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I Love My Church



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Restored by Love | Ezra 1:1-11



The Big Idea: Though the book of Ezra tells the story of renovating a physical temple, at its core it is about God renovating His people, who themselves are called His temple. At FBC, we're about to begin some renovations of our own.

As exciting as it will be to enjoy an updated facility, this season is really an opportunity for God to refocus us on why we exist as a church. We don't exist for buildings—we exist for building people. Our mission is to lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Blueprints: What Is He Building?

"...the house of the LORD" - Vs. 3

The Process: How is He Building?

"...go up to rebuild..." - Vs. 5

The Workers: Who Is He Building With?

"...everyone whose spirit God stirred up" - Vs. 5

The Materials: What Is He Building With?

"the vessels...that Nebuchadnezzar carried away" - Vs. 7

"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"

Matthew 16:18

REACH ♦ CONNECT ♦ GROW ♦ SEND

Small Group Discussion Guide

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The Background

For centuries, God called His people to turn away from idols and back to Him. He sent prophets warning that if they did not repent, the unthinkable would happen: their temple would be destroyed, and they would be taken into captivity. In 587 B.C., the magnificent temple King Solomon had built was destroyed by Babylon, and many Jews were carried off into exile. But God had also promised restoration: after 70 years of captivity, His people would return to their land and temple. The book of Ezra records part of that story. Chapters 1–6 describe the first group of exiles returning and rebuilding the temple under Zerubbabel's leadership. Chapters 7–10 describe Ezra's ministry to bring renewal about 80 years later.

Getting Started

Share a time you tried to restore something—a house, car, family heirloom, relationship, etc.

What was that process like?

Digging Deeper

On Sunday we were introduced to some of the themes from Ezra. Read Ezra 1:1–11 and discuss the following:

1. God cared about rebuilding the physical temple (1:1-2), but ultimately, He was after rebuilding His people. Where in the Bible does God call Christians His Temple?
2. Before God rebuilt His people through Cyrus the Persian, He tore them down through Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian (2 Chronicles 36:14–21).
 - a. How is this like God's work in our lives?
 - b. What are some examples of God painfully removing things from someone's life for the sake of greater joy?
 - c. God used pagan kings to bring both demolition and rebuilding. What does this teach us about the unexpected ways God works to build us up?

3. In Ezra 1:2–4, Cyrus issues a decree for God’s people to return and rebuild.

- a. If you were leading the rebuilding project—knowing God had exiled Israel for ignoring His instructions for worship—what steps would you take to make sure the project was successful?
- b. God is the architect of life, and we are contractors called to stick to His blueprints. Using conflict as an example, what are some ways we easily depart from His design?
- c. What area of your life right now requires you to study God’s blueprint more closely?

4. Just as individuals can drift from God’s blueprint, so can churches. Consider the definition of a local church below. Examine each part of the definition and discuss the various ways a church can depart from God’s plan for it.

A local church is an identifiable group of baptized believers who join together to follow Jesus under qualified leadership, in regular gatherings, for the hearing and application of God’s Word, the administration of the sacraments (baptism and communion), for deep community within, and for serious mission without.

Putting It into Practice

God used the physical rebuilding of the temple to reawaken His people’s passion for *being* His temple. At FBC, we are heading towards a season of physical renovation. As exciting as new facilities are, God’s greater goal is to refocus us on why we exist as His people in this community.

Take some time to pray together that God would stir our hearts during this season, just as He did in the book of Ezra.