

Personal weekly Bible readings to go deeper into Scripture.

Memory Verse: Esther 4:14b

Day 1 – Chapter 20 of “The Story”

Day 2 – Esther 1-2

Day 3 – Esther 3-5

Day 4 – Esther 6-7

Day 5 – Esther 8-10

Questions to consider while reading the Bible:

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to rely on?

Is there a command to obey?

Is there a challenge in which to respond?



The Story: The Return Home

February 2-3, 2013

“The Story” Chapter 19; Haggai 1:7-11, 13-15

Please use this space to take notes during the message today.



Then Haggai, the LORD’s messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: “I am with you,” declares the LORD...They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month. Haggai 1:13, 14b-15

Adult and teen small group discussion points

Please use these discussion questions in your small group or with your teens.

1. Have you ever been away from home for a long time? When you returned, what was it like? How did you feel about coming home?
2. How did the LORD fulfill His word spoken by Jeremiah? Look up Jer. 25:12 and 29:10. What happened to the king of Babylon? (See p. 264 for further insight.)
3. Look up Isa. 44:28 - 45:1. Isaiah speaks of Cyrus about 400 years before he makes his edict to rebuild the temple? What does this teach you about God?
4. Why do you think many of the exiles chose to stay in Babylon instead of returning home to the Promised Land? How do you suppose God viewed that choice?
5. When the temple was re-established, some were overjoyed, and some were heart-broken. Many churches go through periods of growth, reconstruction and challenge. How should we respond when mixed feelings pull us in opposite directions?
6. Eventually the people got sidetracked from rebuilding God's temple. It was sixteen years before he finally got them back on track (Haggai 1; "The Story," pp. 266-267). What slowed down their work and what got them up and moving again?
7. What are some of the consequences we face when we do our own thing and forget to follow God's plan for our lives?
8. Zechariah's message claimed that people from other nations would be attracted to the religion and the God of the Jews. (p. 269-270). What was to be the basis for this attraction? In what ways should our church be attractive to outsiders? In what ways should the body of Christ be attractive to outsiders?
9. The end of this chapter of "The Story" offers a glimpse of the political wrangling that took place behind the scenes. The governor of the region wanted the people to stop building the temple and accused them of not having permission to build it. After communication with the king of Babylon, everything changed (Ezra 5-6; "The Story," pp. 270-273). How did God turn everything upside down and provide for the temple? How do you see the upper story breaking into the lower story again?
10. With Zechariah's encouragement, the people completed the task God gave them. Who in your group needs encouragement? Make a list of specific needs to pray for, and check on them next week.



Close in prayer.

Family's with kids discussion points

Please use these discussion questions with your children.

Memory Verse: They will be my people. I will be their faithful God. I will keep my promises to them.—Zechariah 8:8

1. Cyrus, the king of Persia, encouraged God's people to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the Lord's temple. About 50,000 people went back to start the project. When the foundation was laid, some of God's people cried and others shouted with joy. Talk about a time when you cried tears of joy. Can you remember a time that you shouted with joy?
2. God's people pitched in their gold and silver to make God's temple magnificent. Talk about a time when you worked together with friends to accomplish a big task. Did it work better when everyone shared?
3. How does it make you feel when you give something of value to another person?
4. People in the surrounding areas didn't want the temple rebuilt. They tried to stop the building. Have you ever known God wanted you to do something and had others stand in your way? What did you do? What was the end result?
5. In the ultimate backfire, governors in nearby areas went to King Darius to see if King Cyrus had truly decreed that God's people could rebuild the temple. They hoped Darius would stop the building. Instead he found Cyrus' decree and made these governors give money and supplies to build the temple. Obviously, God's plan trumped the governors'. How do you think the governors felt? Have you ever had a plan backfire?
6. What does this story teach about God's plans?

Prayer together: Lord, we thank you for our beautiful church, the people who built it, and those who work together to take care of it. We also thank you for the larger church, the body of believers, that they keep your purposes in front of you. Fill us with your Spirit for Jesus' sake, so that we can be about your business and put you first in our lives. We ask it in his name. Amen.

