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Bethel Gospel Tabernacle



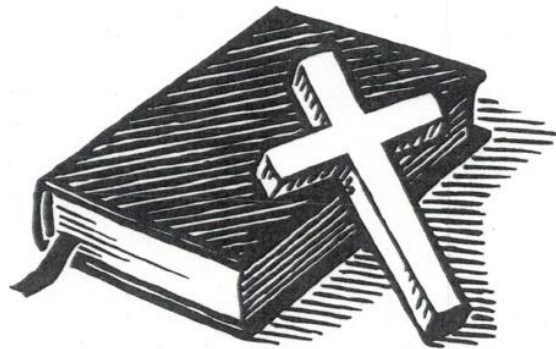
C.A.R.E. SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

C.A.R.E. Study Material

BOOK OF EZRA

*And daily in the temple, and in every house,
they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*

(Acts 5:42 (KJV))



For more information on the C.A.R.E. Ministry
Please email CARE@bgtintl.com or call the Church office
Christ-Like Approach in Reaching Everyone

Copies of this Study Material can be found
on the Bethel Website: <http://www.bgtfi.us/care>

The material herein is copied from the Illumina Bible Software,
originally published by Tyndale Publishers
in conjunction Visual Book Production in 2003.

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Notes:

1. EZRA 1:1-11

God put it in the hearts of Cyrus, the priests, the Levites, and the Hebrew people to rebuild the Temple. The Israelites gathered supplies from their neighbors and gifts for the Temple construction project. They prepared themselves for a long journey and hard work. They faced these challenges with great joy because God had placed the mission to rebuild the Temple on their hearts.

OPEN

1. When was the last time you felt there was something you “just had to do”?

EXPLORE

2. Why did Cyrus make his proclamation? (1:1) 3. What motivated Cyrus to make his announcement? (1:1)

4. What specific instructions did Cyrus give to the people? (1:3-4)

5. What motivated the people of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi to go to Jerusalem? (1:5)

GET IT

6. What kind of relationship do you think Cyrus had with Israel and their God?

7. Why were freewill offerings necessary to rebuild the Temple?

8. What can you learn from this story about God’s sovereignty over history?

9. When have you ever felt God “move your heart”?

APPLY

10. What steps can you take to allow God to work in you?

2. EZRA 2:1-70

The Hebrews were heading back to their hometowns after seventy years of exile in Babylon. They began to settle down, and as they did they gathered offerings for the Temple work. Each family gave as much as they could as an act of worship: gold, silver, and clothing for the priests.

OPEN

1. What motivates you to give to your church?

EXPLORE

2. Why were the Israelites in exile? (2:1)
3. What did the Israelites do when they were released from captivity? (2:1)
4. What did the Jews do when they reached Jerusalem? (2:68-69)
5. How was the size of each family's offering determined? (2:69)

GET IT

6. What does this passage teach about the attitude we should have toward any place of worship?
7. How can you support your own church and its leaders?
8. How should we determine the size of our financial gifts to God's work?
9. What gifts can we give to God besides money?

APPLY

10. What steps could you take in the next few weeks to make your spending, saving, and other uses of money an act of worship to God?

3. EZRA 3:1-7

It took courage for the Hebrews to rebuild the altar. The people living around them would take notice of it. But the returning Israelites wanted to obey God no matter what their neighbors thought. They wanted to begin anew, worshiping the God who had delivered them from their long exile. It was in this ancient, yet renewed, place that they offered their first sacrifices of praise. The foundation for the Temple had not even been laid, yet the foundation of worship and obedience was well in place.

OPEN

1. What is your first memory of church?

EXPLORE

2. Why did the Israelites build the altar? (3:2)

3. What were the Israelites obeying by building the altar? (3:2)

4. Why were the Israelites afraid? (3:3)

5. What did the Israelites do when they had completed their building project? (3:3)

GET IT

6. How does your fear of what other people think affect your obedience to God?

7. What does God want us to do about our fears and anxieties?

8. What does this passage tell you about the sacrifice that Jesus made by giving his life for our sins?

9. What and how does God want us to give to him?

APPLY

10. What kind of “sacrifice” can you give to God as a freewill offering of praise?

4. EZRA 3:8-13

When the foundation of the Temple was laid, the people joined together and offered their praise to God as their forefather David had done centuries ago. They dressed in their finest, skillfully played their musical instruments, sang with great joy, and then shouted, “Praise the LORD!” God was pleased with this grand celebration in his honor.

