

ECH[®]OES

ADULT TEACHER COMMENTARY

FALL 2025



JUDAH, FROM
ISAIAH TO EXILE

DAVID  COOK

ECHOES[®]

ADULT TEACHER COMMENTARY FALL 2025

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INVITATION TO THE QUARTER AND CONTRIBUTORS



I was a substitute teacher when my daughters attended high school. Some students could have called me “Mom” because we got so close. I was at the school that often!

When I walked into the classroom, the students knew the drill. I asked them about things on their hearts—family, school, or other matters. After I took the time to pray for each situation, we’d have a fun discussion. I would let them tell a funny story, to talk about a book or a movie they’d seen, or to toss out a real-life situation for discussion.

But somewhere in the day, the class had to get quiet for serious study time. I needed them to complete the assignments the teacher had left. Perhaps they needed to listen while I taught from a chapter of a textbook. When it was study time, I expected full attention and cooperation. Playtime was over; it was time to get down to business. And most of the students understood. If one of them kept fooling around, talking out of turn, or disturbing the class, I had no problem sending a student to the office or writing a detention slip. Sometimes, I’d hear one student say, “She’s nice, but she has limits.”

This quarter’s lessons are about the prophetic ministries of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. God is full of mercy and compassion, but He sets limits on His people’s behavior. Through the prophets, God extends grace upon grace, warning after warning. But God’s children keep turning to the worship of idols, oppressing their neighbors, and trusting in everything except the true and living God. At one point, God has to say, Enough is enough. Even the vast, beautiful temple that Solomon built would be destroyed. God cares far more about the hearts of His people. Even in their exile and shame, God continues to plan their restoration. We can be grateful for a God that loves us so much that He sets limits on us.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CONTENT

God guided the people of Judah, and the same God helps and guides us today. The time of the prophets reminds us of our own context: people distracted, chasing after idols, and forgetting what God had done. Over the next few months, we will read about God's way of reminding His people of His love and purpose, often through the sending of prophets. As we approach these stories, we find that they teach us about ourselves and our relationship with God.

As in our own lives, God provides hope and redemption through the humble and afflicted servant described in Isaiah 53.

In the story of Isaiah and the renewal of the temple, we see theological reasons for the decline of Judah. Good theology and obedience to God and His Word is critical to preventing decline, both personally and corporately. This shows up when we look at the prophet Isaiah and two faithful kings of Judah. This unit will also give us a glimpse into the destruction of the temple. This devastating event in the history of Judah was brought about, in part, by social injustice, moral decay, and disobedience. But as with most Bible stories, there is hope and a redemptive purpose. As in our own lives, God provides hope and redemption through the humble and afflicted servant described in Isaiah 53.

In the second unit, we are going to look at the prophet Jeremiah, who lived through the Babylonian assault on Jerusalem. God gave Jeremiah a blunt message to share with His people: change! They did not listen, and judgment came. We will see that there are consequences, even today, if we chose a path of disobedience to God. But we will also discover that God continues to be a God of hope, and He would ultimately bring them home again. Jeremiah hears a message of hope, that the law of God will one day be written on the heart and not in stone (Jeremiah 31:33). Today, God's law is written on our hearts and is our guide in a world that is dark and treacherous.

The final unit of this quarter examines the words of God through His prophet Ezekiel. As we read these passages, we find they are full of brutality, despair, and destruction. This might not sound all that different than the evening news today! But just as Ezekiel preaches hope and restoration after the downfall of Jerusalem, there is hope and restoration promised for us as well.

Throughout the quarter we will see that there are consequences for sin and disobedience, but God always offers hope, forgiveness, and restoration. In times of uncertainty and strife, remember that God is the one who comforts us, loves us, and offers us a way forward.

GET THE MOST FROM EACH LESSON

1 Start the Conversation

Many of us show up thinking about our mortgage or about our family relationships, and that is normal! This curriculum is designed to engage our everyday experiences and to set up a genuine conversation to examine what God might be teaching us throughout the week, not just through group study. Use this introduction and questions to spark a connection that prepares your class for the themes of the biblical text.

2 Study Today's Scripture

Lively Bible study is the goal, for “the word of God is alive and active” (Heb. 4:12). You might have students who think that Bible study is dull and routine. Nothing could be further from the truth: the more that we examine the Bible in its historical context, the more we gain eyes to see and ears to hear the heart of a heavenly Father, who invites each of us to turn to Him. Whether we are examining Old or New Testament texts, the suggested questions and answers are relevant and compelling, often with more than one “right” answer. Use the Teacher Commentary notes to share even more information with your class. You will have engaging points to add when tough questions arise.

3 Apply the Message

This is where the rubber meets the road, where we assemble the points emerging from the biblical text to describe one particular message. This section will always address a new covenant application, and it is an opportunity to spend extra time processing the words of Scripture, sometimes by drawing connections to other parts of the Bible. Suggested questions and answers are always provided, and most weeks have an optional handout with additional activities (for instance, if your class enjoys art, writing prompts, or games).

4 Live It Out

This is the opportunity for each person to make a response to God's invitation. Often, that response can be as simple as writing words of a prayer or making a concrete plan of obedience to God's Word. Students will have a key verse and a list of planned readings for each day, and notes of what to anticipate in the week ahead. In addition, you'll have a suggested prayer for the whole group, so that you might conclude the lesson and dismiss your class into the world, living for Christ and His kingdom.

Ella Baker:



A Model of Servant Leadership

By Juliet Liu

Among the many individuals who played a role in the civil rights movement of the mid-twentieth century, Ella Baker stands out as a unique representation of leadership. People like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X may be the first names coming to mind when discussing the movement, but Baker's service was no less profound, even though her name is not well-known. Ella Baker shows the meaning of Christlike leadership—not seeking to be a charismatic person in the spotlight but accepting the role of a quiet servant, one who raises others up. She demonstrates that true leadership is rooted in giving and empowering others.

