

**REFRESH**  
**Worship is Central**  
**Ezra 3:1-13**  
**May 26, 2019**

I don't suspect that any of us have been exiled to a foreign land for 70 years, but I do know that we can find ourselves in need of a refresh just like God's people all those years ago. And the question becomes, what's most important that I make sure is a part of my life when I need that refresh? The short answer is WORSHIP. And the story that is recorded for us in the Old Testament books of Ezra and Nehemiah gives us a picture of what it looks like to make worship central in our lives.

**Ezra 2:1** — *1 Now these were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town.*

Worship is the act of publicly exalting God's Person & His Performance in keeping His promises.

Celebrate the **FAITHFULNESS** of God.

If you are going to have a healthy spiritual core, celebrating the faithfulness of God has got to be at the very center of your life. And the greatest act of faithfulness on the part of God for us is the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus, in our place.

Celebrating the faithfulness of God...

1. It calls for **SACRIFICE** to be first. Ezra 3:1-2

**Ezra 3:1-13** — *1 When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem. 2 Then arose Jeshua the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.*

They can't afford to be isolated or selfish. If they are going to experience a refresh, they will need to come together and focus on the faithfulness of God for them. The question they would have been asking is "Does God still love us? Is He still committed to us?"

We can live a life of sacrifice today because that's what the life of Jesus does.

2. It's how to respond to the **FEAR OF OTHERS**. Ezra 3:3-5

*3 They set the altar in its place, for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands, and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, burnt offerings morning and evening. 4 And they kept the Feast of Booths, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the rule, as each day required, 5 and after that the regular burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the appointed feasts of the Lord, and the offerings of everyone who made a freewill offering to the Lord.*

When I celebrate the faithfulness of God it helps remove the fear I have of others, fear that I'll be rejected by others or I will disappoint others or I want measure up in the sight of others, or that I'll do something that others don't agree with or don't want me to do that I know is right.

**1 John 4:18** — *18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.*

The way to deal with the fear of others is to focus on the steadfast love of the LORD that endures forever.

3. It doesn't wait for things to be **PERFECT**. Ezra 3:6-7

*6 From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord. **But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.** 7 So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from Cyrus king of Persia.*

They didn't wait for everything to be perfect before they started celebrating the faithfulness of the LORD.

4. It makes **ADJUSTMENTS** as needed. Ezra 3:8-9

*They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to supervise the work of the house of the Lord...**10** And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, according to the directions of David king of Israel.*

When it comes to celebrating God's faithfulness, don't be so tethered to how things have always been done, that you aren't willing to make adjustments as needed. And finally, celebrating the faithfulness of God...

5. It doesn't expect everyone to **RESPOND THE SAME WAY**. Ezra 3:11-13

***11** And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. **12** But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, **13** so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.*

Not everybody responded in the same way. We're not told exactly why the people had such different responses. Maybe it was the memories of what they had lost or maybe it was simply the fact that it was different.

**Revelation 21:22-27** — ***22** And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. **23** And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. **24** By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the*

*earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

If we are going to experience a refresh in our lives today, celebrating the faithfulness of God has to be central and that's possible because Jesus is the final, perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice in our place. And because of that, you can live a life of sacrificial service for the glory of God and you don't have to wait until everything is perfect in your life. Start responding to God now, start expressing your love to God right now and do it for the glory of God.

Let's talk about the centrality of worship...

1. What temptation did the people of God face when they first returned to their homeland (v.1)?
2. How did the people of God know what to do when they returned to the homeland (v.2)?
3. Why would God's people have been afraid of the people of the land when they set up the altar in Jerusalem (v.3)?
4. What was so special about living in temporary dwellings during the Feast of Booths (v.4)?
5. Why didn't the people wait until the foundation of the Temple had been laid to start offering sacrifices (v.6)?
6. How did the people know what to do when they gathered to celebrate the laying of the foundation of the Temple (v.10)?
7. What did the people believe about the LORD as they celebrated this great event in the life of their nation (v.11)?
8. Why did the older men weep when they saw the foundation of the new Temple (v.12)?
9. Why do you think people who have been in church for a long time struggle with how younger people worship the LORD today?