

# A Mighty Redwood/ Ezra the Tree Man

Lesson 4

## KNOWING GOD MEANS KNOWING HIS BOOK

The Kinnoins have many trees in their yard. To keep them healthy they consult with the “tree man”, who sometimes injects slow-release fertilizer deep into the soil, and sometimes prunes away unwanted growth. He treats the tree at its point of need, and causes it to flourish. He understands trees and their needs.

**Principle:** *“People who are unfamiliar with the Word of God will eventually be unfamiliar with God Himself. To know God intimately we need to be familiar with what He has said about Himself.” – Francis Schaeffer*

*“Scripture is like a pair of spectacles which dispels the darkness and gives us a clear view of God.” – John Calvin*

**Bible Character: EZRA**

**Scripture:** The Book of Ezra: Key verses are 7:6-10

- 6 This **Ezra went up from Babylon**, and he was a scribe **skilled in the law of Moses**, which the LORD God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all he requested because **the hand of the LORD his God was upon him**.
- 7 And some of the sons of Israel and some of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants went up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.
- 8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.
- 9 For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because **the good hand of his God was upon him**.
- 10 For Ezra had set his heart to **study** the law of the LORD, and to **practice** it, and to **teach** His statutes and ordinances in Israel.

**Insight:** During the fifth century before Christ three leading thinkers of history were making their mark: Buddha, Confucius, and Socrates. In Babylon a Jewish scholar was also leaving a significant legacy and example; his name was Ezra.

Ezra's *familiarity with* and commitment to God's word enabled him to be the agent of revival and spiritual reform when God allowed some of His people to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their homeland. He demonstrates that what the world needs is not new thinkers or thoughts. It needs people to pay attention to the thoughts – and words – of God. (Taken from *To Stand and Not Be Moved* by Fran Sciacca.)

**Hands On** (vs. 6, 9)

Perhaps there have been times when you wished God would show up in practical ways in your life. All of us can relate to and appreciate a “hands on” approach. So, what brought this about in Ezra's life?

First of all, Ezra had the blessing of a godly heritage, and was in fact a direct descendant of Aaron the chief priest (see 7:1-5). But he did not inherit expertise in God's word; he invested time in studying it and allowing God to lead and use Him (vs. 6 and 10). Then as he took action (“went up from Babylon”, v. 6), *“the hand of the Lord his God was upon him”* (v. 6). This “good hand of his God” appears in verse 9 as well.

Can you expect God to lead you, use you and provide for you if you neglect Him and His word? How could you have His wisdom and think His thoughts without knowing His word? 1 Cor. 2:16 says that *“we have the mind of Christ”*. Rom. 10:17 says that *“faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ”*. Heb. 5:14 makes the case for taking in “solid food” – the deep teaching of God's word – and practicing it so that we can learn to discern good from evil. 1 Peter 2:2 says we are to *“long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”* Clearly our investment in studying God's word pays big dividends!

► *There is a direct relationship between “accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15) and God's direct work in our lives.*

**Character Trait** (vs. 9-10)

These verses present an excellent resume of Ezra’s life and character. Do you see a connection between verses 9 and 10?

The phrase “set his heart” in verse 10 means to establish, make firm, or set up something. It means to be complete devoted to what you are pursuing. What were the three things that Ezra had “set his heart” to do regarding the Word of God?

- S \_\_\_\_\_ God’s Word.
- P \_\_\_\_\_ God’s Word.
- T \_\_\_\_\_ God’s Word.

There is significance to the actual order of these three commitments. Why is this significant? Mat. 12:34 says, “the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart”. They either defile us (see Mat. 15:18) or edify others (“the tongue of the wise brings healing” – Prov. 12:18). Jesus, in pointing out what we consider of the most value, said, “where your treasure is there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:21).

- What could happen if you practice what you have not learned well?
- What is a potential flaw in trying to teach what you have not learned (or practiced)?
- What is the key to the effective STUDY of God’s word?

As a note, *financial mismanagement* is akin to cutting off big, strong limbs from the redwood tree, severely compromising its health, stature, strength, and benefit to others.

**For Discussion**

For today’s table discussion I’d like you to look up as many of the following verses as time allows and fill in the benefit of being familiar with God’s Word.

<b>Scripture</b>	<b>Benefit</b>
Deuteronomy 32:46-47	
Psalms 119:11	
Psalms 119:98	
Psalms 119:45 (and John 8:32)	
Matthew 4:1-4	
Acts 17:11	
Romans 15:4	
Hebrews 4:12	

**The Caution:** Just as an unhealthy tree is subject to aphids and other insects, a man without God’s word flowing through his veins is vulnerable to spiritual decay. This tree, this man, will not provide the shade for others that God designed it to provide, and will not bear the fruit that God intended.

**The Cure:** Spend time EACH DAY reading God’s word. On a regular basis, **study** it, **practice** it, and **teach** (share) it to others. Be a “Tree Man” like Ezra! **Wear your “SPT” badge this week!**

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**Next Time:** Esther the Garden Tool / *Seeing Your Life as a Means, Not an End*