

# PRACTISING WHAT WE PREACH: A CHARACTER STUDY OF EZRA

*The following are resource questions that you can use with your Care Group for discussion. They are based on the sermon preached on Sunday, May 16 2010, by Rev Dick Hugoniot at the Grace Baptist Church, Singapore. The sermon is available online at <http://www.gracebap.org.sg/worship/series.html>.*

May 16, 2010

**Introduction:** We are familiar with the saying “**Practice what you preach**”. We usually hear this from those who think that Christians are a bunch of self-righteous hypocrites.

After serving as a preacher and missionary all of these years, I have come to the following conclusions:

- It is always easier to preach righteousness than practice it
- It is always easier to preach holiness than to practice it.
- It is always easier to preach faith than to practice it.
- It is always easier to preach completely trusting in God than doing it.

➤ Do we agree with the above statement? If so, why?

In today’s world we are looking for authenticity. The phrase “**being authentic**” describes what people want in this day and age.

➤ What does “**being authentic**” mean in the Christian context?

Ezra lived in a difficult period of history, it was the time of captivity, and the people of Israel longed to get back to Jerusalem. He lived at the same time of Nehemiah. We are more familiar with Nehemiah and often use him as a model of Godly leadership. But Ezra was the one who brought the Word of God back into usage among the Jewish people.

Many Bible scholars credit him as the author of 1st and 2nd Chronicles and several of the psalms, most notably Psalm 119, which would be appropriate since this psalm centres on the Word of God.

➤ What stands out to you about the man Ezra? What made him so special in God’s sight?

## **EZRA SET HIS HEART TO STUDY GOD’S LAW—Ezra 7:10**

The whole reason and motivation for living was that “**Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it.**” This was his life.

➤ How can we set our hearts to study God’s Word and make it foundational to our lives?

## **EZRA SHARED HIS HEART WITH THE KING —Ezra 7:25,27-28a**

It was no easy task coming before the king and to have the courage to ask for a letter of endorsement and empowerment. Ezra came before the King and the King entrusted him with everything that he needed.

## **EZRA SEEKS GOD’S HELP IN FORMING HIS TEAM—Ezra 7:28b**

The last part of 7:28 says, “**Thus I was strengthened according to the hand of the LORD my God upon me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.**” This indicates a process.

When beginning a new work for the Lord like planting a church, how important is it to have the right team?

➤ Discuss this.

### **EZRA STEPPED OUT IN FAITH—Ezra 8:21-23**

Ezra had been before the king and the king was ready to give Ezra anything that he wanted, including soldiers to protect them on their journey. But Ezra had proclaimed before the king how they were trusting in God alone. And that God would protect them as they made the four month long journey to Jerusalem.

Ezra had assured the king that the “**Good hand of the Lord our God**” would be upon them. The king was impressed, for he would never embark on a journey like this without a mighty army accompanying him.

From these scriptures we get our pattern of spending time with the Lord in fasting and prayer before any major undertaking.

- Do we sometimes speak spiritual truths and promises spontaneously without considering that we would have to practice them in the world that we live in? Will we respond like Ezra did with fasting and prayer?

### **EZRA FACED DIFFICULT SITUATIONS Ezra 9:2-5**

It would have been so easy to rationalize away any need for the people to change; but Ezra did not let the emotionally charged issue deter him from doing God’s will and calling the people to account!

- How would we respond to the kind of situation that was facing Ezra?

**Application:** The hand of the Lord was upon Ezra because he...

- **Had prepared himself**
- **Sought the Lord**
- **Was willing to step out in faith**
- **Was willing to face difficult situations**

- Are we willing to do the same in our lives?

~~~~~