SEVEN-DAY DEVOTIONAL

Stirred to Return and Rebuild

From comfortable captivity to faithful completion.

A Seven-Day Devotional Based on The Bridge Church Annual Family Camp

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PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Ezra 1:5 - "...everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem." (NIV)

Over seven days we follow the journey through Ezra: God stirs hearts, names ordinary people, restores identity, rebuilds worship, joins generations, exposes discouragement and calls His people to finish what He began. The final challenge is not only to be stirred, but to set our hearts to study God's Word, do it, pass it on and carry the message into daily life.

Based on the Ezra teaching series preached by Wessie van der Westhuizen
at The Bridge Church Annual Family Camp
31 July-2 August 2026

READ SLOWLY. REFLECT HONESTLY. PRAY PERSONALLY.

Each day is designed for about 15 minutes, including Scripture, reflection, three memory questions and prayer.

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DAY 1

When God Stirs a Heart

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON

The weekend began with a call to reverence and expectation. If people can stand in hushed awe before a painting, how much more should God's people recognise the presence of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? Wessie then opened the book of Ezra and placed the church inside Israel's long journey from Jerusalem to Babylon and back again. The central tension was clear: Babylon had become familiar and comfortable, but God still had a purpose in Jerusalem. The question that began the whole camp was, 'Lord, what is it You want to stir in my heart?'

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Ezra 1:5 (NIV)**
>
> *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.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

1 Israel had been carried away after turning from God. Seventy years is long enough for exile to feel normal. Many of the people who heard Cyrus's decree had been born in Babylon; it was the only home they knew. Jerusalem was not a warm memory but a ruined city

described by parents and grandparents. Wessie compared this with families who have lived for years away from their homeland and whose children know no other home. The sermon did not treat displacement as an idea. It asked us to see people, families, losses and the way a strange place can slowly become familiar.

That is where the challenge becomes personal. I may never call my life 'captivity', yet I can become settled in patterns that are less than God's purpose. Comfort can silence longing. Familiar habits can make obedience look unreasonable. Wessie spoke about ministry trips when he longed to cross the border for familiar food and comforts, until God dealt with his heart. The issue was not the food. The issue was whether comfort had become more attractive than the place where God was calling him to remain and serve.

2 Ezra 1 begins by saying that the word spoken through Jeremiah was fulfilled. Wessie reminded the church that Jeremiah 29:11 was given to people facing a long captivity, not as a promise that they would avoid difficulty. God's good plans did not cancel the seventy years; His faithfulness carried them through it. This matters when I am tempted to judge God's goodness by how quickly hardship ends. God can be present in the fire, forming something in me that ease could never produce.

The turning point was not human enthusiasm. Scripture says that the Lord stirred the spirit of Cyrus, a king who did not belong to Israel, and then moved the hearts of the people who were to return. God was sovereign

over the prophecy, the king, the timing and the response. The decree opened the door, but the people still had to rise, prepare and go.

[3] Wessie's opening appeal was therefore simple and searching: present yourself to God for His stirring. Ask Him to awaken what has become faint, forgotten or buried under routine. The remnant did not return because Babylon suddenly became uncomfortable. They returned because God stirred them toward His purpose. The same Spirit can awaken hunger for God, compassion for people, courage to obey and willingness to leave what is familiar.

The weekend prayer was that the stirring would not last only until Monday. Wessie encouraged the church to take note of what God was saying, write it down and become accountable to one another. A genuine stirring moves beyond emotion. It becomes a remembered word, a surrendered decision and a practical next step.

Today I do not need to manufacture a dramatic calling. I need to become available. I can open my hands and say, 'Lord, my eyes are on You, my ears are open, and my heart is surrendered. Show me where I have made peace with Babylon. Stir me again for Yourself and for the purpose You have not abandoned.'

