



FACILITATOR'S GUIDE—YOUTH

Year 3—The God Who Pursues Relationship: A Story of God's People

Module 5: The Message of the Prophets

Lesson 3: Rebuilding The Temple—Ezra 3; 6-7

ENCOUNTER 1—Community Discussion

Read Ezra 3 together out loud as a group. Encourage each person to journal through the passage using these questions. After allowing sufficient time for reflection, invite the group to share their thoughts.

How is this God's story?

How is this others' story?

How is this my story?

How is this the world's story?

ENCOUNTER 2—Community Discussion

(Read the biblical reflection included with this lesson. The questions are designed for your group to enter into a meaningful dialogue about the Word. The bulleted teaching points are taken from the reflection and correspond to the questions.)

GOD'S STORY

When have you seen the need for a group of people to rededicate themselves to the Lord?

- Restoration can happen on an individual basis, or among a community of God's people.
- Church denominations and congregations typically have those in leadership who try to maintain the theological purity of what they see in the Bible.

What are some of the tangible structures or symbols that help you focus on growing your relationship with God?

- Many church buildings are intentionally structured to emphasize a value, such as facing the chairs in the same direction to receive teaching from God or telling his story through stained glass windows throughout the space.

OUR STORY

What would you like people to see in your character?

- Your reputation is what other people think of you. Your character is who you really are.

When you look in the mirror, what feelings do you experience regarding the person you see looking back at you?

- We might at times in Christian circles hear someone say, "I'm a sinner saved by grace." God says otherwise—we are no longer sinners once we are in Christ, but "saints" with the capacity to choose sin (Romans 8:27; Ephesians 3:18).
- Feeling conviction comes from God, but feeling constant guilt comes from Satan. The Lord wants you to identify yourself with a restored identity and not a constantly broken one.

OTHERS' STORY

Who in your life sees you for who you used to be or who they want you to be?

- Once we believe who God says we are, we understand there's nothing that can separate us from the love of God.
- The evidence of a disciple is marked by the Holy Spirit living through you through love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

In what way has God called you to lead others to Christ?

- Leading another person to Christ can be like the temple rebuilding process: a foundation is laid, there is a weeping realization of what "should have been," the bricks are laid, outside criticism and support both occur, and finally there is a full-on dedication.

THE WORLD'S STORY

When do you feel something in the world is intentionally "against God"? When is that the after-effect of it merely being self-centered?

- Ignorance is context, but never an excuse. Just as we are subject to the laws of the land whether we know them all or not, so do we answer to God.

What about God do you think the world is receptive to? What do you sense it wants to reject?

- The Lord is actually the "Desire of All Nations" (Haggai 2:7). Knowing this, even though the world has suppressed it, can encourage us in being missionaries locally and globally.

PRAYER

(Lead your group in corporate prayer.)

"O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens. From the days of our forefathers until now, our guilt has been great. Because of our sins, we and our kings and our priests have been subjected to the sword and captivity, to pillage and humiliation at the hand of foreign kings, as it is today.

"But now, for a brief moment, the Lord our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage. Though we are slaves, our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem.

"But now, O our God, what can we say after this? For we have disregarded the commands you gave through your servants the prophets when you said: 'The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other. Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them at any time, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it to your children as an everlasting inheritance.'

"What has happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our great guilt, and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and have given us a remnant like this. Shall we again break your commands and intermarry with the peoples who commit such detestable practices? Would you not be angry enough with us to destroy us, leaving us no remnant or survivor? O Lord, God of Israel, you are righteous! We are left this day as a remnant. Here we are before you in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence."

(Ezra 9:6-15)

WEEKLY PRACTICE

(Read the weekly practice out loud, and challenge your group to practice *missio* beyond today.)

Growing something requires caring for it, often from start to finish. Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Work on growing each of those areas somehow this week. Here are some ideas:

- **Grow your mind:** Research something you hear about but know little of; read a book in a week that would normally take you longer; investigate something you studied or did in the past and are now “done with” so it can become a part of you again.
- **Grow your heart:** Focus on finding out the condition of the under-resourced in your city and letting what they go through affect you; follow up with someone who online or in person shared they’re not doing well; watch some videos regarding impoverished children to better relate to their plight; go out of your way to meet a need for someone or show kind affection in a way that you normally wouldn’t.
- **Grow your soul:** Listen to some worship music you’re unfamiliar with and sing along as you can; write out a full page of nothing but praise to God that is personal to your life; confess something you struggle with to another trusted Christian without excuses.
- **Grow your strength:** Set a routine-based goal for your body this week, such as “I will exercise for 20 minutes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday this week.” Be realistic in this so you actually do it, but also don’t shy away from challenging yourself.
- **Grow your relationships:** Write a note to your closest friends or family members that shares a time you felt your relationship really took off and how thankful you are for them; find a way to join someone you care about in a burden or task they’re worn down by.

BECOMING MY STORY

(Encourage the group to spend time this week in God’s Word, allowing it to penetrate their heart and life.)

Nehemiah 1

Romans 12

Spend time this week reading and journaling through the above scriptures. In the context of Ezra 3; 6-7, consider the following questions:

What does it mean to practically restore myself back to God?

What does it mean to practically restore others back to God?

Consider other passages you might know related to Ezra 3; 6-7 and read them this week, journaling as you go.