



PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE—YOUTH

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

ENCOUNTER—Community Discussion

After reading the passage, take time to journal through the questions below. Don't feel like you have to answer all these questions. Wrestle with the text, and be prepared to share with your community.

*How is this God's story?
How is this others' story?*

*How is this my story?
How is this the world's story?*

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

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 strength and relationships. 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

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.