

Ezra

FaithBuilders Study Plan | Summer 2019

For more information about our Ezra journaling Bibles, click here:

<https://kingdomupgrowth.com/faithbuilders/>

For each week, we have an assigned passage to read through. Use the reflection questions if you'd like to help you prepare for class.

General Journaling Questions

Use these if you'd like to help you journal about the text:

1. What is the bigger, unseen story going on in this passage? What is God up to?
2. What is a time in your life where you or someone close to you felt the way that the people are feeling in this text? Who was there? What was happening?
3. What is a situation in my life which this text might speak to?
4. What step in my life might this passage inspire me to take?
5. What is the bigger, unseen story that may be going on in my life right now? What is God up to?

Class Preparation Guide

To prepare for: June 16

Read 2 Chronicles 36:9-23

Reflection Questions for the Reading:

When you see people around you going in a bad direction, what helps you resist?

The Israelites had a hard time imagining faith in the absence of the Temple and all its fancy furnishings. Do you think there are any aspects of church in which people are putting their faith other than God?

Jeremiah had predicted that Jerusalem would have to sit desolate for 70 years. This would have been hard, but are there ways this could have also been redemptive?

God put rebuilding on King Cyrus' mind. How do you think God puts things on our mind that are important? How do we get better at listening?

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To prepare for: June 23

Read Ezra 1

Reflection Questions for the Reading:

King Cyrus issued his decree in writing. What are the benefits of us writing down our goals, objectives, and values?

How do we go about blending God's work and our work? What helps us to be able to say as we go "God be with us"?

What are some of the components that helped those returning to Jerusalem get off to a good start? What similar elements might we consider when we ourselves seek revitalization?

Can you remember ever going to a place you'd heard much about but had never seen before? What surprised you? What do you think this trip would be like for those going to Jerusalem?

To prepare for: June 30

Read Ezra 2

Reflection Questions for the Reading:

Just for fun: If you found out you were expecting another child and had to name them from Ezra 2, what name would you give them? How about if you got to give a name to your worst enemy's child from this list, what would it be?

What records do you keep track of in your life? What do they mean to you later?

Look at some of the various roles mentioned such as in v. 36, 40, 42, 43, and 55. What are some of the important roles in our community? Are there any roles for which we need more people?

Verse 59 describes families who were unable to trace their ancestry. Do you have a strong sense of your own ancestry? What does it mean to you? How does our own heritage of faith play into your life and who you hope to be?

Around verse 68, it describes families making gifts for the continued work. Is it easy for you to want to give to causes greater than yourself? What can we do now that will bless future generations?

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To prepare for: July 7

Read Ezra 3

Reflection Questions for the Reading:

There is an interesting tension in this chapter. People are excited to begin worshipping, but also are afraid of the neighboring peoples. What tensions do we live in as we worship?

Are there aspects of the Christian community life you read about in Scripture that you wish we did a better job of embodying? What do you imagine?

The laying of the foundation led to a great shout of joy among the people. What serves as a foundation for us? What are things we should work hard to establish, and feel happy about?

To prepare for: July 14

Read Ezra 4

Reflection Questions for the Reading:

Nearly every good thing you ever do will encounter opposition. What forms has your opposition taken?

Have you ever had an enemy act one way to your face and known there were bad intentions? How do we be, to use Jesus' phrase, "shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves"?

There is some nasty letter-writing recorded around v. 12. Sometimes God allows us to experience harsh difficulties. What might be the greater purpose of these difficulties for us?

For a time, the building of the temple was forcibly stopped. This must have been hugely frustrating and demoralizing. What would be an important principle of which you would remind the Israelites who were made to put their project on hold?

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To prepare for: July 21

Read Ezra 5

Reflection Questions for the Reading:

What is a time when something you had given up on ended up happening despite your giving up?

Prophets are mentioned in this chapter. When you think of a prophetic word, what would it involve? How might these have encouraged the people to be strong?

The last couple of chapters there have been a lot of governmental people involved in the story. How do you think God works through the government? Or does he? How do we interpret political happenings through a lens of faith and the mission of God?

To prepare for: July 28

Read Ezra 6

Reflection Questions for the Reading:

The people got some great news from King Darius in this chapter about funding and the removal of red-tape and opposition. How does the interplay of good times and bad times help us grow our faith?

There was a huge dedication ceremony for the completion of the temple. What are some elements of this gathering that you find significant and inspiring?

What are some of the religious traditions they were sure to include in the process, according to Moses' writings? How do we join our religious traditions into the work that we do?

To prepare for: August 4

Read Ezra 7

Reflection Questions for the Reading:

At this time, Ezra himself arrives from Persia to help. What made Ezra unique? What were his skill sets?

Look at some of the goals that Ezra had determined in his heart. How might similar goals help us?

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Ezra was clearly in a position of great influence. What do you think led to this, even though he was part of a people who had been living in exile?

To prepare for: August 11

Read Ezra 8

Reflection Questions for the Reading:

Sometimes it helps us to remember there are people other than our normal group who are also active in loving and serving God. What an exciting time it must have been for Ezra to show up with so many more people. What times of fellowship in your life have encouraged you? Do you have regular things you do to connect with Christians that you aren't able to see often?

Ezra proclaimed a fast in v. 21. What was so important to him that he would have everyone fast and pray? What work for God have you committed yourself to so completely that you've been moved to fast and take time especially to pray?

In v. 31, we see what has been a recurring theme in this book: ambush! How do you think Satan works at ambushing us when we try to do things for God?

At the end of the journey, all goods were accounted for, and they took time to rest for three days. When is a time of rest appropriate for us? How do you make sure to give yourself time to recover?

To prepare for: August 18

Read Ezra 9

Reflection Questions for the Reading:

There is sometimes a challenge for us in trying to be mission-minded, but also trying to keep ourselves "unspotted" by the world. How do we balance being missionaries while maintaining personal holiness?

What was it about the foreign peoples and intermarriage with them that Ezra found so offensive? What alliances should the church avoid?

Ezra prays a very sincere and searching prayer in this text. Pick out two or three parts you think are especially meaningful and reflect on them.

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To prepare for: August 25

Read Ezra 10

Reflection Questions for the Reading:

This is a hard text. It is hard to think about a person sending away both wives and children as a way of purifying the people. Why do you think this was so important to the community? If you were to criticize Ezra what might he say in response?

American Individualism is an assumption for us, but would be totally foreign to ancient Israel whose primary place of belonging was to the greater community. How might a deeper sense of community challenge us personally?

Church discipline seldom occurs (nor should it be something we are anxious to deal out) yet it *is* something that Paul believes is occasionally necessary, such as in I Corinthians 5. When would communal discipline be appropriate? What should be its goal and desired outcome?

It can be a difficult matter to sort out the far-reaching implications of our choices. What is the best way to address a shortcoming in your life?

To prepare for: September 1

Read: Nehemiah 1

Reflection Questions for the Reading:

Nehemiah comes to help the Israelites to finish the walls protecting Jerusalem. First, he hears the news of what is happening elsewhere and feels compelled to help. What is something that has weight on your heart before to the point you felt a compulsion to get involved?

Look through Nehemiah's prayer. What are some covenantal things that Nehemiah remembers?

What are some things Nehemiah prays about that are similar to things we ought to pray about more often?

What would make it challenging for Nehemiah to do what he desired in his heart to do? How do we gather courage to take on challenges?