Early Life and Education

Born on December 13, 1903, in the state of Virginia, Ella Baker grew up in a family that valued education and community activism. Her grandmother was born into slavery, and her parents instilled in her a strong sense of justice and the importance of standing up against inequality. After Baker's grandparents gained their freedom, they purchased a small parcel of land that they were able to farm. Neighbors in need often knocked on the door, and young Ella noticed that no one was turned away without something to eat.

Baker attended the New York College for Teachers (now the City University of New York) and graduated in 1927. Her education provided her with academic knowledge and a grounding in social justice. After college, she began a career as a teacher. Soon her passion for activism took center stage in her professional and personal life. This activism was rooted in the stories her grandmother told, about

what it was like to grow up enslaved. Ella had also witnessed the generous community her grandparents provided throughout her childhood.

"Strong people don't need strong leaders."

Activism and the NAACP

Baker demonstrated her commitment to civil rights in the 1930s when she began working with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Beginning as a volunteer, her hard work and determination quickly advanced her to several leadership roles. Throughout the 1940s, Baker acted as the organization's first field secretary. She traveled across the South, advocating for voter registration, organizing grassroots campaigns, and responding to lynchings and segregation.

Baker believed in the power of ordinary people to effect change, and her role only made her more certain. This belief would shape her approach to leadership throughout her life, as she began to witness that real power lies in collective action, not in the visibility of individuals.

SCLC and the Importance of Collective Action

In 1957, Baker founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other prominent

Black Christian figures. As she worked with Dr. King, Baker began to see her vision of leadership diverge from many male counterparts in the SCLC. Several of these men emphasized a centralized, charismatic leadership model: they believed only strong leadership would drive the civil rights movement forward. But Baker advocated for the opposite—a more decentralized, democratic approach to organization. She believed that leadership should not just arise from public speakers in the limelight but from ordinary members of the community. For Baker, it was essential to nurture the skills and voices of those who might otherwise remain unheard.

SNCC and the Empowerment of Young Leaders

Baker's commitment to empowering others became especially evident in her approach to youth activism. She understood the necessity to engage young people in the civil rights movement and recognized their capacity to drive change. This commitment culminated in her involvement with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which she helped to organize in 1960. While the SCLC and the NAACP had always made efforts to convince young activists to join their existing organizational structure, Baker feared that young students would not be taken seriously or allowed to contribute in their own unique ways. Baker encouraged the college students to create their own movement instead. Through SNCC, Baker inspired a generation of young men and women to an active rather than passive role in the struggle for civil rights.

A Quiet Leader

Behind closed doors, Baker was known to challenge Dr. King for his comfort in the spotlight. She argued that, if people were tempted to worship and follow him as an extraordinary hero figure, this would not be good for the movement in the long run. An emphasis on Dr. King and other charismatic leaders might cause ordinary citizens to question their own ability to make meaningful contributions. Baker challenged Dr. King to step out of the spotlight and to raise up leaders alongside him, but this request created friction between the pair. Ella Baker did not back down, and she continued to grow the movement in her own ways.

One of her most significant contributions was her belief in the power of collective decision-making. Baker famously stated, "Strong people don't need strong leaders." This philosophy emphasizes

the importance of empowering individuals to take ownership of their activism. It is all too easy to tell ourselves, *Someone else can be the one to do it*. Baker encouraged others to think critically and to take action; she fostered a sense of agency among those she mentored.

Defined by humility and a focus on service rather than personal acclaim, Baker's leadership style was both distinctive and effective. As she worked behind the scenes, provided support and guidance to others—while deliberately avoiding the spotlight for herself—Baker modeled a different path for future leaders. Her mentorship extended beyond mere guidance; she invested in the growth, contributions, and success of all those around her. Many activists who worked with Baker, figures like John Lewis and Diane Nash, credit her with shaping their understanding of leadership and activism.

Legacy

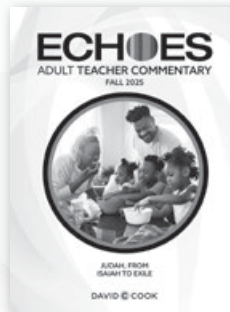
Ella Baker's life reminds others of the leadership style of Jesus, who told His disciples that anyone wishing to be a leader must first be a servant of others (Mark 10:43–45). She embodied this principle, demonstrating that true leadership is not about seeking power or recognition but about lifting others up and serving the community. Despite her significant contributions, Baker's name is often overlooked in narratives of the civil rights movement, even though she had a role in three organizations: the NAACP, SCLC, and SNCC. This oversight shows that society still tends to celebrate charismatic leadership, while neglecting the quiet, behind-the-scenes work that is just as impactful—if not more so.

But Baker's legacy lives on and continues to influence activists and leaders today, especially those who value collaboration and community engagement. In a world that values charisma and personal glory, Baker's example says, *Think again*. She teaches that effective leaders emerge from the community, driven by a passion for justice and a commitment to the good of others. In our churches and communities, let us cultivate an environment where every voice is heard and valued, echoing Baker's belief that strong people act, even in the absence of strong leaders. When we embrace servant leadership, we foster a culture of collaboration, empathy, and empowerment, ensuring that the legacy of Ella Baker lives on.

ENHANCE YOUR TEACHING

Adult Teacher Kit

The **Adult Teacher Commentary** and **Adult Resources** are packaged together for your convenience. Use the reproducible worksheets, additional discussion starters, and full-color Bible background posters to fully engage participants in each lesson.



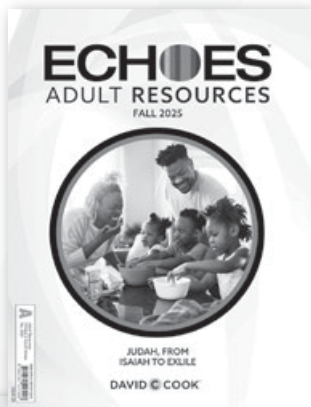
Power for Living®

This weekly, magazine-style handout features articles on unique ministries, world missions, spiritual trends, and Christians serving the Lord throughout the world. The issues also include daily Bible readings, puzzles, poems, and book excerpts. *Power for Living* connects God's truth to real life and can also be used as an outreach tool in prisons, in doctors' offices, and as part of a ministry to homebound members of the church community.

