



August 23, 2020

Ezra 8—Mark Mitchell

Read Ezra 8:1 and Ezra 8:15-36

1. Martin Luther King said, *“Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.”* Share with your group about a time or circumstance that called for you to exercise Martin Luther King kind of faith. Did you take that step? If you did, how did that step of faith change you?
2. God called the Israelites under Ezra’s leadership to travel 900 miles from Babylon to Jerusalem. What perils might they come across on that journey? Discuss a time when exercising faith required you to do something uncomfortable? How did that uncomfortable experience change you?
3. Sometimes exercising our faith leads us to different conclusions based on personal conscience. (Romans 14: 1-4) How do we as Christians allow for different convictions on secondary issues and still preserve our unity? Mark used the example of our November elections.

4. Assess your own faith journey. Is there anything you are doing that if God doesn't show up you are in trouble? Why can you really trust he'll be there for you?
5. Why would you consider growing in the spiritual discipline of fasting? What is a good first step for you to practice your faith through fasting?
6. What did the Israelites offer up to God when they returned to Jerusalem? Why was that celebration so special to them?
7. Mark defined faith as "an active response to God's initiative." Can you sense that God has initiated something in you, and it's time for an active response? Share with the group and ask for prayer.

One active response to God's initiative is to take the first step of faith and respond to God's initiative to send us His Son. Ask your group how you might take that first step and receive the gift of God's Son Jesus into your heart.