

## **The Story: Chapter 19**

### **The Return Home**

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August 20, 2023

#### **DURING THE STORY SERIES, REMIX CLASS SESSIONS WILL BE DIVIDED INTO TWO SEGMENTS:**

**1) THE STORY STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS CHOSEN BY THE LEADER.**

**2) THE FOLLOWING REMIX QUESTIONS:**

#### **Opening Discussion**

· What thoughts, feelings, or impressions do you have about the sermon this week?

#### **Thought #1: Finding Your Way Back**

Read Ezra 3:11-13

"With praise and thanksgiving, they sang to the Lord: "He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away."

In Ezra chapter 1 Cyrus the King of Persia felt led by the God of Israel to send the people home. That they were to rebuild the temple. He even encouraged other Israelites to give them money, donations, animals, and anything else that would assist them in rebuilding the temple. He even returned the gold and other artifacts that were originally in the temple.

As the rebuilding was taking place and the altar was built, the Israelites were overcome with emotion. This moment symbolized a renewed relationship with God. That they had returned to where they belonged. That there would be restoration for them. Understandably they felt joy. However, they also felt sorrow.

Have you found yourself in this place before? Where you had been distant from God but had found your way back. What emotions did you experience during this time? Just as the Israelites spent time clearing things out of the temple, were there things in your life that needed to be cleared

out in order to rebuild? They built an altar in the middle of the temple and dedicated it to God. Similarly, how have you made room in your heart for Him? What have you dedicated to Him in order to rebuild?

#### **Thought #2: When the Journey Gets Hard**

Read Ezra 4:23-24

"As soon as the copy of the letter of King Artaxerxes was read to Rehum and Shimshai the secretary and their associates, they went immediately to the Jews in Jerusalem and compelled them by force to stop. Thus, the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia."

In the midst of rebuilding, the Israelites came up hard against a major obstacle. They were forcefully stopped from doing what God had called them to. In our own spiritual lives, we also sometimes face opposition. Obstacles that make it difficult to continue the ongoing work of building our relationship with God.

What obstacles, either past or present, have you encountered as you build your relationship with the Lord? When this happened, what feelings did you experience? How did you deal with these feelings?

In the story, the Israelites quickly become distracted in the face of their discouragement. They move on to other projects; focus on other things.

In your experience, how did discouragement lead to distraction? In the face of opposition, what are you most distracted by? How does the enemy use these distractions to keep you from making progress in building your relationship with God?

#### **Thought #3: A Reminder of What's Important**

Read Haggai 1:3-9

"Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much but harvested little. You eat but never have enough. You drink but never have your fill. You put on clothes but are not warm. You

