

SUNDAY STUDY | church on the drive

Scripture: Ezra 1:1-5, 4:1-7; 5:1-5; 6:1-22



Socially distant, spiritually connected - During this time when we have to keep a safe distance from each other, we want to be socially distant, but spiritually connected. In order to do that, we as a body of believers are all studying the same thing today! You are invited to take out a journal and record your thoughts through this bible study and share them with members of your community group and/or family, whether via telephone or in person.

1. Prayer

- a. Thank God for today and all that you get to enjoy as part of it
- b. Pray for people you love
- c. Pray for people you have trouble loving
- d. Ask God's help during this COVID-19 pandemic - for you, for our city, for our world
- e. Pray for our leaders - government and church
- f. Ask God to help you minister to those around you in the best possible way

2. Watch this video online to give you context for today's study: <https://vimeo.com/194570866>

- a. **Read Ezra 4:1-7; 5:1-5; 6:1-22**

3. God Brought the People Back

a. **Read Ezra 1:1-5**

- i. So often we look to political, corporate, or economic structures in our world as if they were the only expression of authority. Yet God reminds us that each of these pales in comparison to God's authority and kingship. No matter who the financial leader, business leader, or political leader, they are all subject to the authority of God. This applies to global pandemics too. While things may happen and people may make decisions that do not honor God, ultimately, we can live with confidence that God is in control.
- ii. **Why do we often act and feel as if God were not in control?**
- iii. In Ezra we see that God's faithfulness to God's people returning from exile is a picture of Jesus's faithfulness to us and that should always lead us to worship.
- b. God moved the heart of King Cyrus and his successors to decree that the people could come back to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple and the city. It wasn't because the people forced them to do so. It wasn't because they were necessarily a moral people who had been convinced it was immoral to leave the Jews in exile. God was working.
 - i. **Do you believe God still works on behalf of God's people? Why or why not?**
 - ii. **How long do you keep praying for something that you want before you give up? Do you blame God if it doesn't work out like you hoped?**

4. Read Ezra 4:1-7, 5:1-5; 6:1-12

- a. At some point in life, we've all experienced a change in leadership that departed from the approach and promises of the previous leader. That can be disheartening. Imagine starting to work as the Israelites had and having *the* leader of the region come ask why you were rebuilding the temple. Imagine them truly asking why you thought you could do that, because they had never been told you could. That would be unsettling, to say the least.
- b. Much like the Israelites of old, we can be confident that God is working on our behalf, even when it seems like things have changed very quickly and trouble might lie ahead. We can remember that God is in control and guiding us, always at work on behalf of believers, even when we cannot tell.
 - i. **How have you seen God work around you in unlikely scenarios to accomplish God's purposes?**

5. Read Ezra 6:13-22

- a. Look closely at 6:16 - The Israelites were moved to celebration because of what God had done for them. They had great joy because God was faithful. Even in times like these, we can have great joy because God has been and will always be faithful to us. Out of that joy we should worship God, whether we are in a church building or in our living room or in a forest somewhere. The joy we have from God's continued faithfulness can lead us to worship, just like it did the Israelites in the Book of Ezra.
 - i. **What are some ways God has been faithful to you? How does it impact your worship of God?**

6. Pray and thank God for continued faithfulness.

7. **This Week:** Let someone know you're thinking about them. Remind them of a time God has been faithful in your life (or their life!) and assure them God will still be faithful.