



# SHARING SCRIPTURE

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### Leaders in Israel

**For use:** Dec. 22 - 28

**Texts:** 1 Kings 12:1-16; Acts 15:7-11; John 11:46-53; Nehemiah 4:7-23; Ezra 8:21-23, 31, 32

Historic leadership upheaval just rocked Finland.

The nation traditionally elects a full slate of older men, but their new Prime Minister is 34-year old Sanna Marin. In fact, women now lead all five of Finland's governing coalition parties, and all but one are under the age of 35. Some view this demolition of the traditional age and gender barriers as good for Finland's international reputation. Others, however, are not so complimentary.

Since Marin worked as a cashier after her graduation, Estonia's far-right interior minister Mart Helme derided her as a "sales girl."

Marin shot back, "I'm extremely proud of Finland. Here, a poor family's child can educate themselves and achieve their goals in life. A cashier can become even a Prime Minister."

Another right-wing Finnish politician tweeted his congratulations with an emoji of a bucket of popcorn—a sarcastic way of saying that the world is watching to see if this new leadership coalition is up to the task of tackling Finland's issues. [1]

The leadership qualities explored in this week's lesson include courage in the face of daunting challenges, empowerment of other leaders, laser-focused purpose, a burning passion, Christ-like humility, and perseverance. We wrap up the quarter by looking at the leadership qualities exemplified by Ezra and Nehemiah as they effectively led Israel through their rebuilding process. Ezra and Nehemiah both embodied a servant leadership model. They both experienced deeply personal relationships with God, and love for God and concern for their nation motivated them.

Ezra, as the spiritual leader, kept God's vision of a restored temple service before the people, while Nehemiah battled the neighboring pagan tribes that threatened to derail the project. In fact, Nehemiah left a plum position in the court of the Persian king to live in the spartan rubble of Jerusalem's ruins. He faced blistering opposition that would have demoralized a self-serving leader. His life is an illustration of the leadership qualities of Jesus who, motivated by love, left heaven's perfection to live among earth's dysfunctional family.

Their leadership qualities are timeless characteristics that are still valuable in both spiritual and secular leadership today.

~Chuck Burkeen

[1] <https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/22/europe/finnish-prime-minister-sanna-marin-profile-intl/index.html>

## For Reflection

**Connecting:** Ask those members of your group who have ever played organized sports to please share about their favorite coach. What qualities do you remember that raised this coach's profile above the rest?

**Sharing:** Of all of the leadership qualities that we've studied this quarter regarding Ezra and Nehemiah, which stands out to you as the most memorable?

1. Ezra's ability to organize worship among a people who had forgotten how to reverence God
2. Nehemiah's determination to lead by example, such as when he stood up to those who would kill him to stop the construction
3. Ezra and Nehemiah's ability to work together as a team, with each one bringing his own unique gifts and passions to their mission
4. Nehemiah's boldness in making his requests for his nation to the most powerful kingdom in the world
5. Ezra's faithfulness in not compromising his beliefs in the face of opposition
6. Other:

**Applying:** Imagine that God has called your class to lead your church through a massive spiritual project in your community. Go around your group and affirm each one for a leadership quality that you see in each person. Discuss how effective you see your group as a leadership team. Are there any qualities that you need to add to your team?

**Valuing:** Do you personally feel comfortable in a leadership role, should God call you to such a position? Reflect on the steps you would take to approach that call, and pray that God will effectively use you in whatever way is necessary to fulfill your church's mission in your community.

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Three decades ago, we created this resource for small groups and Sabbath school classes, and it continues to bless so many people worldwide. Thank you for your continued interest in these biblical themes and what they mean to your life and those people with whom you share it.

Paul Richardson  
Executive Director

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