

# HEART AT WORK

## SAMPLE FROM THE BOOK OF EZRA

This sample guide is intended to demonstrate how working through this 7-step process might look when completed. Your responses may be as simple or as in-depth as you feel so inclined.

This process will look different for everyone.

### 1 Return

Find a quiet space. Get comfortable. Do whatever helps YOU still your heart, your mind, your body...to return to God's intimate presence. Perhaps that is listening to a worship playlist or radio station, or playing an instrument. Perhaps that is coloring or drawing. Perhaps that is sitting silently in a quiet space. Perhaps it is taking deep breaths and concentrating on those breaths...in and out. Whatever it is that stills you, do it.

Allow God to open your heart by acknowledging or confessing anything that keeps you from wanting to be fully in His presence. Ask Him for a spirit of receiving...a willingness to return to Him. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you as you prepare to engage with His Word.

### 2 Read

Read the passage: Ezra Chapter 1

### 3 Retell

#### **Something detailed like this:**

During the first year that Cyrus was king of Persia, God moved in his heart to make a proclamation. This proclamation was put into writing and fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah. The written proclamation stated that Cyrus had been given a divine appointment to build a temple for God at Jerusalem in Judah. It also instructed any Jews living in exile to return to Judah to rebuild the temple of their God in Jerusalem. Lastly, the proclamation instructed that neighbors of any surviving Jews should help provide for their departure by offering money, livestock, goods and freewill offerings for the temple. So, after their hearts were also moved by God, the Jewish families of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites, prepared to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. All their neighbors assisted them by providing for their needs as the proclamation instructed. In addition to those provisions, King Cyrus brought out precious items that had belonged to the temple of the Lord and were brought by Nebuchadnezzar to the temple of his god in Babylon. Cyrus gave these items to his treasurer, Mithredath, who counted them out to the prince of Judah, Sheshbazzar. Sheshbazzar ended up bringing 5,400 articles of gold and silver with him, not including the gifts from neighbors, when he and the other exiles returned to Jerusalem.

### 4 Recollect

#### **Observations (what do I see in the text?):**

- Cyrus was a new king in Persia.
- Cyrus was sensitive to God moving in his heart. He was moved and he moved into action.
- Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled.
- God not only made a way for the Jews to return from exile, but He even had the oppressing nation provide the means for them to return to Jerusalem.

#### **Thoughts (what do I want to know more about?) What could I research?:**

- Who are the named people in this passage (Cyrus, Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar)?
- What happened to the king prior to Cyrus?
- What did Jeremiah say that is now being fulfilled by Cyrus?
- What were the events leading up to the exile of Jews in Persia?
- What happened to the original temple in Jerusalem?

#### **Revelations (what is God stirring up in my heart from this text?):**

- The people in this passage were moved by God and they moved. In order to return, we must move.
- Returning to God's heart requires movement/action.
- God orchestrates every piece of this "moving" and fulfills promises according to His timing.

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### 3 Retell (cont.)

**Or something simple and conversational:**

When Cyrus was king of Persia, he was instructed by God to allow the Jews in exile to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. So, he let them go. Before they left, Cyrus told their neighbors to help them in any way they could. He also returned precious items that originally belonged to the Jewish temple. All of this fulfilled a prophecy of Jeremiah.

### 4 Recollect (cont.)

- Generosity overflows from a sensitivity to God's leading
- God "moving in hearts" is evidence of an active Holy Spirit in the OT

### 5 Reflect

*(What questions has God placed on my heart in response to the observations/thoughts/revelations above?)*

- How sensitive am I to the Holy Spirit moving in me? When have I acted in response to God moving in my heart?
- Where can I find other clear evidence of an active Holy Spirit in the OT?
- How has God fulfilled promises in my own life? How has "His timing" played a role in this?
- God used the Babylonian people (the oppressing nation) to help provide the means for the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem. When has God used a seemingly contradictory/ironic/opposing instrument to orchestrate change in my life?

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### 6 Respond

**Prayer response:** Father, thank you for revealing to me through Your Word that You are moving and have been moving since time began. Thank you for moving in me today. Just as Your Spirit brings glory to Your Name by being active in the hearts of men and women, I also want to bring You glory by actively moving. Show me how to move for Your glory.

**Physical response:** What "freewill offering" could I give to others? Do I have a friend/neighbor in need? Is there an organization that accepts and could make use of a donation from me?

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### 7 Return

Return to your daily routine with God's words still ringing in your ears and spilling from your lips. Share your discoveries with a friend or small group. Remind yourself of these discoveries throughout the week (stick post-it notes around your house, journal, text a friend and ask them to send a text back to you at a later time).