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	Why had Babylon become difficult for many of the exiles to leave, even after Cyrus gave permission to return?
2	What correction did Wessie make about the usual way Jeremiah 29:11 is quoted?
3	What did Ezra 1 say God did in Cyrus and in the people before the return could begin?

PRAYER

Father, I do not want comfort, routine or disappointment to make me deaf to You. Thank You that Your purposes remain faithful even through long and difficult seasons. Stir my heart again. Show me what I have accepted as normal that You are calling me to leave, and give me the courage to prepare, rise and obey. Help me record what You say and walk it out with others. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

Lord, stir me beyond the comfort of Babylon and into Your purpose.

DAY 2

Your Yes Has a Name

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday we saw that God fulfilled His word, stirred Cyrus and moved the hearts of ordinary people to leave familiar Babylon and return to Jerusalem. The call was not to create emotion but to become available, write down what God is saying and respond. Today the sermon moves from the stirring itself to the people who said yes - named, counted and remembered in Ezra 2.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Ezra 2:64, 70 (NIV)**
>
> *64 The whole company numbered 42,360,*
>
> *70 The priests, the Levites, the musicians, the gatekeepers and the temple servants settled in their own towns, along with some of the other people, and the rest of the Israelites settled in their towns.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

[1] Before working through the names in Ezra 2, Wessie suggested five directions in which God stirs a heart. First, He stirs us toward Himself. We respond because God first came toward us in love. Second, He stirs us toward His Word, creating fresh hunger to read and receive truth. Third, He stirs us toward His likeness, because meeting Him and hearing His Word must form the character of Christ in us. Fourth, He stirs us toward

His people, not for what we can gain but for what we can give. Fifth, He stirs us toward His mission, recognising that the workplace, the neighbourhood and the ordinary week are mission fields.

These five stirrings belong together. I cannot honestly say that I am drawing closer to God while remaining indifferent to His Word, resistant to His character, detached from His people and uninterested in His mission. The love of Christ moves inward and outward. It changes what I desire, how I forgive, whom I notice and why I go to work tomorrow morning.

2 Ezra 2 can look like a chapter to skip. It lists leaders, families, priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers and temple servants. Yet Wessie insisted that the list reveals something beautiful: God recognises the individual. The returning company numbered 42,360, but they were not a faceless crowd. Families and names were recorded because each yes formed part of the rebuilding story.

Wessie compared this with a group photograph. The first face I normally search for is my own or someone I love. A list becomes meaningful when my family is in it. He even used an obscure name from the chapter to imagine a family, settled in Babylon for decades, whose children and grandchildren would later say, 'Our people left what was established and became part of the remnant that rebuilt.' Their name mattered because their obedience became part of the story.

This does not mean every person is called to move countries or make the same sacrifice. Wessie pointed out that some Jews remained where they were and were still used by God. The question is not whether my yes looks as dramatic as someone else's. My yes may be to go; it may be to stay faithfully where God has placed me. The value lies in responding to the stirring God has actually given me.

[3] That led to one of the weekend's clearest statements: 'A legacy is not what you leave for people. It is what you leave in people.' Material things may carry memories, but a life invested in another person can shape generations. Wessie told of a couple who could not have biological children and opened their lives to two abandoned girls. Their yes carved out a future in people. That is the kind of legacy the returning remnant left: worship restored, courage modelled and a path prepared for those who came after them.

I may never have my name printed in a history book, but my life is not hidden from God. He knows the small act of obedience, the person I encourage, the child I disciple, the neighbour I serve and the workplace in which I remain faithful. The deeper question is not whether I will be widely remembered. It is whether my life will leave Christ in people.

Today I can ask which of the five stirrings has grown quiet. Is my hunger for Scripture weak? Have I become isolated from God's people? Has mission become an event rather than my identity? God sees my name, my

place and my yes. The invitation is to let that yes become a legacy in someone else.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What five directions did Wessie give for the stirring of God in a believer's heart?
2	Why did Wessie say the long list of names and the number 42,360 in Ezra 2 were important?
3	How did he define true legacy, and what kind of yes can build that legacy?

