

The book of



chapters

4 — 6

Day 1

1. Read Ezra 4-6 or listen to it read aloud on your YouVersion app. These chapters are filled with much treasure. Don't forget to stop and ask God to open your heart to all he has for you.

2. As is the case with most large reconstruction projects, there was some opposition. According to Ezra 4:1, who stood up offering to help in this building project?

What powerful word was used to describe these men. They were not comrades, friends, or brothers, they are _____ of Judah and Benjamin.

3. Fill in the blanks. "Let us _____ build because, like you, we seek _____ God..."

Do you believe these people loved and served Jehovah as the One true God?

Or are they merely adding Him to their worship along with all the other gods they chose to serve?

4. These people were not Israelites. They may have been some of the peoples forced to live in the land when Assyria took the Israelites captive back to Assyria. A common practice of that day was to remove the nationals and place others in the land. Their forefathers had been brought to Israel by Esarhaddon king of Assyria. After reading the chapter, what do you think might have been the motive behind offering to help?

5. What was the response of Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the heads of the families to this request?

6. After having their request denied, they show their true intent very quickly. What did they do? Read Ezra 4:4-5.



7. What was the time span mentioned in Ezra 4:5?

“They bribed officials to work against them and frustrate their plans during the _____ reign of _____ king of Persia and down to the reign of _____ king of Persia.”

8. Even as I am writing this, I too have experienced meeting with obstacles after following God’s call. Even when these obstacles seem insurmountable, we must continue doing what God has called us to do and allow our gracious God to work out the details. Discouragement sits at the door waiting for an opportunity to rush in and plant fear. If every divine assignment were easy, we would never get a chance to see God move on our behalf. Like the Israelites, we must continue our God given assignment and not allow our work to be frustrated by the enemy.

Read James 1:2-7. What has God called you to do?

Are you experiencing problems and opposition?

How do you handle discouragement, fear, and frustration?

Day 2

9. Discouragement and fear are two of Satan’s favorite tools. Read Joshua 1:9, Deuteronomy 31:8, and John 16:33. What are believers to do when these two come our way?

While in a locksmith’s store I read a sign that said, “Don’t give up, it is usually the last key you try that opens the door.”

10. Charles Stanley said, “Disappointment is inevitable. But to become discouraged is a choice I make. God would never discourage me. He always points me to himself to trust him. Therefore, my discouragement is from Satan.”

What are we to do with temptations from the evil one?

Read Matthew 4:4, 7, 10 to help you answer this question. Ask yourself, what would Jesus do?



11. There are times when our setbacks bring discouragement. But we must remember that setbacks can be redirected, and they can be a set up for what God has in store for us today. How might a setback be redirected and make it an opportunity to bring God glory?

12. Fear can be a motivating force to keep us from danger or it can be crippling, leaving us without hope. My sweet friend Rene' loves to encourage others with these words; "God has never failed me in the past and I do not believe he will start now."

It is important for us to check our focus when fear comes our way. Think of the last time you were struck by fear; did you focus on the size of the problem or the size of our good God?

What helps you focus when you experience fear?

13. Think about the last time you were frustrated. Often it is an unreal expectation that has caused frustration.

- We expect a situation to go in a particular direction, but it does not.
- We expect someone to do or say something and they do not.
- We expect an outcome to our actions, and it does not happen.

These can all be frustrating. What can we do?

Here are some verses that are good for us to focus on. How might focusing on these verses help us follow Christ's example?

Comment on each verse.

James 4:7

Proverbs 3:5-6

Colossians 3:2

1 Peter 5:6-9

Day 3

14. The next section of scripture can be confusing. These are letters to and from King Artaxerxes. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* notes say, “They show that the opposition Ezra had begun to describe (vss. 1-5) continued for many years to 485 BC, the year Xerxes began to reign (vs. 6) and on into the days of Artaxerxes (464-424 BC). Artaxerxes was the king who was reigning during the events recorded in chapters 7-10.”

Ezra 4:6 tells us of a written accusation brought against God’s people. The letter was sent to King Artaxerxes. Skip down to Ezra 4:11-16, the letter suggests that their only reason for writing is their concern for their king’s welfare. This sounds very noble, as though they have only the king’s interest at heart. Specifically, what did they say they wanted the king to know?

15. What was their word of warning to the king? Read Ezra 4:13-16. In their opinion, what will be the outcome if the king does not step in and put a stop to all this?

16. Those writing this letter want the king to believe they are thinking only of his best interest. Look at verses 12-15, how are the people of Jerusalem described? How far back in history did these men go to make their point?

Hint: How long were the Israelites in captivity in Babylon?

17. What did King Artaxerxes find when his historians looked back in the history books concerning the people of Jerusalem?

What orders did he send? (Ezra 4:19-22)



18. To a conquering king, the Israelites would look like a difficult people to rule. But who was to be the only true king to rule over Israel?

Read the verses below and comment.

Jeremiah 30:22

Jeremiah 10:10

Zephaniah 3:15

19. Circumstances are sometimes out of our control. That is what we see here. King Artaxerxes called for a halt to the rebuilding process. Think of the last time you were proceeding with a task you felt God had clearly instructed you to do and, for whatever reason, the work had to stop. What was your attitude?

