**Fellowship CommUnity Group**

 **Discussion Guide for Leaders**

*Series: Ruin, Rebuild, Renew*

*Sermon: Ezra the Priest and Holy Living*

 *3-17-19*

1. **Getting To Know Each Other** Opening Question: **What is your favorite traditional Irish food?**
* **Opening Prayer**. (Either leader, host home or someone who is willing to pray out loud)

*(Notes from message for reference only – use only as needed)*

**\*\***Use Sermon notes bulletin insert

* **Ezra 7**
* I. Ezra is introduced as a priest and teacher that is skilled in the law of Moses.
* II. Ezra leads another group of exiles back to Jerusalem with the blessing of Artaxerxes.
* III. A glimpse at Ezra’s devotion to God.

**Marks of Ezra’s Devotion**

1) His heart was set on studying the law of the Lord. 2) His heart was set on doing what God’s law required. 3) His heart was set on teaching and instructing Israel in the law of the Lord.

* IV. Artaxerxes sent Ezra to Jerusalem with a royal letter and decree.
* V. Ezra pronounces blessing and praise to the Lord God for providentially allowing all of this to happen.
* **A Theological Consideration:** Ezra is a 2nd Moses and a foreshadowing of Christ.
* **Lessons from Ezra to Apply**
* 1) The Lord will use our faithfulness and commitment to his Word as the means through which we can have political influence.
* 2) Proper devotion to God’s Word teaches us how to rightly discern God’s activity in the world and in our lives.
* 3) God-glorifying worship always requires holy living.
* 4) Faithfulness to God in the little things is extraordinary.

**Into The Text** (15 Minutes) (Leaders: This time is not meant to be application yet, this is time in the Word, before we seek to apply truth, we need to understand the truth. The section after this one will focus on application.)

1. Ask someone to read Ezra 7:1-6. *Ask: Why was it important that Ezra came from a priestly line? Why does Ezra point out that his lineage traced back all the way to Aaron? What do you think it meant that Ezra was skilled in the Law of Moses? What does it mean that the ‘hand of the Lord his God was on him’?*
2. Ask someone to read Ezra 7:7-10.  *Ask: Why is Ezra considered a 2nd Moses? Why were there Jews still in Babylon? What was Ezra leading the people to do in these verses? What are the three marks of Ezra’s devotion to God in v10?*
3. Ask someone to read (or have someone play the Bible audio) Ezra 7:11-26. *Ask: What is most surprising to you about this letter? Was God providing for his people through this king and nation? Does God always provide in this way? In what ways does this letter indicate that Ezra was a diplomat of the king?*
4. Ask someone to read Ezra 7:27-28*. How would you describe Ezra’s response to God in these verses? What is Ezra’s reason for praising the Lord God in this way? Why does Ezra say yet again that the hand of the Lord his God was on him?*

**Application & Discussion** (15-20 Minutes)

1. Say: **Let’s move to application and discussion**. *Ask: What does it mean for someone today to be ‘skilled in the Word of God’? Is skill in the Word of God only necessary for those in Christian ministry? Do you consider yourself ‘skilled’ in the Word of God? Should you be?*
2. *Ask: What it would mean for you to have your heart set on the study of the Word? Why was it important that Ezra was a ‘doer’ of the Word? How important is it for us to also be ‘doers’ of the Word? How would you describe someone who is not a ‘doer’ of the Word? Should everyone be a ‘teacher’ of the Word in some manner? Discuss.*
3. *Ask: How can your devotion to God’s Word help you to discern God’s activity in your life and the world? How can a lack of studying God’s Word lead to misunderstanding what God is doing in our lives and the world?*
4. Ask: *Why must our holy living align with our worship? How does the world view a Christian that worships but seems to live like everyone else?*
5. *Ask: In what way is God asking you to be faithful in the ‘little things’ of your life? How can your faithfulness in that ‘little thing’ become something extraordinary?*

**Closing Prayer Time**: (10-12 Minutes) **(Leader Say:**) Let’s close with a time of prayer. Let’s ask the Lord to help us set our hearts on the study of his Word. *(Ask someone to open, let people pray as they feel led, and then leader closes.)*