



Parkway Fellowship

THE JOURNEY BACK • WE GOT THIS, I THINK... • EZRA 7:8-10 • 5/31/2020

MAIN POINT

As we return to life after COVID, we must live out the truths we say we believe, share our human moments, and run after Jesus in whatever circumstances we face.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Have you ever been a part of a group project where others did not participate well?

How did that harm your project and/or your attitude?

What are some things God is certainly asking our church to do on our journey back to life after COVID? Is that largely the responsibility of the church staff, or do you play a role in that? Explain.

Group projects can be frustrating. Sometimes, others will not pull their weight, and so the burden of moving forward falls on the shoulders of only a few. Often, it proves impossible to finish because others will not take the project seriously. The return of the exiles to Israel started with great joy. The Lord moved the heart of the king to resettle the Jews into the promised land. However, the task nearly failed. Even though the people knew that they had been taken captive because they disobeyed God, as soon as they returned from exile, they began to do the same things that got them into trouble in the first place! If it weren't for Ezra and a few others, Israel could have wound up worse off than they began.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EZRA 7:8-10.

In this week's message, we learned that Ezra was a part of the second wave of exiles that returned back to Jerusalem. There were actually 3 kings (King Cyrus, Darius, and Xerxes) that ruled over Persia before the 4th King (Artaxerxes) sent this second group on their journey back to Jerusalem.

Considering that Ezra wasn't among the first group back to Jerusalem, do you think he might have felt intimidated or like it wasn't his place to step in and lead?

Why are newer members of the church equally called to do the work of the church?

How do people tend to react to leadership that promotes changes they themselves are not willing to make?

What are some of the steps Ezra took that would help him be a good leader to the people of Israel?

The psalmist wrote that "The instruction of the LORD is perfect, renewing one's life; the testimony of the LORD is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise" (Ps. 19:17). King Artaxerxes recognized that Ezra was a wise man. Wisdom was the fruit of Ezra's dedication to the study and obedience of God's Word.

Before Ezra could become a good leader for the people of Israel, he had to first dedicate himself to be a student of God's Word. For Ezra, this did not mean a simple memorization of God's Word, but also a devotion to obey it for himself. Before Ezra could call for repentance in the lives of others, he had to be repentant himself. Ezra's discipline qualified him to be the kind of humble leader Israel would need to finish what they had begun on their return from exile.

In this week's message, we learned from Ezra's story that he "just lived it." Why is that a struggle for so many well-meaning believers?

We also learned that Ezra shared his concerns about the treacherous journey back to Jerusalem with the other Israelites. Then they all willingly fasted and sought God's provision and protection over their journey, and God came through! Why do you think so many believers, even those involved in community, are hesitant to voice their fears and concerns to others? Why is it important that we do?

The third point of application from this week's message is that we must run after Jesus in our circumstances. Ezra just lived it and shared his struggles because his hope was in a God that keeps his promises. Where are some other places we tend to place our hope in trying times?

Read James 1:12. How does this verse encourage you in your present circumstance?

How are you challenged by Ezra's example in your own walk with the Lord?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is God prompting you to "Just Do?"

What are you currently fearing in this COVID season?

What is something new you need to do to run after Jesus?

What is something you have done in the past that helped you run after Jesus?

PRAYER

Thank God for giving you a community of believers to help you walk by faith. Ask the Lord to help you dedicate yourselves to learning and obeying the Word of the Lord. Pray that God will give you the grace, strength, and humility to repent of the sin in your lives, just live in His grace and power, share your human moments, and run hard after Jesus.

COMMENTARY

| EZRA 7:8-10

Ezra's journey toward Jerusalem probably began on April 8, 458 b.c., but 8:15-31 tells of an immediate delay when it was discovered that no Levites were present. Taking the shortest route, this would be a journey of about 500 miles. However, such a route across the desert would be unlikely in summer, particularly during a time of political upheaval that made travel even more dangerous. The more common route covered about 900 miles. After a fourteen-week pilgrimage, they probably arrived in Jerusalem on August 4, 458 b.c. Ezra's greatness is seen in his resolve to study... obey, and teach God's law to God's people.