PRAYER

Lord, thank You that You see ordinary people and count every faithful yes. Stir me toward Yourself, Your Word, Your likeness, Your people and Your mission. Deliver me from comparing my calling with someone else's. Show me where I can invest in a person today so that I leave more than possessions or memories - I leave something of Christ in them. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

My name may be ordinary, but my yes can become part of God's story.

DAY 3

Identity Before Activity

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday we saw that the returning exiles were named and counted because God values the individual. We also heard the five directions of His stirring and the call to leave a legacy in people. Today the sermon turns to Zerubbabel, a man whose name carried Babylon, but whose life was given a new place in God's redemptive purpose. From that restored identity, he led the people to worship before they built.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Ezra 3:1-2 (NIV)**
>
> *1 When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, the people assembled together as one in Jerusalem.*
>
> *2 Then Joshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

[1] Wessie paused over the meaning of Zerubbabel's name: 'sown in Babylon' or 'seed of Babylon'. The name linked him to exile, captivity and confusion. He was also the grandson of a king connected with the fall

into captivity. Yet neither the name given at birth nor the failure attached to his family line determined his place in God's purposes.

That is good news for every person who carries labels from family history, birthplace, culture, failure or shame. Wessie said that, without Christ, all of us are like Zerubbabel - people marked by confusion. But when Jesus enters our lives, our deepest identity changes. The greatest title is not a position, qualification, connection or impressive history. It is 'son of God' or 'daughter of God'. Nothing is bigger than belonging to Him.

Zerubbabel's story also raises a generational question: What might our fathers and grandfathers have led us into that God is asking us to lead our children and their children out of? This was not an invitation to dishonour previous generations. It was a call to recognise patterns that have become familiar but do not reflect Christ - bitterness, compromise, fear, silence, broken relationships or a way of living that everyone excuses because 'this is how our family has always done it'.

2 God used the grandson in a redemptive direction. Zerubbabel led people out of the captivity into which the previous generation had gone. What the enemy meant for evil did not have to become the final family story. In Christ, I can receive a new identity and take responsibility for a new direction. I do not have to transmit every wound, habit or limitation I inherited.

The first major action of the returned community was also significant. They gathered as one and built the altar before rebuilding the temple. They had royal permission, resources and a construction mandate, but Wessie stressed that permission did not give them confidence. They needed worship. Before the walls, before the programme and before visible success, they turned to God.

[3] The altar declared dependence: 'Unless God does the work, we are going to fail.' The people were afraid of those around them, yet fear drove them to restore worship rather than abandon obedience. The sermon warned that churches and individuals can become so occupied with programmes, projects and visible activity that true worship is missed. The work may be for God while the heart is no longer before God.

This is a needed order for my life. Identity comes before activity, and worship comes before building. I do not rebuild my family, work, ministry or future by proving that I am strong enough. I begin as a son or daughter who belongs to God. I bring Him my heart, confess where I have wandered and place my confidence in His presence.

Today I can stop asking only, 'What must I do?' and first ask, 'Who am I in Christ, and have I built the altar again?' The call is not to avoid responsible planning. It is to refuse to let planning replace surrender. From a restored identity and a worshipping heart, the work can begin in the right spirit.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What did Zerubbabel's name mean, and why did Wessie say that name did not determine his future?
2	What generational question did the sermon ask about what we may need to lead our children out of?
3	Why did the returned exiles build the altar before rebuilding the temple?

PRAYER

Father, thank You that my background, family history and past failures do not have the final word. Teach me to live from the identity You give me as Your child. Show me any pattern I must not pass to the next generation. Before I build, plan or serve, draw me back to the altar of worship and dependence. Unless You do the work, I will fail; with You, redemption can begin. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

I build from my identity as God's child, and I worship before I work.