OPEN

1. How do you feel when a friend or coworker compliments you?

EXPLORE

2. Who was appointed to supervise the building project? (3:8-9)

3. What happened when the foundation of the Temple was laid? (3:10)

4. What did the priests and the Levites use to praise God? (3:10)

5. What motivated the praise from the Israelites? (3:10-11)

GET IT

6. Why is it significant that so many people were involved in rebuilding the Temple?

7. How would you describe in modern terms the celebration in this passage?

8. How do you think Christians today differ in their praise to God as compared to the Israelites?

9. Besides words, what can we use to praise God?

APPLY

10. What specific offering of praise could you give to God today?

5. EZRA 4:1-5

The people of God were ready to work. The Temple restoration had begun. But the opposition had organized themselves as well. Israel's enemies were against the Temple restoration project. The Israelites had to recognize their opponents and protect themselves and their building efforts from clever distractions.

OPEN

1. What comes to your mind as an example of an offer that seemed “too good to be true”?

EXPLORE

2. For whom did Israel build the Temple? (4:1)

3. Why did Israel's enemies say they wanted to help build the Temple? (4:2)

4. Why did Israel not want help in rebuilding the Temple? (4:3)

5. How did the enemies of Israel attempt to discourage the rebuilding of the Temple? (4:4-5)

GET IT

6. Why did Israel refuse their neighbors' help?

7. What distracts you from seeking and serving God alone?

8. In what ways can faith be both personal and part of a group?

9. How does God want us to deal with long-term opposition from unbelievers?

APPLY

10. What concrete action could you take over the next few weeks to protect yourself from discouragement or fear?

6. EZRA 4:6-24

The enemies of the Temple restoration project tried to stop its progress with political blockades. In a shrewd letter, they appealed to King Artaxerxes's sense of power. They reminded the king of Israel's long history of disobedience to authorities. With this letter, Israel's enemies succeeded in stopping the reconstruction project for two long years.

OPEN

1. In what ways does Christianity go against the flow of society today?

EXPLORE

2. Why did Israel's enemies write a letter to Artaxerxes? (4:8-16)

3. What motivated Rehum and Shimshai to send their letter to the king? (4:14)

4. What did Rehum and Shimshai's letter say would result from Jerusalem's restoration? (4:16)

5. Why did Artaxerxes order the Israelites to stop rebuilding the Temple? (4:18-22)

GET IT

6. Why did Israel's enemies not want them to build a Temple to God?

7. How should believers respond to opposition?

8. What can you do when it seems as if you have lost a spiritual battle?

9. Why do you think God allows believers to experience failure?

APPLY

10. What specific steps can you take this week to protect yourself from Satan's attacks?

7. EZRA 5:1-17

The Israelites listened to their prophets and believed that God was watching over them. Because of this, they began the reconstruction of the Temple, even though they had experienced opposition in the past. Their perseverance in the task of rebuilding revealed their ardent trust in God.

OPEN

1. Under what circumstances do you find it difficult to persevere in doing what is right?

EXPLORE

2. How were Zerubbabel and Jeshua able to start rebuilding the Temple again? (5:2)

3. How did the governor describe Israel's God in his letter to the king? (5:8)

4. Why was a letter sent to the king? (5:8-17)

5. How did the Jews view themselves and their work? (5:11)

GET IT

6. How is God's hand evident in this incident?

7. When have you experienced God's protection in your life?

8. What have you learned from this study about God's control over the events of your life, both good and bad?

9. In what way did the Jews use their enemies' persecution as an opportunity for good?

APPLY

10. How can you demonstrate your thankfulness to God for his protection over you?

8. EZRA 6:1-22

God miraculously changed the mind of the king. He stopped opposing the Hebrews and helped them instead. With the support of the king, in time, the Temple restoration was complete. The Hebrews celebrated and gave God the glory. They ate together the Passover lamb remembering with joy how God had helped them throughout the entire laborious process. The Temple was finally complete!