Real Life Downloaded

This **FREE** online resource combines current news stories with your weekly Bible lessons. Each week you will find an alternative introductory activity featuring a news story and discussion questions that relate to the lesson. Also online are links to additional Bible commentary, worship playlists that relate to the focus of the lesson, and additional resources to help you prepare for and teach your lesson. Explore it today at RealLifeDownloaded.com





Adult Resources

This addition to your teaching has been created to enhance the experience of the quarter with more visual aids and supplementary handouts for the class. Many of the larger themes and big ideas come together in these components, and the handouts give your students something else to take with them.



- 3 full-color posters to enrich your teaching
- 2 reproducible sheets that enhance the posters and feature a quarterly topic
- 12 reproducible handouts that support the lesson with an activity and/or discussion prompts

Quiet Hour®

When you use these daily devotions, you'll read through the recommended passage of Scripture, consider how fellow believers have applied the passage's theme to daily life, and be encouraged to step into daily living with God in your life. Reflecting on the Bible each day invites us to a deeper fellowship with Christ as we apply God's Word to our lives. This devotional aligns with the ISSL (International Sunday School Lessons) Home Daily Bible Readings listed each week in the Adult Teacher's Commentary and Adult Student Guide.



5 Meaningful Ways to Honor Your Pastor

October is Pastor Appreciation Month, but it's worth taking the time to encourage your pastor any month of the year

- **Handwritten Letter or Card**

One of the best ways to show that you care about them is to simply drop them a handwritten note of gratitude and thanks, perhaps highlighting something they have said or done that impacted you.

- **Fill a Box or Jar of Memories**

Find a group of people within the church and have each person write a positive, uplifting memory on a piece of paper. Collect all those memories in a decorated box or jar. Your pastor will be able to draw from that encouragement little by little, when needed.

- **Organize a Calendar of Encouragement**

Pastors need to be appreciated all year long. Find people to sign up for a specific month of the year to send a card or a small token of appreciation to the pastor. Don't forget to remind people of what month they signed up for.

- **Start a Pastor's Prayer Group**

Pastors need prayer. Start a small group of people that will commit to praying for the pastor regularly throughout the day or week. Let the pastor know that specific people are praying regularly.

- **Honor Your Pastor's Spouse (if applicable)**

If your pastor is married, there is no greater way of showing appreciation to them than appreciating their spouse. Any of the above suggestions work equally well.

A FAMILY'S EXAMPLE

INVITATION

Prepare your heart and pause before you teach this lesson

I come from a family of gossipers. On Sunday afternoons, my immediate family roasted the deacons, choir members, Sunday school teachers, and the people in the pew. We made jokes about how people dressed, how they talked, and who they brought to church. Talking about people from church, in the community, and around the world was what we did for fun at family gatherings. I admit, I participated for a long time into adulthood.

I will never forget one holiday in particular. I had finished eating, and the gossip started to flow. I opened my mouth and join in, but the Holy Spirit constrained me. I heard the Spirit quietly saying, "This is wrong." I felt uncomfortable sitting at the table. So I scooped up a baby and said, "I'm going to put her down for a nap." I stayed with the baby a long time because I didn't want to return and be questioned about my silence. I no longer felt comfortable making fun of people. A few years later, I did speak up at a family dinner: "Maybe we should find something else to do besides talking about people." I got put down and called a Miss Goody Two-Shoes. I'm sure whenever I left the room I became the next subject of scorn. I felt awkward and rejected by my own family.

Early in my Christian life, I looked down at those I thought were not following biblical principles. But as I grew older, I realized my own shortcomings and failings. Now when I hear things that are out of order, I ask the Holy Spirit if I should say something. Family fun and traditions are one thing, but following the Lord's leading is more important. That's what your class needs to hear!

REALLIFEDOWNLOADED.COM

Find alternative lesson introduction, Spotify® playlists, and links to more teaching resources



On Echoes Worship Weekly, listen to "Hold to God's Unchanging Hand" by Anchor Hymns, Sandra McCracken, and Chaunda Jefferson. This song is all about trusting God and following His ways. On Traditional Worship Weekly, listen to "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" played by Jadon Lavik.

LESSON FOCUS:

Be faithful to God's ways, even more than human traditions.

LESSON SCRIPTURE:

Jeremiah 35:5–11

1 Start the Conversation

Share about important family traditions.

2 Study Today's Scripture

Jeremiah uses a family's traditions as an example of faithfulness.

3 Apply the Message

Traditions are one way that we demonstrate faithfulness.

Suggested Materials:

- ♦ Adult Resources: Reproducible Handout—"Tradition and Truth"

4 Live It Out

Be intentional about the good that can come from your traditions.

For more commentary, see p. 1250 in *Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*.



As we have been learning about the prophets, we have seen that their job of communication is not easy. This week provides a concrete example of something that Jeremiah does as a demonstration, something to show what faithfulness means. God uses Jeremiah to try to get through to the people of Judah, even when they are not listening. “Living Parables: The Life of Prophets” and its associated handout give more examples.

1 Start the Conversation

Share about important family traditions.

student guide

LESSON 07

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A FAMILY’S EXAMPLE

“It’s going to be big fun, mate. We do it every year,” explained Ambrose. “We get hammered and make a whole night of it.”

“Don’t you chaps do the same thing in America?” chimed Robert.

They were in Antonne’s dorm at the University of West London. It was his second year at the university. It had been difficult to settle into a new country and new school, while making a new group of friends. But Antonne found his English classmates to be friendly toward Americans, possibly more so to Black students.

