**Fellowship CommUnity Group**

 **Discussion Guide for Leaders**

*Series: Ruin, Rebuild, Renew*

*Sermon: Questions of Authority*

 *3-3-19*

1. **Getting To Know Each Other** Opening Question: **What was the worst weather you have ever driven in?**
* **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 5**

I. God rouses his people out of lethargy and back to the temple rebuilding work and he does it through the preaching of his word.

II. The authority of the temple rebuilding is questioned.

III. The eye of God is sovereign over all.

IV. A letter is sent to the king to determine if authority has been granted.

**Ezra 6**

V. Darius the king searches the royal archives and finds Cyrus’s decree.

VI. Darius issues his own decree for the temple rebuilding to continue and for all of it to be paid from the royal treasury.

**What is God teaching us about his authority in our lives even today?**

1) God will use whatever means he chooses to accomplish his purpose and will.

2) God will remove his blessing from our lives when we marginalize him and neglect his work.

3) God is still using the preaching of his word and obedience to his word as the primary means of his kingdom work.

4) The church has faced opposition for more than two thousand years and the gates of hell have not and never will prevail against it!

5) Breakthroughs are coming, but only God knows when – trust him!

**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 5:1-5. *Ask: How did God use his prophets to motivate his people back to rebuilding? What does it mean that the prophets were ‘supporting’ the leaders? Why does Tattenai ask the returned exiles where they got their authority? Why does he want their names? What does it mean that the ‘eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews’?*
2. Ask someone to read Ezra 5:6-8*. Ask: How is this letter different from the letter in chapter 4? How does Tattenai describe the status of the rebuilding work in the letter?*
3. Ask someone to read Ezra 5:9-17. *Ask: How do the Jews refer to themselves? Why do the Jews seem to clarify that they are ‘rebuilding’? What does Tattenai ask Darius to do?*
4. Ask someone to read Ezra 6:1-5. *Ask: What does Darius find out about Cyrus’s decree? List as many details as possible.*
5. Ask someone to read Ezra 6:6-12. *Ask: What does Darius decree? Why does he specifically say that Tattenai and his associates must ‘keep away’ from the rebuilding effort in Jerusalem? How did Tattenai’s letter end up helping the returned exiles? Who is the ultimate authority in this entire situation? How does God work differently in chapter 6, than he did in chapter 4? Why*

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

1. Say: **Let’s move to application and discussion**. *Ask: What place does the preaching ministry of the word have in kingdom building today? How can the church ensure this priority is not lost?*
2. In chapter 4, the opposition stopped the rebuilding but in chapter 5-6 it did not*. Ask: Why does God remove obstacles sometimes and sometimes he does not? How are we to respond? Is God playing games with us? What can these differences in divine response teach us about God?*
3. (Ask a few people to read Haggai chapter 1.) Haggai needed to preach the people out of complacency and back to the rebuilding work*. Ask: How easy it for us to allow spiritual complacency and lethargy to creep into our lives? In what ways do we sometimes marginalize God in our lives today? How can something as practical as our Legacy of Worship campaign help to keep us from complacency?*
4. Ask: *How long has the true church been opposed? How much longer will the true church be opposed? Will the true church ever be defeated? How can you live that out in your life?*
5. *Ask: How do you handle opposition to the gospel?*

**Closing Prayer Time**: (10-12 Minutes) **(Leader Say:**) Let’s close with a time of prayer. Let’s pray and ask the Lord to bless the ministry of the Word in our lives and in our church. Let’s ask the Lord to help us respond to gospel opposition as he desires. *(Ask someone to open, let people pray as they feel led, and then leader closes.)*