DAY 4

One Sound: Joy, Tears and a Shared Future

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday we followed Zerubbabel from a name associated with Babylon into a new identity and redemptive purpose. The people gathered as one, rebuilt the altar and put worship before construction. Today the foundation is laid, but the response is not simple. Joy and grief rise together, and the sermon uses that moment to call older and newer believers into one shared future.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Ezra 3:11-13 (NIV)

11 With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

12 But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy.

13 No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

1 The people praised God when the foundation was laid. The building was not finished. There were no completed walls, no impressive rooms and no final result to display. Yet they sang, 'He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever.' Wessie called attention to responsive worship: they were answering what God had already done. They did not wait for completion before giving thanks.

I often postpone gratitude until the whole problem is solved. Ezra 3 teaches me to worship at the foundation. The first restored prayer, the first honest conversation, the first small act of obedience and the first sign of renewed hunger are not insignificant. They are places to recognise God's goodness before the finished structure is visible.

2 Then the sermon lingered over the verse that is easy to skip. Older people who had seen Solomon's temple wept, while those who had never known a temple shouted for joy. The same foundation produced two honest responses. One group saw what had been lost; the other saw what was beginning. Scripture did not silence either sound. The grief and the joy became so loud that no one could distinguish them.

Wessie connected this with people who remain wounded by what was lost in the past. Pain can make the present look too small and the future impossible. Grief is real, and the sermon did not mock it. But grief becomes dangerous when it turns into bitterness,

resistance to God or refusal to recognise what He is doing now.

The same tension can appear in church life. Those who have followed Jesus for decades carry stories, tested faith, memories of God's power and lessons that younger believers desperately need. Yet long familiarity can also create resistance to unfamiliar expressions. Newer believers bring freshness, questions, passion and a willingness to celebrate what is beginning, but they may lack the depth that comes through years of faithfulness.

[3] Wessie divided the congregation according to how long they had followed Christ and then brought the groups together. The point was not that one side was better. It was that each side had something to pass on and something to receive. He rejected the idea of an old people's church and a youth church separated from one another. The preferred future required people to cross toward each other, take hands and pray.

The older generation must not make the younger generation live only in yesterday's temple. The younger generation must not despise the tears, stories and sacrifices that helped preserve the faith they now enjoy. Together they can honour what God did, receive what He is doing and move toward what He has not yet done.

This applies beyond age. Whenever change comes, I can be the person rejoicing or the person grieving. Mature unity does not demand that everyone feel the

same. It asks whether I will hold my brother or sister's hand while we seek God's future together. One temple is built from many lives. The church's sound can include gratitude, lament, hope and surrender without becoming divided.

Today I can ask whether nostalgia has made me resistant, or whether novelty has made me dismissive. God's call is not to erase the past or idolise it. It is to let the stories of faithfulness and the energy of new beginnings meet in worship, so that the sound heard far away is the sound of one people moving with God.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	At what stage of the rebuilding did the people give a great shout of praise?
2	Why did some people weep while others shouted for joy at the same foundation?
3	What prophetic action did Wessie use to show how longer-standing and newer believers should move forward?

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for every foundation You have laid, even where the building is not finished. Teach me to praise You at the beginning. Heal the grief and bitterness that keep me trapped in what was lost. Make me humble enough to receive from believers who are different from me, and generous enough to pass on what You have taught me. Join us as one people in Your preferred future. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

I will honour the past, welcome what God is doing now and cross toward others in faith.

DAY 5

The Work Begins Again

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday the foundation produced both joyful shouting and deep weeping. Wessie called the church to honour the past without resisting what God is doing now, and to bring longer-standing and newer believers together. Today the sermon moves into Ezra 4 and 5, where opposition appears friendly, discouragement stops the work for sixteen years, and God graciously speaks again through Haggai and Zechariah.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Ezra 4:4; Ezra 5:1-2; Zechariah 4:6 (NIV)

Ezra 4:4 - Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building.