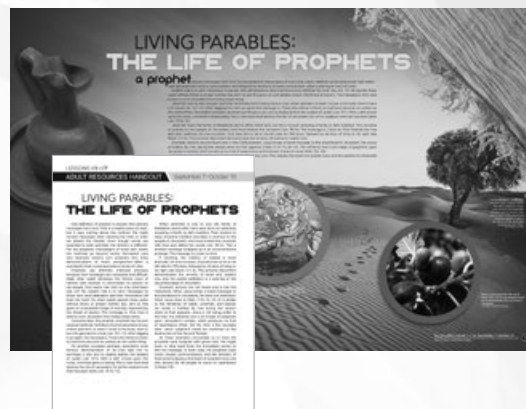
Ambrose and Robert had promised him a “rip-roaring, good time” for Halloween. The plan was to hook up with a larger group and to get “totally sloshed.”

“I’m telling you, mate, you’re not going to want to miss this. And Felicity will be there,” added Robert.

Antonne kept thinking of what his extended family was doing back home: celebrating at a local farm with pumpkins, a corn maze, and all the trappings. Later they would build a campfire, drink cider, and huddle under blankets to sing or to listen to stories from his grandfather. It wasn’t the typical way to spend Halloween, but it had more meaning than what other folks did.

“You know,” Antonne said, sitting down and reaching for his phone, “I think tonight I might hang back and connect with my family. I haven’t called my grandfather in ages.”

Adult Resources Posters



Discussion Questions and Answers

1 What is one of your favorite family traditions?

Many of us grow up celebrating important milestones and holidays with some kind of specific tradition. You may notice that many traditions are associated with meal times. That is no coincidence, since meals are an important community event.

2 What value did that tradition teach you?

Traditions can teach us to value certain things: diligence, patience, or quality time. Some traditions don’t have an obvious purpose, but they still form us into a closer community (a group that does something together).

3 What kind of good tradition do you want to start with your friends and family?

We probably don’t put enough thought into the formation of new traditions. Traditions can help us see the passage of time as we witness that some things change, while some never do. We should create God-honoring traditions to share with family.

2 Study Today's Scripture

Jeremiah uses a family's traditions as an example of faithfulness.

Lesson Context

Jeremiah 35 takes place during the reign of King Jehoiakim, most likely around 605 BC, before Jeremiah is barred from entering the temple (Jer. 36:5). He has spent several years calling the people to turn back to God, often by unorthodox means: hiding and ruining a new garment (Jer. 13:1–11), smashing a clay jar as an example of God's destructive power (Jer. 19:10–11), even wearing a yoke (Jer. 27:2; 28:10–11). Here Jeremiah uses a peculiar example—in fact, a peculiar people—to get his message across.

Points to Emphasize

Read Jeremiah 35:5–7, and note the following:

- Jeremiah has invited a family called the Rekabites to join him in a room of the temple.
- Once there, Jeremiah places bowls of wine before them and invites them to drink.
- Instead, the Rekabites explain that this would violate their family's traditions, which prohibit living in houses, farming crops, and drinking wine.
- They have kept these traditions in the hope that they shall remain in the land.

Teacher Commentary

Who Are the Rekabites?

The ancestry of the Rekabites dates back to the Kenites, a nomadic tribe that included Moses' father-in-law, Jethro. According to 1 Chronicles 2:55, a Kenite named Hammath preceded Jehonadab as a "father of the Rekabites." Once the Israelites came into the promised land, the Kenites settled "among the inhabitants of the Desert of Judah in the Negev near Arad" (Judg. 1:16), which is near the border of modern-day Jordan.

The Rekabites appear to have retained their nomadic lifestyle. Over the following centuries, they moved throughout the land of inheritance. They were probably in the northern kingdom of Israel at the time they had taken their original vows and may have migrated south toward Judah after the fall of Israel in 722 BC.

⁵ And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine.

⁶ But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: ⁷ Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers.

student commentary

The Rekabite Vows

The setting is the middle of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry. At least some of the worst outcomes have already begun. But there is yet time to save lives and to make the people understand that turning to God's mercy is their only hope. The faithless king of Judah, Jehoiakim, has not led the people into sincere repentance. Judah has been forced to submit to the invading powers of Babylon (1 Kings 24:1). Amidst all the coming and going from the city of Jerusalem, God sends Jeremiah to one family: the Rekabites, descendants of their ancestor, Rekab. God has a planned demonstration in mind.

Jeremiah brings the clan into the temple and arranges a test. He sets bowls of wine before the family and tells them to drink (Jer. 35:5). But there is something to know about the Rekabites: unlike most other families of this time, they have certain unique traditions. They do not drink wine, do not farm, and they live in tents (vv. 6–7).

Through his actions, Jeremiah is tempting this group to violate long-held family traditions. Before them is a prophet of God who has invited them to enter the temple and has made an offer of wine (presumably, before observers). But Jeremiah anticipates their response. Jeremiah (more importantly, God) already knows what the Rekabites will do.

The family comes at Jeremiah's invitation, but they flatly decline to drink any wine set before

⁵ Then I set bowls full of wine and some cups before the Rekabites and said to them, “Drink some wine.”

⁶ But they replied, “We do not drink wine, because our forefather Jehonadab son of Rekab gave us this command: ‘Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine.’ ⁷ Also you must never build houses, sow seed or plant vineyards; you must never have any of these things, but must always live in tents. Then you will live a long time in the land where you are nomads.”

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them. They explain their traditions, perhaps thinking this might be a simple misunderstanding: “Our forefather Jehonadab, son of Rekab gave us this command: ‘Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine’” (v. 6). The family members have probably kept this vow for more than two centuries, and they are not about to violate it now.

We may wonder why the Rekabites have this tradition in the first place. Unfortunately, the rest of Scripture is mostly silent about them; Jeremiah 35 is the only chapter that describes their history. More than likely, the reason their ancestor had forbidden the drinking of wine or the cultivation of crops was to free his descendants from being settled in one territory. The Rekabites are probably a clan of permanent nomads, expected to live like nomads, and a love for wine would make that lifestyle impossible.

