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## The Story: Ezra (God Supports Our Restoration)

Let's look at 4 ways God supports our journey back to Him and 3 characteristics of restoration:

### #1 GOD SUPPORTS us by giving us hope in His Word!

Ezra 1:1-2, 1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm...2 "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah."

- Isaiah 44:28, "...Lord moved the heart of Cyrus..."
- Jeremiah 29:10-11, "...70 years are completed..."

### #2 GOD SUPPORTS us by changing our hearts!

Ezra 1:5, 5 The family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests & Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem.

- If you sense a desire to change, that's God moving!
- Philippians 2:13, "it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."

### #1 RESTORATION starts small and then grows

Ezra 3:2; 7, 2 Then Joshua...and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel...and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law...7 Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters...

- They started small, with rebuilding the altar.
- Before we can fix the big issues in life, we need to start small: pray, read the Bible, attend church, etc.

### #2 RESTORATION requires realistic expectations

3:11b-13a, 11...And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. 12 But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. 13 No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping...

- The journey back towards God can be quick, but the restoration of a broken life will likely take longer.
- Celebrate the small wins, not just the big victories!

### #3 RESTORATION will face opposition from others

Ezra 4:11a, 4 Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building.

- Whenever there is a work of God, there's opposition.
- Deal with discouragement by focusing on truth.
- Romans 8:31, "...God is for us..."
- 1 John 4:4, "... the one who is in you is greater..."

### #3 GOD SUPPORTS us by sending us encouragement!

Ezra 5:1-2, Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet... prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. 2 Then Zerubbabel ...and Joshua...set to work to rebuild the house of God...

- Message to Joshua = Zechariah 3:1-4
- Message to Zerubbable = Zechariah 4:6-7
- Message to the People = Haggai 1:2-5
- Galatians 6:1, "If someone's caught in a sin you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently."

### #4 GOD SUPPORTS us by giving us the grace to repent!

Ezra 9:6-8, Ezra prayed, "I am too ashamed and disgraced, my God, to lift up my face to you, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens. 7 From the days of our ancestors until now, our guilt has been great. Because of our sins, we and our kings and our priests have been subjected to the sword and captivity, to pillage and humiliation at the hand of foreign kings, as it is today. 8 "But now, for a brief moment, the Lord our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage."...10:12, The whole assembly responded with a loud voice: "You are right!..."

- As we spend more time with God, He'll reveal more issues that He wants to work on. That's good!
- If you've wandered far from God, return to Him!