

NEHEMIAH 1 - 2

SMALL GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

TO DISCUSS ON _____

PART 1: A SPECIAL ANOINTING FOR A SPECIAL TASK

TO BRIDGE CHAPTER 1 & 2 OF NEHEMIAH, LET'S TAKE A MOMENT TO VISIT THE HISTORY OF HOW GOD WORKED IN THE HEARTS OF PAGAN KINGS TO BRING ABOUT THE RETURN OF THE EXILED PEOPLE, AND START, HALT, RESTART, AND FINISH THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE.

Write out PROVERBS 21:1-2 below.

Do you think this applies to both good and evil Kings?

God uses both believers and unbelievers to accomplish His work each day. Can you think of a time that you have seen God move an unbelieving heart to accomplish something that brought Him glory?

Who does Isaiah prophesy that the LORD anoint in ISAIAH 45:1?

What does ISAIAH 44:28 say King Cyrus will do?

BOTH ISAIAH AND JEREMIAH PROPHESED ABOUT KING CYRUS AND GATHERING THE EXILES.

In the middle of JEREMIAH 29:10-14 we see a familiar text of promise often quoted today. Write what stands out to you about these verses when read within this letter to the exiles.

How long does JEREMIAH 29:10 say that the Jews were exiled in Babylon?

What does Jeremiah prophesy that the LORD will do in JEREMIAH 29:14?

LORD, thank you for being a God who holds the hearts of kings in your hand. Burden us to pray for those who lead us today, knowing that you alone can move the heart of man.

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PART 2: A GOD THAT MOVES THE HEART OF MAN

EZRA CHAPTER 1 RECORDS THE FULFILLMENT OF THIS PROPHECY AND THE FIRST WAVE OF EXILES TO RETURN TO JERUSALEM FROM BABYLON. THIS WOULD HAVE HAPPENED DURING THE TIME OF NEHEMIAH'S PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS. WE KNOW HIS BROTHER HAD ALREADY RETURNED TO JERUSALEM, BECAUSE OF HIS REPORT IN NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 1.

Read EZRA CHAPTER 1.

What does VERSE 1 say about how quickly the Lord worked once Cyrus was king.

What do VERSES 1 AND 5 say about how it came to be?

What does the end of VERSE 1 say that King Cyrus did after making the proclamation?

EZRA 1-6 RECORD THE ACCOUNT OF THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE AND ALTAR UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF ZERUBBABEL. DURING THIS TIME PERIOD KING CYRUS DIES IN BATTLE.

How long did it take before the exiles began to rebuild the altar according to EZRA 3:1?

How long did it take before the exiles began to rebuild the temple according to EZRA 3:8?

Preparations are necessary. Think of a time in your life when you were preparing before something could begin. How did you feel when the time finally arrived?

What does the new king order in response to this news in EZRA 4:21-23?

What does EZRA 4:24 say would happen in Persia before work would resume on the temple?

LORD, thank you for being a God who has had a redemptive plan for His people from the very beginning. Help us to increase our trust that you are always working in the unseen.

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PART 3: A TINY TASTE OF THE LAST PROPHETS

THERE WERE 4 PROPHETS DURING THE TIME THAT THE EXILES WERE RETURNING. THEY EACH HAD A SPECIFIC ROLE IN BRINGING GOD'S WORD TO THE PEOPLE. WE ARE ONLY GOING TO INTRODUCE EACH ONE BRIEFLY TO GET AN AWAKENING GLIMPSE OF THE MESSAGES AND THEMES THAT THE LORD WAS TRYING TO SPEAK TO HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE COMING OUT OF EXILE.

<u>PROPHET:</u>	<u>MESSAGE</u>
ZEPHANIAH	AWAKEN A COMPLACENT PEOPLE (JUDAH) & URGE THEM BACK TO GOD
HAGGAI	TO CALL THE PEOPLE TO REBUILD AND COMPLETE THE TEMPLE
ZECHARIAH	MESSAGE OF HOPE OF FUTURE DELIVERANCE THROUGH THE MESSIAH
MALACHI (FINAL)	TO CONFRONT PEOPLE WITH THEIR SIN TO RESTORE THEM TO GOD

Which one of these messages do you think would be the most difficult for you to receive from the LORD today? Which one do you think would be the easiest? Why?

Write what your first thoughts or reactions are as you read a few of the words they spoke:

ZEPHANIAH 2:1-3

HAGGAI 1:4-11

ZECHARIAH 7:8-14

MALACHI 4:1-5

Even messages that point toward good news are sometimes weighty and hard to hear. Good news cannot be good without the bad news. We will revisit these books to see how God's redemptive plan for His people was carried out more later on, but for now it is good to paint a broad stroke over these prophets of the Lord.

LORD, we confess our great need for you and ask for Your forgiveness for our sin and for our families, our churches, our nation. Fix our eyes on the only One who can save us.

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PART 4: LOOKING FORWARD

LET'S SPEND A LITTLE BIT OF TIME THIS WEEK LOOKING FORWARD. EVEN THOUGH IT IS GOOD TO LIVE ON THIS SIDE OF CALVARY, IT IS COMMON TO SOMETIMES TO THINK THAT IF WE HAD PROPHETS TELLING US WHAT TO DO, AND COMMANDS TO FOLLOW, AND GOD LIVING IN A CLOUD OR A TEMPLE OR SO ON... THAT OUR FAITH JOURNEY WOULD SOMEHOW BE EASIER FOR US. WE KNOW BETTER, BUT LET'S REMIND OURSELVES OF THE INCREDIBLE TRUTH OF THE ERA IN WHICH WE LIVE.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-18 *compares the glory of the old and new covenants.*
Write down what is associated to each one:

GLORY/GLORIOUS

MORE GLORIOUS/SURPASSING GLORY

*If we have such a hope, what does **VERSE 12** say we are?*

*What does **VERSE 14 AND 16** say that only Christ can take away? How is it taken away?*

Do you feel like you are veiled or unveiled spiritually?

*According to **VERSE 17** what is always present where the Spirit of the Lord is?*

*Write **2 CORINTHIANS 3:18** below:*

Ask the Lord to transform you into His likeness a little more today, with ever-increasing glory.

LORD, thank you for being a God who has had a redemptive plan for His people from the very beginning. Help us to increase our trust that you are always working in the unseen.