Jehonadab—the ancestor who came up with these traditions—promised his family that, if they keep these traditions, they will “live a long time in the land where [they] are nomads” (v. 7). This promise closely resembles the wording of Israel’s covenant: “Observe therefore all the commands I [God] am giving you . . . so that you may live long in the land” (Deut. 11:8–9). And here is the crux of Jeremiah’s demonstration. Before the observers, Jeremiah highlights a family who upholds their traditions to ensure a righteous outcome.

Discussion Questions and Answers

1 What does Jeremiah the prophet ask the Rekabites to do? Why?

Jeremiah invites the family to come to the temple, where he sets before them bowls of wine and invites them to drink. This is an elaborate setup and test that will make an important demonstration. Jeremiah anticipates that his offer will be rejected.

2 How do the Rekabites respond? Why?

The Rekabites come and patiently explain their traditions before Jeremiah and observers. They have been faithful to what their ancestor asked of them, and they will not make this the day that they drink wine. Keeping their traditions has been part of their identity as nomads, for centuries.

3 What makes the Rekabites want to keep their traditions?

The promise of their ancestor was that these traditions would sustain his clan and would make their way of life possible. The Rekabites remember his promise: they shall retain the ability to live on their land if they abide by the traditions. Thus they avoid farming, drinking wine, and living in houses instead of tents.

Teacher Commentary

Jehonadab

Jehonadab lived in the ninth century BC, during the reign of King Jehu of Israel. Second Kings 10:15–31 tells that Jehonadab meets with Jehu (about 842 BC), and agrees to help Jehu eliminate the house of King Ahab and the Baal worship established by Ahab’s house. Verses 23–28 describe how Jehu and Jehonadab brought all Baal’s servants into the temple of Baal; after making sure “that no one who serves the LORD is here with you—only servants of Baal” (v. 23), Jehu sends his guards and officers in to kill Baal’s servants, then has them destroy the temple of Baal itself.

At their first meeting, Jehu recruits Jehonadab because of their mutual “zeal for the LORD” (v. 16). That same zeal remains evident in Jehonadab’s followers more than two hundred years later. The Rekabites’ reputation precedes them by the time they meet Jeremiah in the temple.

Points to Emphasize

Read Jeremiah 35:8–11, and note the following:

- The Rekabites continue to explain that they have come to the city of Jerusalem to seek refuge from the wars and conflicts in the land.
- They have not violated their traditions in any way.
- This demonstration of faithfulness stands in stark contrast to the rest of Judah, who has not obeyed the covenant with God.

Teacher Commentary

Refusing Wine

During the temperance movements of the early twentieth century, the Rekabites' refusal to drink wine was cited as an example for all believers to follow. Then and now, it is important to recognize and honor their faithfulness without missing the bigger point of obedience to God in all things. The Rekabites' nomadic lifestyle prohibited them from planting vineyards, and avoiding wine was only one part of their vows.

Still, the Bible prohibits drunkenness and has many examples of its harms (Gen. 9:20–25; 19:30–38; Lev. 10:1–2, 8; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18). Yet Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1–11). Thus the apostle Paul's advice probably sums it up best: "whether you eat or drink . . . do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

Nebuchadnezzar's Raids of Judah

At the likely time of this passage (605–604 BC), King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had already begun raiding the regions around Judah, including Syria, Lebanon, and Israel, thus driving the Rekabites from the lands they had previously settled. Second Kings 24:1 also informs us that Nebuchadnezzar had begun raiding the outer regions of the southern kingdom of Judah, and eventually besieged Jerusalem itself: "Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. But then he turned against Nebuchadnezzar and rebelled [in 601 BC]." Jehoiakim would join forces with the Egyptians and would eventually be removed by Nebuchadnezzar in 598 BC, carried off to Babylon.

Another immediate effect of Nebuchadnezzar's initial raids was that, in submitting to Babylon, Jehoiakim had sent "some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility" to Babylon—including the prophet Daniel and his friends (Dan. 1:3, 6–7).

⁸ Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; ⁹ Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: ¹⁰ But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. ¹¹ But it came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

student commentary

Radical Obedience

The Rekabites and their leader, Jaazaniah, continue to explain these vows and their refusal to drink wine. After their forefather forbid them to drink wine, build houses, or farm, they "obeyed everything [he] commanded" (v. 8). Because they all followed these commands to live as nomads, they "have lived in tents and have fully obeyed" (v. 10). Their long-standing zeal toward keeping ancestral traditions overcame any temptation to seek the comfort of permanent homes, much less a temptation to drink the wine Jeremiah has set before them.

The only reason the Rekabites have come to Jerusalem is to find safety from invading armies (v. 11). As a result of their nomadic lifestyle, they were able to flee to the city in a time of crisis. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had begun invading the lands of Judah and the eastern Mediterranean. Because of these wars to the north, the Rekabites arrived as refugees to Judah and found safety in the city of Jerusalem (v. 11). Even now, they are not in violation of their vows and traditions. Even now they are still living in tents.

Following the printed text, God tells Jeremiah to speak to the gathered people. Jeremiah recaps the test of the Rekabites and their faithful response (vv. 12–16). Then he brings

⁸ We have obeyed everything our forefather Jehonadab son of Rekab commanded us. Neither we nor our wives nor our sons and daughters have ever drunk wine ⁹ or built houses to live in or had vineyards, fields or crops. ¹⁰ We have lived in tents and have fully obeyed everything our forefather Jehonadab commanded us. ¹¹ But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded this land, we said, ‘Come, we must go to Jerusalem to escape the Babylonian and Aramean armies.’ So we have remained in Jerusalem.”

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the demonstration to a theological point: the Rekabites have done everything their ancestors had asked, have remained faithful, generation after generation. Conversely, during the same time, the people of Judah have proved utterly faithless to the covenant with God. God has sent many prophets (Jeremiah included) to urge Judah to turn from sin and idolatry. “But,” God concludes, “you have not paid attention or listened to me” (v. 15). Thus, the Rekabites are an illustration of the kind of faithfulness that Judah has struggled to display.

