



Chosen & Struggling PT. V | Ezra | Mark Allen | 02.01.26

Rebuilding What's Broken

Opening Prayer

Opening Prayer: Begin by thanking God for His Word and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion.

Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: Have you ever had to rebuild or restore something physical (a car, house, furniture, etc.)? What made it challenging? What made it successful?

Key Scripture References

Ezra 1:1, 5 - "The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus...and everyone whose spirit God had stirred."

Sermon Summary

The book of Ezra teaches us about restoration - specifically how to rebuild what has been broken in our lives, relationships, and marriages. Just as Ezra and Zerubbabel returned from Babylon to rebuild the temple, we can learn God's process for restoring broken areas of our lives through five essential steps.

Discussion Questions:

Part 1: Understanding the Foundation (15 minutes)

1. **Context Question:** Why is it significant that both Zerubbabel (descendant of King David) and Ezra (descendant of Aaron the priest) were involved in the restoration? How does this point to Jesus as both King and Priest?
2. **Personal Reflection:** What areas of your life currently feel "broken" and in need of restoration? (This could be relationships, habits, spiritual disciplines, etc.)

Part 2: The Five Steps of Restoration (30 minutes)

Step 1: Gain God's Initiative

"The Lord stirred up the spirit..."

3. What does it mean for God to "stir up" your spirit? Have you experienced this in your life?
4. Why is it impossible to have true restoration without God initiating the work? What happens when we try to fix things in our own strength?

Step 2: Build an Altar

"They built the altar of the God of Israel..."

5. What does "building an altar" look like in practical terms today? How can you create sacred space in your home or life for seeking God?
6. For married couples: How might building a spiritual altar together strengthen your marriage?

Step 3: Lay a Foundation

"They sang, praising and giving thanks to the Lord...when the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid."

7. Jesus talked about building on rock versus sand. What does a solid spiritual foundation look like in your daily life?
8. What "foundational practices" do you need to establish or re-establish in your life?

Step 4: Expect Opposition

"The enemies...discouraged the people...and frightened them from building."

9. Why does opposition always come when we're doing things God's way? Share a time when you experienced discouragement while trying to do the right thing.

10. Pastor Mark mentioned being careful about whose voices we listen to. How do you discern which voices to trust when facing opposition?
11. The people stopped building for 16 years because of opposition. What causes us to give up on restoration efforts?

Step 5: Wash Out the Old

"They have not separated themselves from the peoples of the land..."

12. What does it mean to "feed the new nature" versus "feed the old nature"? Give practical examples.
13. Ezra set his heart to three things: study God's Word, practice it, and teach it. Which of these three is easiest for you? Which is most challenging?

Part 3: Personal Application (20 minutes)

14. **Self-Examination:** Using Ezra's example (Ezra 7:10), evaluate yourself:
 - How consistently am I studying God's Word?
 - Am I practicing what I read?
 - Am I sharing/teaching what I'm learning with others?
15. **Action Steps:** Of the five steps to restoration, which one do you most need to focus on right now? What specific action will you take this week?
16. **Accountability:** Is there something in your "closet" that needs to be cleaned out? How can this group support you in that process?

Key Takeaways

- **Restoration requires God's initiative** - We cannot fix what's broken in our own strength
 - **Build an altar** - Create sacred space for seeking God alone or with your spouse
 - **Lay a solid foundation** - Build your life on Christ, not on worldly principles
 - **Opposition is normal** - Expect discouragement but don't let it stop you
 - **Clean out the old** - What you feed will grow; feed your new nature in Christ
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to implement this week:

Option 1 - Build an Altar: Designate a specific time and place in your home for daily prayer. If married, commit to praying together at least 3 times this week.

Option 2 - Lay a Foundation: Commit to reading God's Word for 15 minutes each day. Use a reading plan or start in the book of Ezra.

Option 3 - Clean Out the Old: Identify one habit, relationship influence, or activity that feeds your "old nature" and take concrete steps to remove or limit it.

Option 4 - Study, Practice, Teach: Pick one verse from Ezra that spoke to you. Study it, practice applying it, and share what you learned with someone this week.

Prayer Focus (10 Minutes)

Group Prayer Time:

- Pray for areas of restoration needed in group members' lives
- Ask God to "stir up" hearts toward the work He wants to do
- Pray for strength to face opposition and not give up
- Ask for wisdom to build on the right foundation
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Prayer Pairs: Break into pairs and pray specifically for each other's restoration needs. Remember: prayer puts Jesus back in the center.

Closing Thought

"Unless the Lord builds the house, the laborers labor in vain." - Psalm 127:1

Restoration is God's work in us, not our work for God. Surrender your broken areas to Him and watch Him rebuild what only He can restore.

For Next Week

- Read the book of Nehemiah (it's short - only 13 chapters!)
- Journal about what God is stirring in your heart regarding restoration
- Be prepared to share what happened when you implemented this week's challenge