

The book of Ezra records the glorious and merciful provision of God as He enables the nation of Israel again to consciously enter into His promises. A Jew in exile could easily conclude that God had abandoned His nation, and the lavish promises of God for the nation could easily morph into thoughts of “the way things could have been” rather than “the way things will be.” God has used the exilic period to break Israel of her propensity to turn to idols, and now God begins the process of re-making the nation and assuring them that His promises have always been true. Ezra has a special place within the canon as well, along with Nehemiah, because it is in these books that we see the seeds planted for what we will find in the pages of the Gospels. Indeed, Ezra begins to set the context for the story of Jesus. For our church family, we studied these lessons over a four month period, some lessons taking more than a week, also allowing some time for review. We trust you might enjoy this great Old Testament book as much as we did!

The curriculum series *The Book of Ezra—Israel: The Potter’s Vessel Remade* is based in part on Pastor Mark Minnick’s preaching at Mount Calvary Baptist Church, Greenville, SC. In an effort to rehearse the preaching that we hear and continue having the Lord work it more deeply into our souls, from time to time we “resurrect” series or portions of series that Pastor Minnick has preached and format them for use in our adult Sunday school ministries.

Our Sunday school cycle does not fit the typical quarter system. We tend to give at least four months to a topic. Though the written lessons are often too long to be covered entirely in a single class hour, we provide our teachers with this material to enhance their preparation. Our teachers are welcome to condense the lessons and customize them to their own style of teaching.

Our goal in providing the materials to our teachers is three-fold:

- To support and reinforce the pulpit ministry
- To provide helpful teaching material to our teachers in an accessible format.
- To ease the load of lesson preparation for our teachers

We are delighted that you have chosen to use this material, and we trust the Lord will use it in your own life and in the life of your church in the same way He has used it in our church family.