Therefore, because of this faithless behavior, God shall bring about “every disaster [God] pronounced against [Judah and Jerusalem]” (v. 17). God has provided ample opportunity to return to covenant obedience, but the door is quickly shutting.

On the other hand, the faithfulness of the Rekabites has not gone unnoticed before God. This opens a path for God to reward them. The point is not that the traditions of the Rekabites should be adopted by the other residents of Judah. But in recognition for their having kept ancestral traditions, God says, “Jehonadab son of Rekab will never fail to have a descendant to serve me” (v. 19). In the midst of a faithless generation, God finds cause to reward a family who chooses a different path.

Discussion Questions and Answers

1 How have the Rekabites demonstrated obedience to their ancestors after relocating to Jerusalem?

Because they were used to a nomadic lifestyle, the Rekabites were able to flee to Jerusalem. Once there, they continued to live in tents within the walls of the city. They are keeping their traditions during a time of uncertainty and when others would have made a change.

2 Why does God want to highlight an example of extravagant faithfulness?

God is not saying that the traditions of this family should be adopted universally. But God is on the hunt for faithfulness, because Judah has proven habitually unfaithful. Through Jeremiah, God demonstrates that people are finding it easier to keep human traditions than to keep the covenant.

3 How does God reward the Rekabites?

God says that there shall always be a descendant of this family in His service. It means that the Rekabites will, at least in part, escape the destruction that is to come. Their family will survive and continue.

One Bible, One Story

Tests from God

There are many other instances in the Bible where God “tests” an individual or group—including cases when He fully anticipates a positive result. Abraham’s near sacrifice of Isaac—when God had already provided the real sacrifice (Gen. 22:8, 13–14)—is probably the best-known example. It allows Abraham to demonstrate obedient faith.

Another example appears in Mark 7. As Jesus travels to the region of Tyre, He encounters a Gentile woman who pleads with Him to cast a demon from her daughter. Jesus’ initial response seems unusually blunt, if not rude: “it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs” (v. 27). In response, however, the woman’s words are humble and faith-filled: “Lord . . . even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs” (v. 28). Jesus immediately tells the woman that her daughter has been healed as a result of her faith (vv. 29–30). Like the test of Jeremiah 35, Jesus allows her to demonstrate her faith, which serves as an example to the observers—and to us.

3 Apply the Message

Traditions are one way that we demonstrate faithfulness.

This devotion and conclusion encourages each of us to pursue faithfulness to those things that God requires. Like the Rekabite family, we can demonstrate what it means to be faithful.

Discussion Questions and Answers

1 What is an example of something you always want to finish?

Almost everyone is devoted to finishing certain types of things. Maybe we are great at finishing our projects, our responsibilities at work, or even our taxes. If we look at what we are good at finishing, it might reveal something about our priorities. For instance, perhaps we are careful not to embarrass ourselves before colleagues at work by leaving work undone.

2 How can our faithfulness in other areas of life be an example of faithfulness before God?

Depending on where we find faithfulness easy or convenient, it can spur us to consider the same attitude toward our spiritual obligations. Perhaps we need to take more care to follow God's instructions, or perhaps we need to invite the right mentors to help us find a path forward.

3 What does it look like to obey God and to finish well?

There are many examples of individuals who have left a legacy that persists: spiritual leaders who bring people to Christ, great minds who inquire after God, devoted missionaries who spend a lifetime in service, and more. Use this opportunity to praise and to speak well of any pillars of your faith community, those showing you the way.



Adult Resources Handout Tradition and Truth

This handout invites us to evaluate holiday traditions against the truths we find in Scripture. It gives instructions for an additional activity: a group discussion of instructions from God.

student conclusion

The Art of Finishing Well

"We have to finish this game!"

When those words came from my son's mouth, I knew he was right. I had always been a lover of boardgames, but this was the moment I knew he loved them too. We were seated on the carpet of our living room, cards and pieces scattered in every direction. The game had gone on so long that I was willing to pack it away. But one look at his face made me certain I didn't want to disappoint him.

"You're right. We finish things, don't we?"

With perfect comedic timing, my wife leaned into the room while holding a laundry basket. She said, "You finish the things you want to finish!"

It became a family joke that turned into a larger conversation. Each of us was able to think of projects and tasks that went unfinished: clothes tossed to the floor, a recycling bin that overflowed, schoolwork marked "Incomplete." Thus, a new family motto was born: *In this family, we finish things.*

In the days of Jeremiah, God was seeking faithfulness, or what we might call the skill of *finishing well*. But the people of Judah were rebellious and uncommitted. Soon their lack of fortitude would reach its natural conclusion: God would send them into exile.

We can be grateful that God notices and rewards individual faithfulness. More than that, God is devoted to His plans and promises. If faithfulness is the art of finishing well, God is the master. He always brings His plans to fruition. In the person of Jesus, God has been faithful beyond the wildest imagination of human beings. We should be faithful because God is faithful.

Reminding the World of God's Faithfulness

As we have studied the traditions of one ancient family, perhaps you have noticed ways that your own family traditions could point others to God. Since we serve a God who is faithful, we can look for ways to exemplify faithfulness ourselves.

With a partner, discuss a family tradition that this lesson has encouraged you to start or continue. How do you hope that your family traditions can point others to God?

Key Text

For unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment:

—Jeremiah 35:14b KJV

To this day they do not drink wine, because they obey their forefather's command.

—Jeremiah 35:14b NIV

4 Live It Out

Be intentional about the good that can come from your traditions.

This lesson and the discussion of family traditions can prompt several responses. Perhaps some of your group will be proud to share about their family's existing traditions, but others will want to use this opportunity to plan a new beginning. While there can be great joy in following traditions, we should ask ourselves whether we are using every opportunity to point the world to our heavenly Father.

Father in heaven,

You are faithful; we struggle to be faithful. We confess that we may sometimes take ourselves and our traditions more seriously than our obedience to Your ways. Please help us to send the right message in all we do. Challenge us to finish well, in whatever lies before us. We are grateful for Your gift of redemption and that You continue to shape us into Jesus' image. We pray in His name.

