

It Takes Preparation!

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For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel (Ezra 7:10).

I was recently asked to present some thoughts before a congregation regarding my interaction with elders and elderships over the years. Toward the close of my lesson, a question was asked, “What advice would I give to a young man who thinks they may desire to become an elder one day?” I gave what I thought was a suitable answer. However, the very next day, I read the above passage, and I wished I would have thought of this verse as an answer in addition. Unfortunately, I thought of this verse a day late. In the future, if I am asked this question, I hope my answer might be more thorough.

Ezra’s preparation in the passage noted is indeed the perfect answer to a young man, or any Christian for that matter, who desires to serve others in the future. Becoming elders, as well as working toward a faithful eldership, does indeed require much preparation and, yes, forethought. It is interesting that this passage contains three things one must do in order to more easily and readily become a leader and worker in the Lord’s body, especially for those desiring to become elders, deacons, evangelists, and servants in general. What a great example for us all!

It is worth noting Ezra “*prepared his heart*” to do these three things. First, it takes preparation to become a leader in the body, usually quite a few decades, especially for that of elders. Elders do not become elders by accident. Faithful elderships do not become so by accident. To become a faithful and worthy servant of any kind takes forethought from both perspectives. This principle applies to the one being considered as well as the one deciding whether he is qualified or not to be appointed leaders in the Lord’s churches.

Ezra prepared his heart to do three things. First, he prepared his heart to “*seek the Law of the Lord.*” How does one do this? We must prioritize the Law of the Lord in our own minds and hearts. We must reach a point where the Lord’s laws are appreciated and pursued. His laws must be discovered, applied, and loved. We must come to a point where the Lord’s laws can be seen in our lives. We must come to appreciate how the Lord’s Laws are to our betterment, both spiritually and physically. We must do this “before” we can teach them to others. We should “seek” or look for His laws to apply them to our lives.

Second, Ezra prepared himself to “do” the Lord’s law. Doing is about action. This must go beyond an academic perspective. Yes, we should certainly read and study the Lord and His ways, but we must go further by applying them and following them. Meditating on them is also part of this process. Making them part of our lives. And, again, it takes preparation to “do” them. It takes a desire to follow after what the Lord desires we follow after. This is part of bearing our cross as Jesus taught in **Matthew 16:24**, “*Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’*” James teaches us to be “doers of the word and not hearers only” in **1:22**. We must first be hearers of the word, and then we must be doers of the word.

Third, Ezra prepared his heart to teach the Lord’s “*statues and ordinances to Israel.*” This also takes preparation, even much preparation to do it properly. From my perspective, one of the most important aspects of learning to teach takes time. Those who teach must take time out of their lives to learn and prepare lessons from the Lord’s Word. And, of course, the Lord’s Word is filled with these lessons or “nuggets” as they might be called, beginning in **Genesis 1:1** through **Revelation 22:21**. The apostle Paul instructed Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:2**, “*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*” It is interesting to note Paul did not stop at committing the Lord’s teachings to faithful men, but Timothy was to teach other men that they also may teach others. It forms a continuing cycle that can be repeated until the Lord comes. The apostle Paul wrote

in **Romans 15:14**, *“Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.”*

You might say these three things Ezra prepared his heart to do (to seek the Law of the Lord, do the Law of the Lord, and teach the Law of the Lord) are a continual cycle that has the potential to continue when someone else endeavors to actively prepare their hearts to do these things. This cycle can continue in the lives of His people until Jesus returns on that Great Day. What great advice for a young person as they look forward to wanting to be a servant in the Lord’s body for years to come. It does indeed take preparation!