

# Ezra

## Lessons in New Beginnings

### I. Guard Your Heart & Mind

#### A. You Are Important

1 Peter 2:9-11 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

#### B. How Should I Respond?

Hebrews 12:9 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup> Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!

### III. Ezra, a story of New Beginnings (post discipline)

#### A. Fear Forward

Biblical Principle:

---your unguarded words reflect your heart condition & your actions reflect what you believe

Ezra 3:3-4 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> **Despite their fear of the peoples around them**, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening sacrifices. <sup>4</sup> Then in accordance with what is written, they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles with the required number of burnt offerings prescribed for each day.

- ❖ in the face of fear, they moved forward
- ❖ "in accordance with what is written" --- they were learning to cooperate with God

#### B. Determined to Honor God

Ezra 3:7 (NIV)

<sup>7</sup> Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and gave food and drink and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre, so that they would bring cedar logs by sea from Lebanon to Joppa, as authorized by Cyrus king of Persia.

### C. Expressions of Appreciation

Ezra 3:10-11 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of Israel. <sup>11</sup> With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love to 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.

### D. Opposition ---not everyone believe God is doing this!

Ezra 4:4-5 (NIV)

<sup>4</sup> Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. <sup>5</sup> They hired counselors to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.

- ❖ adversaries sought to instill ---fear & discouragement

### D. Ezra's contribution ---

Ezra 7:10 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> For Ezra had devoted himself to **the study and observance** of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

- ❖ Ezra DEVOTED to study & obedience
- ❖ Ezra was willing to lead

### E. Warning:

Ezra 9:1-4 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, "The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites. . . . <sup>3</sup> When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled. <sup>4</sup> Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of this unfaithfulness of the exiles. And I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice.

- ❖ disobedience is harmful
- ❖ we detour very easily from God's path
- ❖ Ezra's response demonstrates his revelation that casual obedience is inadequate

LET'S NOT EMERGE FROM THIS SEASON AND FORGET OUR DISCIPLINE ---

LET'S NOT RUSH BACK TO OUR PREVIOUS PATTERNS AND HABITS ---

LET'S NOT EMBRACE THE BLESSINGS AND DISRESPECT THE ONE WHO BLESSES