

GRACEPOINT CHURCH

Weekly Devotional

Forward in Faith as Family
By Ian France

Scripture

Ezra 3:1-13

Open your mind and heart as you read the passage of Scripture aloud and then again quietly to yourself. Listen for God's word to you.

Observation

In the seventh month the people were in their cities and they gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles. Jeshua, Zerubbabel and others built the altar of God on the same ground on which it had previously stood, to offer burnt offerings on it as is written in the Law of Moses. This was of spiritual significance to the people and so the full establishment of religious services preceded the building of the temple. They kept the Feast of the Tabernacles and all the following appointed feasts from the first day of the seventh month. Cyrus had given them permission to import cedar from Lebanon to do the building and they hired the masons and carpenters they needed to do the work. (Solomon's temple had been built out of cedar and they wanted to do the same, albeit with far fewer resources). The permission included funding so they used Gentile money to do the rebuilding, just as Solomon had with his temple. In the second month of the second year, they began the building. The Levites who were twenty years and older had oversight of the work. They worshipped and praised God when the foundations were laid giving thanks to the Lord. And all the people shouted because of the work that had been done. Many of the older priests and Levites and the heads of families wept because they had seen the first temple and they knew this one would never be as glorious. Yet many of the younger people shouted for joy and no one could identify the difference between those who shouted mourned and those who shouted with joy. The sound could be heard far and wide.

Icebreaker:

Most people have a family unit to whom they are related by blood. Whether this is true of you or not, who, beyond that unit do you count as 'family'? Why are these people special to you?

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Application

- Do you count Gracepoint as family? What does it mean to you for Gracepoint to move into 2026 as family?
- *Family is where people can celebrate God's grace and goodness together:* What does this mean for you? How does this happen? Do you find Gracepoint to be a place of joy? Why/why not? How often do you take time to be joyful and do something just for the fun and joy of it? Can such celebrations become pressure points in your life?
- *Family is united in common purpose:* What would you say is Gracepoint's 'why'? How does the church stay focused on this 'why'? Where do you fit in? What is your personal 'why'? How important is this to you? Do you make a conscious effort to live according to this 'why' or does your attention drift to it now and then? How does this make you feel?
- *Family gives generously:* Do you find, when there is an appeal for a specific project, that you give more willingly and generously when you know what the outcome will be? Or do you give anyway? How important is giving to God's kingdom to you? Is it a priority? What difference do you think this makes in your life?
- *Family operates from faith not fear:* How would you say you live your life? Do worry or fear play a large part in where you go and what you do? Why do you think this is so? How does your faith in God influence you in deciding whether to do something different or go somewhere where you wouldn't normally go? Are you prepared to take part in activities that the world considers different for the sake of the Gospel?
- How can the group help you with the struggles you have mentioned during this session?

Prayer

Pray for one another in regard to the issues that have been raised during your discussion time, especially any family issues that may have been discussed; and in regard to other needs of the group.

Service

Look for opportunities to be family to people who are not your blood-relatives this week. Take a note of how this makes you feel.

Bibliography

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/ezra-3/>

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