thought in modern language: New International and New Living Translations are examples.

**Interpreting comes by understanding the Scriptures, and is the second step in Bible study.** As you endeavor to understand God’s Word, you are interpreting the Scripture. You are trying to understand what the author was saying, who he was saying it to, and what God wants you to get from His original message. Ask God to help you understand what He meant when He inspired that author to write those words.

You should use King James Version (where possible) to teach Bible doctrine. The other modern translations help teach issues of practical everyday Christian living. Always go back to the version you have that is closest to original to make sure the doctrine did not change with the newer translation.

Begin with whatever version you have, and build yourself a library. A library is NOT a large collection of books. A library is a few good books that will help you learn as you study, and understand as you read. Begin today looking for books that will help you make studying God’s Word a priority in your life. Begin with these (*if possible show students an example*):

-  A good reading Bible – without notes, maps or charts, but with room to write as ideas and inspiration come
-  A good study Bible – with maps, notes, study helps, charts, etc.
-  Alternate Bible translations – parallel Bibles are good
-  A Bible dictionary – to define unfamiliar words in a Bible setting
-  A good concordance – one that matches your Bible version (i.e. – King James Bible needs a King James concordance)

What do you notice about this library? (*Most of the books are Bibles, or closely related.*) The Bible is your greatest and most-used source for lesson preparation. Make all your Bibles your friend by using them. As time and money allow, you can add other books to your personal library. Remember: add books for needs, not just to increase the number of books in your library.

After your heart is prepared and your head understands, your hands need to be involved. What should you do?

**Prepare to Practice (hands).** The final part of Bible study is application. Every lessons needs to be about life, not just facts. Knowledge is good, but must be something you can use for making life better, if it is of any value. God wants teachers to be bridge-builders. His eternal truths never change, but how do you apply these truths to an always-changing world?

**Quote Ezra 7:10**

(The following information was taken from *Research & Resources* by Raymond Woodward:

- ✓ THEN – Bible text

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- ✓ BRIDGE – universal principle
- ✓ NOW – practical application
  - ◆ Every time you read from God’s Word, be sure you know who is writing, to whom they are writing, and why the passage was written: was it an answer to a question, instructions for daily living, or to help solve some problem?
  - ◆ The time period is also important, because it helps to understand a bit about lifestyles and culture of the day.
  - ◆ Where is the writing done, and where will it be sent?

Discovering these things make the application simpler, because they help you understand what these things mean to you here and now. This is the universal principle – the bridge between the writings of the Bible and life today. How do you discover these things? We call it “bridge building.”

Begin with the Word of God (Bible text). What is the eternal truth (universal principle that applies anywhere and always) in this passage? What message was the author trying to give? After you have discovered the truth (God’s message) decide how you should use that truth in your own life.

Once you have built your bridge, you can begin to use the lesson. It does not matter what part of the Bible is being studied, remember that all Scripture is given for a reason.

**Building an application uses these four questions:** (Ask for student volunteer to stand and quote II Timothy 3:16-17) – “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Timothy 3:16-17, KJV).

Now read these verses in a different translation, such as *The New Living*. “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God’s way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.”

What are the four areas that Scripture deals with?

- ✓ Doctrine – what should I believe?
- ✓ Correction – what should I not believe?
- ✓ Instruction in righteousness – how should I behave?
- ✓ Reproof – how should I not behave?

When we have answered these questions about the passage studied, we can put the wisdom found to use in our daily lives, and we can share this wisdom with others too, by teaching them what to do and what not to do. Jesus said profound things in simple ways—we often say simple things in profound ways. Let us be careful to teach others –as as simply as possible – the ways we have learned.

***Why do teachers prepare?***

**Why do we want to teach?** There are too many people in the world who do not know, have not heard, and therefore have no hope. Just as Ezra prepared to teach, so do we.

“And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not” (Ezra 7:25-KJV).

Everyone who does not know needs to hear. One of the last commands Jesus gave before He went back to heaven was: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

“All nations” covers where we go, and “every creature” tells us who needs to hear. When we obey, we must be prepared. What did Jesus want us to teach?

“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:” (Colossians 1:27-28, KJV).

Thank God, someone prepared themselves, and taught me. Thank God, because I have “Christ in me, the hope of glory!”

**Quote Ezra 7:10**

**Conclusion**

Consider what Solomon said about the prepared teacher:

**Ecclesiastes 12:9-11 (NASB)** “In addition to being a wise man, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly. The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd.”

A “wise teacher” gets two results:

- “goad” – spurs people to action, motivating them to do something
- “well-driven nail” – people will remember it; firmly embedded; driven deep

When we prepare properly (heart, head, and hands) and obey completely, God will help us teach wisely.



**LESSON PREPARATION EXERCISE:** (This exercise should be done during time allotted for discussion or class interaction.)

- Choose a method of lesson preparation.
- 2. Use the outline below with Luke chapter 15 (the “lost” chapter).
- 3. Prepare sample lesson given (No.2), following steps as provided by instructor.
  - ✓ Divide class into four (4) groups.
  - ✓ Discuss the three (3) obvious “lost” things in Luke 15.
  - ✓ Find another, less obvious, “lost” thing.
  - ✓ Have four lost things (coin, sheep, prodigal son and brother at home) written on small pieces of paper.
  - ✓ Allow someone from each team to choose one paper, and students work on that “lost” thing together.
  - ✓ Follow the steps/procedure given on chart to prepare each lesson about the four different “lost things” in Luke 15.
- 1) Read the lesson text: (give students limited amount of time to do this – possibly 10 minutes) Allow students opportunity to read text in various versions (as available).

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- Luke 15:1-7 Story of the Lost Sheep
- Luke 15:8-10 Story of the Lost Coin
- Luke 15:11-24 Story of the Lost Son (Prodigal Son)
- Luke 15:25-32 Story of the Lost Brother

- 2) Pay attention to your audience – age, spiritual experience, needs – to help with insights, experiences, illustrations, and stories used.
  - 3) List major points in your assigned story (limit time, according to time available). Major points become a skeleton outline for the lesson.
  - 4) Locate and study any other Bible verses that relate to your assigned story. A concordance will come in handy here. (Work within time limits – possibly 5-7 minutes.)
  - 5) Write any insights, ideas gained from the story or related texts. (Limit to 5-7 minutes.)
  - 6) Add any personal experiences, related stories, or illustrations to make the lesson personal (5 minutes maximum).
  - 7) Add any personal experiences to personal insights to make your assigned story become a relevant lesson for your students (5 minutes maximum).
  - 8) Prepare to present your lesson by method chosen at beginning of this exercise.
4. Present prepared lesson to class. If time allows only one team to present their lesson, choose the team by drawing number from small slips of paper with team numbers written on them, or by choosing first team to finish lesson preparation.

