



November 8, 2015

Ezra 2

Ever Changing, Never Changing Part 2

*“When God Moved Hearts”*

Pastor Gary Hamrick

In his series through Ezra and Nehemiah entitled, “Ever Changing, Never Changing,” Pastor Gary examines more principles in preparation for our move as a local church into our new facility. We learn from the example of the Jewish exiles that the work of God will be done by the people of God when they respond to the move of God in their hearts.

Everyone Whose Heart God Had Moved Will Go

1. **Ezra 1:5** - *“Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites - everyone whose heart God had moved - prepared to go up and build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem.”*
2. The Lord moved in the heart of King Cyrus to let the people leave Babylon and go to Judah.
3. In the same way, God moved the hearts of the people to return to a land they had never known, unless they were very young when the Babylonian’s sent everyone except the poorest into exile.
4. As was mentioned in last week’s study, the people must have been moved by the Lord to return, because they would have had to make a 900-mile journey to a place that had been reduced to rubble by the Babylonians.
5. Bible scholars don’t know for certain how many people the Babylonians exiled, however, it’s believed the number was in the multiple hundreds of thousands.

6. Most scholars are agreement on the fact that, proportionally speaking, not many made the trip to Jerusalem and Judah.
7. [Ezra 2:1](#) - *“Now these are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive to Babylon (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town).”*
8. [Ezra 2:64-65](#) - *“The whole company numbered 42,360, besides their 7,337 menservants and maidservants; and they also had 200 men and women singers.”*
9. What this means is that the vast majority of the Jews adapted to life in Babylon and would never go back to their homeland.
10. They were too comfortable, too settled and set in their ways, having come to love their familiar surroundings too much to leave.
11. Pastor Gary said this account caused him to think about what kind of opportunities might the Lord bring our way that we don't respond to because we are just too comfortable where we are?
12. Many people don't want to be challenged, to be stretched, or to take any kind of risk; they just want to play it safe and stay right where they are.
13. Pastor Gary also said this account reminded him of Jesus' parable of the talents in [Matthew 25:14-30](#), which is generally about stewardship of all that the Lord has given to us.
14. “We have to good stewards about all that the Lord has given us (individually and corporately as a church), and we have to be careful to manage well what the Lord is doing [at Cornerstone Chapel].” - Pastor Gary

Everyone Whose Heart God Had Moved Will Give

15. [Ezra 2:68-69](#) - *“When they arrived at the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, some of the heads of the families gave freewill offerings toward the rebuilding of the house of God on its site. According to their ability they gave to the treasury for this work 61,000 drachmas of gold, 5,000 minas of silver and 100 priestly garments.”*

- a. 61,000 drachmas of gold are equivalent to 1,100 pounds, which would be approximately \$20 million dollars.
  - b. 5,000 minas of silver are equivalent to 6,000 pounds, which would be approximately \$1.5 million dollars.
  - c. The Temple was only about 2,700 sq. ft., so it's easy to see how amazingly generous the people were in their giving.
16. The people were able to be generous, not because they had great personal wealth, which wasn't the case, but because the Lord provided in unexpected ways, so they could do unbelievable things!
17. King Cyrus, in his proclamation, instructed the people of Persia to give gold, silver, and livestock to the exiles.
- a. [Ezra 1:4](#) - *"And the people of any place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem."*
18. Pastor Gary cautioned us to be careful not to think that all that we've accumulated and accomplished came as a result our skills and talent or the work of our hands; it's the provision of the Lord, who has given us the ability, the skills and talent, to accumulate and accomplish.
19. According to [Ezra 2:68](#), not everyone gave offerings, and those who participated, gave *"according to their ability."*
20. [2 Corinthians 9:7](#) - *"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."*

#### Everyone Whose Heart God Had Moved Will Get Involved

21. All of the people who returned came with the mindset that they needed to "roll up their sleeves" and get to work, and the same is true for the people of our church as we prepare to move into our new church.
22. Pastor Gary said, "The work of the ministry cannot rest on the back of a few paid people. The work of the ministry is something we all share as the body of Christ."
23. [Ephesians 4:11-12](#) - *"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to*

*prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..."*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Ezra 2:1, 64-69](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. What are some of the ways you've been moved by the Lord to do be involved in ministry?
4. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's statement: "The work of God will be done by the people of God when they respond to the move of God in their hearts."
5. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about specific times when they came to realize they had become too comfortable to go where the Lord wanted them to go or do what the Lord wanted them to do.
6. How has the Lord challenged you to take risks as you seek to follow his will?
7. Read and discuss [Matthew 25:14-30](#).
8. What kind of a steward are you?
9. Read and discuss [Ezra 2:68-69](#).
10. Are you a generous person who gives according to your ability?
11. Read and discuss [2 Corinthians 9:7](#).
12. Share examples of ways you are serving the Lord, both in the church and outside the church.
13. How has the ministry of Cornerstone Chapel equipped you to serve the Lord? (See #24 above)
14. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).