

Spiritually Preparing Yourself to Serve Others

One of my heroes is a writer named Ezra, who lived about 450 years before the birth of Christ. The Bible describes this priest and scribe as a man who “had devoted himself to the study and observance of the law of the LORD and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel (Ezra 7:10, NIV).” Ezra passionately pursued God through the study *and obedience* of His Word. As he learned from God, Ezra then taught others and helped them apply God’s Word to their lives.

God has led me along a similar path. He gave me an insatiable desire to study His Word. As I study, His Word disciplines and refines me. God is faithfully shaping me into the woman He wants me to be. Meanwhile, He regularly brings teaching opportunities my way to share what He has taught me.

Often, I see needs among God’s people that directly reflect what God has recently been addressing in my own life. It’s as if He has been uniquely preparing me to help meet that need. My teaching regularly flows out of my active relationship with God.

As Christian leaders, we have an enormous responsibility. We cannot spiritually challenge those we teach with anything that we have not personally learned and applied. If I write a Bible study to encourage Christians to tell others about Jesus, I must be committed to witnessing and be actively sharing my faith. We must stay spiritually prepared if we hope to challenge or serve anyone through our writing.

Life is busy these days. Pressing matters often encourage us to set aside things that are less urgent, but more important. We must stay disciplined in taking time to foster our relationship God. Otherwise, what’s the point? We won’t have anything of eternal benefit to share.

Ezra is a worthy role model for us. As I studied the book of Ezra I saw three vital characteristics we should emulate.

1. Devoted

Ezra was firmly determined to study God’s Word. Reading, reflecting, and meditating on Scripture was an enduring, life-long pursuit. Are you firmly established in and committed to regular, frequent, and careful study of the Bible? Is it a life-long passion and pursuit?

Although I read my Bible daily (almost) and engage in deeper study regularly, I also have seasons of laziness. But, God constantly draws me to more time with Him and longer periods spent in Scripture. And the more I study, the more I fall in love with His Word.

2. Determined

Ezra's devoted study of God's Word was not merely an intellectual pursuit. He was determined to apply the things God taught him. Ezra obeyed God and submitted to His transforming power.

Too many times I store the knowledge I gain from biblical study, but fail to submit to and obey what God has taught me. We must allow our study to transform our behavior and attitudes. Unless we do, we cannot faithfully and accurately teach and train those within our sphere of influence.

3. Dependent

The story of Ezra reveals his humility before God and his dependence on Him. Ezra praised God for His sovereign hand in every aspect of his life. His constant recognition of God's presence filled him with the strength and courage to move ahead in each God-given task.

Too often I forge ahead on my own and in my own strength. I fail to realize my need for God and His provision. I fail to see His instruction, guidance, and wisdom. We must regularly and purposefully humble ourselves before God. Humility fosters dependence on God and a constant seeking of His direction and provision.

Ezra's example issues a challenge to us today as Christian leaders and teachers of God's Word. Our calling must begin with a commitment to the diligent study of God's Word and submission to obedience. Without devotion to this life-long pursuit we will have nothing of eternal value to share. In order to serve others through our writing we must stay spiritually prepared.