Ezra 5:1-2 - Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet, a descendant of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jozadak set to work to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

Zechariah 4:6 - So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty."

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

1 The opposition did not first arrive with weapons. It arrived with an offer: 'Let us build with you.' Wessie showed from 2 Kings that the people making the offer feared the Lord while also serving other gods. Their words sounded cooperative, but their allegiance was divided. God gave Zerubbabel and the leaders discernment to refuse a partnership that would compromise the work.

The sermon was not teaching suspicion toward everyone. It was teaching dependence on the Holy Spirit for discernment in relationships, business and ministry. Friendliness is not the same as faithfulness. An opportunity can sound spiritual and still pull me away from the purpose and values God has given.

2 When their offer was refused, the adversaries revealed their intention. They discouraged the people, made them afraid and frustrated their purpose. The result was severe: the work stopped for sixteen years - not sixteen days. Wessie stressed that there was no immediate military attack in that part of the story. Sustained discouragement was enough.

That is a sobering warning. How easy is it for the enemy to stop the work God has called me to? Discouragement often says, 'There is no point. You are alone. It is too small. You have waited too long. People will mock you. You cannot remain holy in this environment.' If I repeatedly agree with that voice, a foundation can lie dormant for years.

Wessie applied this to holiness, relationships, sexual integrity, giving and commitment to the local church. The pressure may appear reasonable or convenient. Yet obedience is not preserved by drifting. It requires decisions, boundaries and sometimes the humility to ask another believer for help. When I cannot stand alone, I must reach for a brother or sister.

3 God did not abandon the stalled builders. In grace He raised Haggai and Zechariah to speak. Their words did more than make people feel better; they called the people back to action. Zerubbabel and Joshua set to work again, and the prophets stayed with them, supporting them. God used truth, encouragement and community to restart what discouragement had stopped.

Haggai confronted misplaced priorities: the people had become comfortable in their own houses while God's house remained unfinished. Zechariah then spoke the word that reframed the task: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit.' The hands that laid the foundation would also complete the work. The call was not to recover enough human force, but to return to dependence on God's Spirit.

Then came the encouragement not to despise small beginnings. Wessie shared how a major land purchase began with one small envelope containing twenty dollars. The amount looked almost meaningless beside the need, but God regarded the beginning differently because He knew what He could do with it. Small obedience is not small when it is placed in God's hands.

Today I need to identify what has stopped. Perhaps it has been dormant for years, months or only days. I can name the discouragement, reject isolation and tell a trusted person the commitment I am making. I do not have to wait sixteen years for a new beginning. The Spirit of God can speak life, direction and courage now, and the work can begin again.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	Why did Zerubbabel refuse the apparently friendly offer to help?
2	What actually caused the work to stop for sixteen years?
3	How did God restart the work, and where did Zechariah say the strength would come from?

PRAYER

Father, give me discernment where opposition is disguised as help and courage where discouragement has made me afraid. Show me what I have left unfinished. Thank You that Your Spirit is stronger than my weariness. Put trustworthy people beside me and help me take the next obedient step. Let the work begin again. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

Discouragement does not get the final word; by God's Spirit, the work can begin again.

DAY 6

Set Your Heart: Study, Do, Teach

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday we saw how false partnership, fear and discouragement stopped the rebuilding for sixteen years, and how God used Haggai and Zechariah to call the people back. The final message of the camp now brings the whole journey into one personal response. A stirred heart must become a set heart - a life that receives God's Word, obeys it and passes it on.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Ezra 7:10 (ESV)**
>
> *10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.*

THE WHOLE SERMON IN ONE FINAL REFLECTION

[1] The sermon began with reverence, expectation and the prayer that nobody would leave the camp unchanged. Wessie opened Ezra in the world of captivity: Jerusalem was ruined, Babylon was familiar and many people had settled into a life far from the place of promise. Yet God had not forgotten His word. He stirred Cyrus, then stirred the hearts of a remnant who were willing to leave comfort and return.