What did you think?

20. When we experience a situation like this, it would be good for us to think back to the Israelites as they stood looking at the Red Sea with the Egyptians headed straight for them. Moses told the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today.” Have you experienced a divine deliverance?



21. What usually happens when a great work is put on hold?

22. It can be hard to gain momentum after a long period of inactivity.

- Have you ever been in a boat which had to be rowed to shore?
- Have you ever had to push a stalled car out of traffic into a parking lot?
- Have you ever been in a race that was suspended even for a few minutes?

Each of these scenarios is easier with momentum. What should we do when we find ourselves struggling to get going again?



23. One of my favorite leadership teachers, John Maxwell said, “Momentum solves 80% of your problems.” He went on to say, “While a good leader sustains momentum, a great leader increases it.” What are you doing to increase the momentum of those in your inner circle to achieve great things for God? This should make for great discussion in your small group.

24. Ezra 4:24 picks back up where it left off in verse 5. The result of the opposition during Cyrus’ reign was that work on the temple was suspended until what year?

25. Ezra 5:2-3 tells us that two leaders stepped up to finish the work. They were joined by two prophets. Who were the four men of conviction who stepped up to finish the work?

26. No sooner had they started than they were called aside and questioned. What was the question they were asked?

Read Mark 11:27-28, who is being questioned in these verses?

Have you experienced someone questioning your authority?

Good leaders seek direction from God and do not allow others doubts to persuade them to stop. That is the wonderful thing about following God’s direction, we can proceed with confidence.

Read Psalm 37:23-24 and Proverbs 4:10-12, 18. What is the promise?

27. Read Ezra 5:5. We all operate under certain earthly authorities. It is important to live in compliance as much as possible. But ultimately there is One who rules in the affairs of men. He is to be obeyed with great care. What important detail is recorded in Ezra 5:5 that allowed them to continue their work?

It is imperative that we know the will of our God and walk in obedience to Him. When we do, we have nothing to fear.



28. Ezra 5:6-17 contains the letter written by the men who opposed the rebuilding of the temple. Look closely at verse 8, what facts did they share with King Darius in their letter?

29. Ezra 5:11-13 contains the answer given by Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai, and Zechariah when they were questioned. Who did they say authorized their work?

Earthly authority was given by _____.

Heavenly authority given to them by _____.

Day 5

30. Ezra 6 begins with the order from King Darius for a diligent search to be carried out to see if a decree had been made to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. What was the result of this search?

31. Notice how specific King Cyrus was, not only were they to rebuild but they were to restore worship. Looking at Ezra 6:3-5, what were the details of the decree of King Cyrus concerning the reconstruction?

32. How clear was the message sent to Tattenai, Shethar-Bozenai, and all the officials of that province?

What specific instructions did he give them?

Ezra 6:6-7

a.

b.

c.



33. Even more than merely granting permission for the work to proceed, King Darius gave further orders. What did he tell them to do?

How many years did the temple rebuilding project take?

34. Read Ezra 6:10, King Darius generously supplied so they could offer sacrifices pleasing to God. What did he want them to do for him?

35. How serious was the order of King Darius? Read Ezra 6:11

36. Would you say King Darius was just a great guy or is there another reason he allowed the work to continue? Read Proverbs 21:1

37. King Cyrus made his decree in 538 BC. (Ezra 1:1) This was the first year after he became ruler of Babylon. In 536 BC the actual building of the temple began. It was the second year after their return to Jerusalem. (Ezra 3:8) The temple work halted. (Ezra 4:23) The temple restoration work restarted. (Ezra 6:13-15) The work was completed in 516 BC (Ezra 6:15), the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. Make a timeline, add the events seen so far in the book of Ezra.

How many years did the temple rebuilding project take?

38. A celebration took place among the people. Priests were installed according to the law given to Moses. On the 14th day of Nisan, the people celebrated the _____ once again. How many days did this celebration last?

Read Ezra 6:22, how was all this even possible?



39. After looking at these first six chapters of Ezra, what are your thoughts concerning the work God has called you to do?

Did any part of Ezra 4-6 speak to something you are experiencing?

Did you glean any treasure or tools to help you in your walk of faith?

What lessons might you apply in your service to our King?

40. Which of God's character qualities have you seen in these six chapters?

Biblical References

Day 1

Question 8 - James 1:2-7

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶ But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

Day 2

Question 9 - Joshua 1:9

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.

Deuteronomy 31:8

The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

John 16:33

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Question 10 - Matthew 4:4

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Matthew 4:7

Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test!’”

Matthew 4:10

Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only!’”

Question 13 - James 4:7

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Colossians 3:2

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

1Peter 5:6-9

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. ⁸ Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Day 3

Question 18 - Jeremiah 30:22

“So you will be my people, and I will be your God.”

Jeremiah 10:10

But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath.

Zephaniah 3:15

The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm.

Day 4

Question 26 - Mark 11:27-28

They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. ²⁸ “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?”

Psalms 37:23-24

The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; ²⁴ though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand.

Proverbs 4:10-12

Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. ¹¹ I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. ¹² When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble.

Proverbs 4:18

The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.

Day 5

Question 36 - Proverbs 21:1

In the LORD’s hand the king’s heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him.