

Connect Group Study Guide - 2

Title: *Altars Before Answers*

Text: Ezra 3:1–6

Theme: Prioritizing worship, surrender, and trust in uncertain seasons

Series: *Brick by Brick*

Session Objectives

- To explore why worship must come before answers, solutions, or actions
 - To encourage surrender in seasons of uncertainty
 - To cultivate trust in God even when the testimony is incomplete
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Read the Passage Together - *Ezra 3:1–6 (ESV)*

(1) When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem. (2) Then arose Jeshua the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. (3) They set the altar in its place, for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands, and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, burnt offerings morning and evening. (4) And they kept the Feast of Booths, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the rule, as each day required, (5) and after that the regular burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the appointed feasts of the Lord, and the offerings of everyone who made a freewill offering to the Lord. (6) From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.

Sermon Summary - Recap

In the face of ruin, uncertainty, and fear, the Israelites prioritized **building the altar** before laying the foundation of the temple. This moment teaches us that:

- Worship must be foundational (Ezra 3:2–3)
- Surrender must come before solutions (Ezra 3:4–5)
- Trust must be established before the testimony is complete (Ezra 3:6)

Discussion Questions

Section 1 - Worship Before the Foundation

1. Why did the Israelites rebuild the altar before doing anything else?
2. What does it mean for worship to be our foundation?
3. **Reflection:** What currently holds first place in your daily life—worship or worry?
4. How can you “set up the altar” in your own schedule, mindset, or family?

Section 2 - Surrender Before the Solution

5. Read Ezra 3:3–5. Why is it significant that they worshiped despite fear and surrounding threats?
6. What does surrender look like when you’re still unsure of the outcome?
7. **Key Word Insight:** *Mizbeach* (altar) means “place of slaughter”—how does that affect your understanding of surrender?
8. Where in your life is God calling you to let go, even before you have clarity?

Section 3 - Trust Before the Testimony

9. Ezra 3:6 says they worshiped even before the temple foundation was laid. Why is that important?
10. What does trusting God in the “in-between” season look like?
11. **Personal Challenge:** Is there an area in your life where you’ve been waiting to praise God *until* things get better?
12. How does this message connect with *Proverbs 3:5–6* or *Philippians 1:6*?

Until Next Time

- **Personal:** Begin each morning this week by offering worship before you check your phone, read the news, or work on your tasks.
- **Relational:** Share a word of encouragement or a scripture with someone who is waiting for answers.
- **Spiritual:** Set aside one specific time this week to build your “altar”—a quiet time of worship, journaling, or prayer—even if your situation hasn’t changed.