That first movement asked whether I have become content and complacent in Christ. God may stir me toward Himself, His Word, His likeness, His people and His mission. The stirring is not an emotional end in itself. It is God's gracious awakening of desire and obedience. It asks me to rise, prepare and say yes.

Ezra 2 then reminded us that God sees the individual. The returning exiles were not merely a number, although the company was counted. They were families, priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers and servants whose names belonged to the story. My calling may not look dramatic, but my yes matters. The true legacy is not simply what I leave for people; it is what I leave in people. A faithful life can carve out a future for children, spiritual children, neighbours, colleagues and the church.

Zerubbabel showed that origin does not determine destiny. His name carried Babylon and confusion, and his family story carried failure, yet God gave him a redemptive role. The greatest title I can carry is son or daughter of God. In that identity I can confront inherited patterns and ask what God wants me to lead the next generation out of.

2 From identity the sermon moved to worship. The people rebuilt the altar before the temple because royal permission and a building programme could never replace dependence on God. They praised when only the foundation was visible. Some shouted because a new thing had begun; others wept because they remembered what had been lost. Wessie called older

and newer believers to cross toward one another, honour the stories of faithfulness, receive fresh life and move as one people into God's preferred future.

Then opposition came in two forms: false friendliness and sustained discouragement. The enemy did not need to destroy the workers; he only needed to convince them to stop. For sixteen years the foundation remained unfinished. The warning was direct: do not let mockery, compromise, fear, pornography, convenience, disappointment or isolation frustrate God's purpose in your life.

God answered the silence with His Word. Haggai confronted misplaced priorities. Zechariah declared, 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit.' The hands that started would complete the work. The small beginning was not to be despised. One twenty-dollar envelope could become the first visible sign of a far larger provision, because God sees the end while we see only the beginning.

3 The closing Scripture, Ezra 7:10, gathers the whole weekend into a lasting pattern: Ezra set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, to do it and to teach it. Study, do, teach. Receive the Word, obey the Word, pass on the Word. The stirring of the weekend must become the setting of the heart after the weekend.

To study is more than collecting notes. It is to return to Scripture with hunger, reverence and patience. To do it is to let truth become forgiveness, holiness, generosity, reconciliation, mission and perseverance. To teach it is

not limited to preaching from a platform. It is the legacy left in people through the way I speak, serve, parent, mentor, work and walk with younger and older believers.

This is how the flame keeps burning twenty, thirty or fifty years later. I write down what God stirred, tell a trusted person, take the small next step and remain in the Word. I refuse to settle again in Babylon. I keep worship before the walls, hold the hands of other generations, resist discouragement and trust the Spirit to complete what He began.

The final question is no longer only, 'What did God stir at camp?' It is, 'What will I now set my heart to?' A stirred heart can cool. A set heart returns daily. By God's grace, I can set my heart to know His Word, live His Word and leave His Word in people.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER THE WHOLE SERMON

1	What central movement did the whole sermon trace from Babylon to Jerusalem and from stirring to rebuilding?
2	What responses did Wessie call for when facing identity struggles, generational differences and discouragement?
3	According to Ezra 7:10, what three things must shape the life that carries this message beyond the camp?

FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for stirring hearts and for never abandoning the work when Your people become weary. Set my heart now. Give me hunger to study Your Word, humility and courage to do what it says, and love to teach it by my words and my life. Lead me out of comfortable captivity, restore worship, redeem what I inherited, join me to Your people and strengthen me against discouragement. By Your Spirit, complete what You have begun, and let my life leave Christ in others. Amen.

THE THOUGHT TO KEEP AFTER THE SIX DAYS

Set my heart, Lord: to study Your Word, to do it, and to leave it in people.