Amen.

Quiet Hour® and Cross Daily Bible Readings

Week of October 20 through October 25

Mon. Joel 2:28–32—A New Salvation.

Tue. Ezekiel 36:25–35—A New Heart.

Wed. Deuteronomy 10:12–21—The Law's Essence.

Thu. 2 Corinthians 3:1–6—A New Covenant.

Fri. 2 Corinthians 3:7–11—A New Spirit.

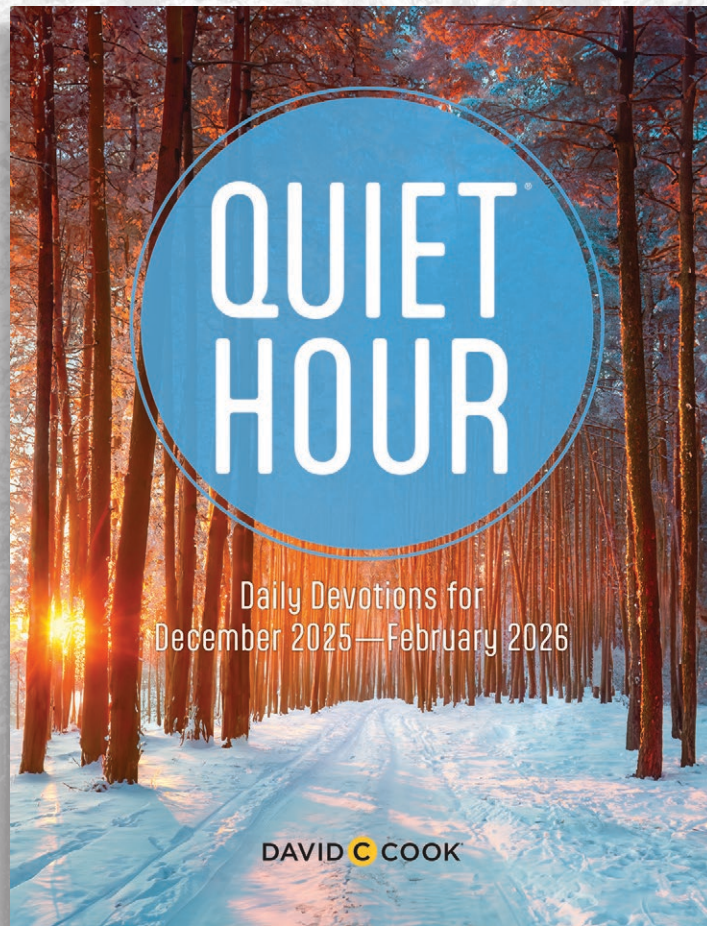
Sat. Jeremiah 31:27–34—A New Relationship with God.

Next Week: Jeremiah 31:29–34; John 1:17

Next week we will be looking at God's promise to make His people faithful and to give a new covenant. What is an item in your life that you've updated recently?



As students are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*®.



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A Adult Teacher
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ECHOES[®]

ADULT STUDENT GUIDE

FALL 2025



JUDAH, FROM
ISAIAH TO EXILE

DAVID **C** COOK[®]

ECHOES[®]

ADULT STUDENT GUIDE

FALL 2025

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WHAT'S AHEAD

QUARTERLY PREVIEW

God guided the people of Judah, and the same God helps and guides us today. The time of the prophets reminds us of our own context: people distracted, chasing after idols, and forgetting what God had done. Over the next few months, we will read about God's way of reminding His people of His love and purpose, often through the sending of prophets. As we approach these stories, we find that they teach us about ourselves and our relationship with God.

In this quarter, here are some of the biblical principles that we will study and apply to situations in our lives:

God makes people His messengers. (Lesson 1)

God invites us to return to Him. (Lesson 2)

God uses Scripture to reform us. (Lesson 3)

God's servant will face rejection and hostility. (Lesson 4)

God's messengers might seem young and inexperienced.
(Lesson 5)

God wants mercy even more than religious devotion.
(Lesson 6)

Be faithful to God's ways, even more than human traditions.
(Lesson 7)

We need God to make us faithful. (Lesson 8)

God can rescue those who do the right thing. (Lesson 9)

Expect human leaders to disappoint you. (Lesson 10)

In our grief we need God. (Lesson 11)

God warns that wickedness leads to ruin. (Lesson 12)

God's redemptive plan is firm and unshakable. (Lesson 13)

A FAMILY'S EXAMPLE

“It’s going to be big fun, mate. We do it every year,” explained Ambrose. “We get hammered and make a whole night of it.”

“Don’t you chaps do the same thing in America?” chimed Robert.

They were in Antonne’s dorm at the University of West London. It was his second year at the university. It had been difficult to settle into a new country and new school, while making a new group of friends. But Antonne found his English classmates to be friendly toward Americans, possibly more so to Black students.

Ambrose and Robert had promised him a “rip-roaring, good time” for Halloween. The plan was to hook up with a larger group and to get “totally sloshed.”

“I’m telling you, mate, you’re not going to want to miss this. And Felicity will be there,” added Robert.

Antonne kept thinking of what his extended family was doing back home: celebrating at a local farm with pumpkins, a corn maze, and all the trappings. Later they would build a campfire, drink cider, and huddle under blankets to sing or to listen to stories from his grandfather. It wasn’t the typical way to spend Halloween, but it had more meaning than what other folks did.

“You know,” Antonne said, sitting down and reaching for his phone, “I think tonight I might hang back and connect with my family. I haven’t called my grandfather in ages.”

1 What is one of your favorite family traditions?

2 What value did that tradition teach you?

3 What kind of good tradition do you want to start with your friends and family?

⁵ And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine.

⁶ But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: ⁷ Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers.

⁵ Then I set bowls full of wine and some cups before the Rekabites and said to them, “Drink some wine.”