OPEN

1. What do you think is valuable about studying history?

EXPLORE

2. What was found in the archives of the Babylonian treasury? (6:2)

3. What order did King Darius give to Tattenai and his associates? (6:6-7)

4. Under whose instruction did the work of the Jews prosper? (6:14)

5. How did Israel react to the completion of the Temple? (6:16-22)

GET IT

6. What does this passage tell us about God's involvement in the lives of unbelievers and Christians alike?

7. How was Israel's celebration in this situation different from the way we celebrate our faith today?

8. What reasons do Christians have to celebrate?

9. What is one thing God has done for you that causes you to praise him?

APPLY

10. What is one tangible way this week you can celebrate what God has done for you?

9. EZRA 7:1-28

King Artaxerxes realized that his life would be much easier if he honored God's people. For this reason he sent a letter to Ezra, a teacher of God's law. He gave Ezra great power to rule the Hebrews and observe God's laws. Ezra praised God for being appointed to this prestigious office and for the opportunity to serve God in that position.

OPEN

1. What motivates people to be generous?

EXPLORE

2. How is Ezra described? (7:1-6, 9-11, 25)

3. To what was Ezra devoted? (7:10)

4. What motivated the king to give so generously to Ezra? (7:23)

5. How did Ezra react to the king giving him so much power and authority? (7:27)

GET IT

6. How do you explain Ezra's great success?

7. What character traits of Ezra would you like to have?

8. Why do you think God grants power and financial security only to some people?

9. How can you change your spiritual habits to become more devoted to God?

APPLY

10. In what way can you give credit to God at this point for any successes you have enjoyed?

10. EZRA 8:1-36

The people of God had a long, difficult journey to make. Ezra did not want to ask the king for protective custody because he had already spoken to the king of God's great power and his ability to protect the Israelites. So before embarking on his journey, Ezra asked the people to fast and pray that God would watch over them on their long journey.

OPEN

1. What makes you feel safe?

EXPLORE

2. Whom did Ezra credit for the men's success? (8:18)

3. Why did Ezra proclaim a fast? (8:21)

4. Why was Ezra ashamed to ask the king for protection? (8:22)

5. How did God respond to the Israelites' prayers and fasting? (8:23)

GET IT

6. How did Ezra show his own faith in God's protective hand?

7. What does this story reveal about God's protection of his people?

8. Under what circumstances do you think it is good to fast and pray?

9. How does God want us to deal with fear and anxiety?

APPLY

10. What steps could you begin to take this week to depend less on your own strength and more on God's power to help you through the challenges you face?

11. EZRA 9:1-15

Against God's commands, the Israelites intermarried with the people around them. Ezra was brokenhearted and appalled at their sin. In fact, he was shocked by it. When he could finally face God with his newfound knowledge, he knelt before God and wept. He confessed all of their sins before God and begged for his forgiveness.

OPEN

1. How much influence do you think your friends have on you?

EXPLORE

2. Of what sin were the Israelites guilty? (9:1-2)

3. How did Ezra react to the news about Israel's sin? (9:3)

4. What did Ezra confess to God? (9:10)

5. Why did God not want the Israelites to intermarry with their neighbors? (9:11-12)

GET IT

6. Why do you think Ezra reacted so strongly to the news that the Israelites had intermarried with their neighbors?

7. In what ways do Christians need to avoid mixing themselves with the world?

8. What kind of relationships should Christians have with unbelievers?

9. What can we learn from Ezra about confession of sin?

APPLY

10. What specific steps can you take this week to sharpen your sensitivity to sin in your life?

12. EZRA 10:1-44

The Hebrews realized their grave error in marrying outside of their nation, directly against God's commands. They gathered around Ezra and made plans for restitution for their sins. Wives were sent away. Families were shattered. The whole nation was touched by the tragic consequences of Israel's sin.

OPEN

1. How do you usually feel when you realize you have made a big mistake?

EXPLORE

2. Who offered a ray of hope to the guilt-ridden Israelites? (10:2)

3. What advice did Shecaniah give to the Israelites? (10:3)

4. What specific instructions did Ezra give to the Israelites? (10:10-11)

5. How did the Israelites turn from their sin and reconcile themselves with God? (10:16-17)

GET IT

6. In what specific ways did Ezra demonstrate his wisdom as a leader?

7. Why do you think it was necessary for the Israelites to take such drastic measures to deal with their sin?

8. How has this passage changed your attitude toward sin and repentance?

9. When is it wrong to feel guilty?

APPLY

10. The next time God convicts you of sin, what can you plan to do in response?