DAY 7

Carry the Stirring Forward

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday gathered the whole camp journey around Ezra 7:10: set your heart to study God's Word, do it and teach it. Today is one final day to consolidate what we have carried through the week. God stirs us out of comfortable captivity, gives us a new identity, calls us to worship before building, joins generations, warns us about discouragement and strengthens us by His Spirit to finish what He began.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Philippians 1:6 (NIV)**
>
> *6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

[1] The first movement of the weekend was God's initiative. He stirred Cyrus, then stirred the hearts of the remnant to leave a Babylon that had become familiar. Wessie kept returning to the question, 'Lord, what is it You want to stir in my heart?' That stirring was never meant to be a momentary emotion. It was a call toward God Himself, His Word, His likeness, His people and His mission. The response was a willing yes - sometimes to go, sometimes to give, sometimes to

forgive, and sometimes simply to remain faithful where God has placed me.

Ezra 2 then slowed the story down enough to name people. Leaders, families, priests, Levites, servants and ordinary households were counted because their obedience mattered. The sermon turned that into a question of legacy: not only what I leave for people, but what I leave in people. Zerubbabel's story deepened the point. His name and family history could have defined him by Babylon, confusion and failure, yet God gave him a redemptive place in the story. My deepest identity is not my past, my title or my achievement. The greatest title is son or daughter of God.

2 The second movement was about how God's people rebuild. They built the altar before the temple because worship had to come before the programme. They praised when there was only a foundation, not a finished building. At that same foundation, some rejoiced and some wept. Wessie refused to make either generation the enemy. Those who remembered what God had done carried stories worth passing on; those seeing a new beginning carried fresh faith and expectation. The church needed both, taking one another by the hand and moving together toward God's preferred future.

That same rebuilding required discernment. The offer in Ezra 4 sounded friendly, but divided worship could not become the foundation of God's house. When the offer was refused, discouragement followed, and the

work stopped for sixteen years. One of the strongest warnings of the weekend was that the enemy does not always need to destroy the work; sometimes he only needs to persuade us to stop. That is why Wessie called people to pursue holiness, refuse convenient compromise and reach for a trusted brother or sister when discouragement begins to isolate them.

3 The final movement was from stalled work to faithful completion. God raised Haggai and Zechariah to speak life and truth into people who had grown cold. The word to Zerubbabel was not to find more human force but to depend on the Spirit: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit.' The hands that laid the foundation would complete it, and the day of small things was not to be despised. Wessie's twenty-dollar-envelope testimony made the point memorable: a small beginning can be a massive moment when God knows what He intends to do with it.

Then Ezra 7:10 gave the camp its lasting pattern: study, do, teach. I return to the Word, obey what God says and leave that truth in other people. Philippians 1:6 adds the confidence that was also spoken over the weekend: the God who begins a good work is able to carry it on to completion. My part is not to recreate the emotion of camp. It is to keep responding - write down what God stirred, take the next obedient step, stay close to His Word, tell someone I trust and keep building by His Spirit.

As this devotional week closes, the question becomes practical: What did God stir that I will now set my

heart to live? I do not want Babylon to become comfortable again. I want worship before the walls, Christ as my identity, people as my legacy, unity across generations, discernment when opposition is subtle, perseverance when discouragement is loud and a heart set to know, do and pass on God's Word.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What did the sermon say God stirs us toward, and what kind of response does that stirring call for?
2	What did the altar, the mixed joy and weeping, and the sixteen-year stoppage teach us about rebuilding God's way?
3	What practical pattern will help me carry the camp message forward after this week?

PRAYER

Father, thank You for every way You stirred our hearts through this journey in Ezra. Keep me from settling again into comfortable captivity. Root my identity in Christ, teach me to worship before I build, help me honour and walk with other generations, give me discernment and keep discouragement from stopping what You have begun. By Your Spirit, strengthen my small acts of obedience. Set my heart to study Your Word, do it and pass it on, and carry Your good work in me to completion. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

What God stirred, I will set my heart to live - and trust His Spirit to carry the work to completion.