⁶ But they replied, “We do not drink wine, because our forefather Jehonadab son of Rekab gave us this command: ‘Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine.’ ⁷ Also you must never build houses, sow seed or plant vineyards; you must never have any of these things, but must always live in tents. Then you will live a long time in the land where you are nomads.’

The Rekabite Vows

The setting is the middle of Jeremiah’s prophetic ministry. At least some of the worst outcomes have already begun. But there is yet time to save lives and to make the people understand that turning to God’s mercy is their only hope. The faithless king of Judah, Jehoiakim, has not led the people into sincere repentance. Judah has been forced to submit to the invading powers of Babylon (1 Kings 24:1). Amidst all the coming and going from the city of Jerusalem, God sends Jeremiah to one family: the Rekabites, descendants of their ancestor, Rekab. God has a planned demonstration in mind.

Jeremiah brings the clan into the temple and arranges a test. He sets bowls of wine before the family and tells them to drink (Jer. 35:5). But there is something to know about the Rekabites: unlike most other families of this time, they have certain unique traditions. They do not drink wine, do not farm, and they live in tents (vv. 6–7).

Through his actions, Jeremiah is tempting this group to violate long-held family traditions. Before them is a prophet of God who has invited them to enter the temple and has made an offer of wine (presumably, before observers). But Jeremiah anticipates their response. Jeremiah (more importantly, God) already knows what the Rekabites will do.

The family comes at Jeremiah's invitation, but they flatly decline to drink any wine set before them. They explain their traditions, perhaps thinking this might be a simple misunderstanding: "Our forefather Jehonadab, son of Rekab gave us this command: 'Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine'" (v. 6). The family members have probably kept this vow for more than two centuries, and they are not about to violate it now.

We may wonder why the Rekabites have this tradition in the first place. Unfortunately, the rest of Scripture is mostly silent about them; Jeremiah 35 is the only chapter that describes their history. More than likely, the reason their ancestor had forbidden the drinking of wine or the cultivation of crops was to free his descendants from being settled in one territory. The Rekabites are probably a clan of permanent nomads, expected to live like nomads, and a love for wine would make that lifestyle impossible.

Jehonadab—the ancestor who came up with these traditions—promised his family that, if they keep these traditions, they will "live a long time in the land where [they] are nomads" (v. 7). This promise closely resembles the wording of Israel's covenant: "Observe therefore all the commands I [God] am giving you . . . so that you may live long in the land" (Deut. 11:8–9). And here is the crux of Jeremiah's demonstration. Before the observers, Jeremiah highlights a family who upholds their traditions to ensure a righteous outcome.

1 What does Jeremiah the prophet ask the Rekabites to do? Why?

2 How do the Rekabites respond? Why?

3 What makes the Rekabites want to keep their traditions?

⁸ Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; ⁹ Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: ¹⁰ But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. ¹¹ But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

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The only reason the Rekabites have come to Jerusalem is to find safety from invading armies (v. 11). As a result of their nomadic lifestyle, they were able to flee to the city in a time of crisis. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had begun invading the lands of Judah and the eastern Mediterranean. Because of these wars to the north, the Rekabites arrived as refugees to Judah and found safety in the city of Jerusalem (v. 11). Even now, they are not in violation of their vows and traditions. Even now they are still living in tents.

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1 How have the Rekabites demonstrated obedience to their ancestors after relocating to Jerusalem?

2 Why does God want to highlight an example of extravagant faithfulness?

3 How does God reward the Rekabites?

The Art of Finishing Well

“We have to finish this game!”

When those words came from my son’s mouth, I knew he was right. I had always been a lover of boardgames, but this was the moment I knew he loved them too. We were seated on the carpet of our living room, cards and pieces scattered in every direction. The game had gone on so long that I was willing to pack it away. But one look at his face made me certain I didn’t want to disappoint him.

“You’re right. We finish things, don’t we?”

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In the days of Jeremiah, God was seeking faithfulness, or what we might call the skill of *finishing well*. But the people of Judah were rebellious and uncommitted. Soon their lack of fortitude would reach its natural conclusion: God would send them into exile.

We can be grateful that God notices and rewards individual faithfulness. More than that, God is devoted to His plans and promises. If faithfulness is the art of finishing well, God is the master. He always brings His plans to fruition. In the person of Jesus, God has been faithful beyond the wildest imagination of human beings. We should be faithful because God is faithful.

1 What is an example of something you always want to finish?

2 How can our faithfulness in other areas of life be an example of faithfulness before God?

3 What does it look like to obey God and to finish well?

Reminding the World of God's Faithfulness

As we have studied the traditions of one ancient family, perhaps you have noticed ways that your own family traditions could point others to God. Since we serve a God who is faithful, we can look for ways to exemplify faithfulness ourselves.

With a partner, discuss a family tradition that this lesson has encouraged you to start or continue. How do you hope that your family traditions can point others to God?

Key Text

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Sat. Jeremiah 31:27–34—A New Relationship with God.

Next Week: Jeremiah 31:29–34; John 1:17

Next week we will be looking at God's promise to make His people faithful and to give a new covenant. What is an item in your life that you've updated recently?



Ezekiel says, “Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail. . . . Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing” (Ezek. 47:12).

To this day around the world, many kinds of trees shed leaves as they prepare for seasonal change. As days shorten, leaves lose their green color, revealing vibrant yellow, orange, and red. But what if those falling leaves didn’t decay and turn into compost? What if God were to redesign even the decaying leaves and repurpose them for healing?

That is part of Ezekiel’s vision of hope. Anyone who feels awestruck by the splendor of leaves passing away, God invites to rest in the hope that these glories of creation shall be reshaped and remade, until all is well.

God gives light to the darkness, new life to the lifeless.



Embracing God's Longing and Our Spiritual Thirst in Prayer

Author Strahan Coleman offers readers guidance on how to have a transformative relationship with God. In *Beholding*, Coleman redefines prayer as a way of being with God, emphasizing its role in deepening our connection and enriching our spiritual lives. *Thirsting* explores our deep yearning for God, guiding us to embrace this spiritual thirst and experience a profound, intimate communion with God.

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