

What Makes a Great Leader?

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[0 : 00] As we read chapter 7, verses 1-10, if you would stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together.

Remember this in the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia.

This Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses that the Lord, the God of Israel, had given. And the king granted him all that he asked for the hand of the Lord his God was on him.

And there went up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king some of the people of Israel and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers and temple servants.

And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which is in the seventh year of the king. For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia.

[1 : 41] And on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem for the good hand of his God was on him. 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.

May God add a blessing to the reading of his Word. Would you please be seated? What makes someone a great leader?

We could spend a lot of time answering that question, listing all of the traits we believe make a great leader.

Our culture values leadership and leadership development. A Google search on leadership will return thousands of books and podcasts and blog posts and seminars that address the importance of leaders casting a vision and then developing a strategy to implement that vision so that they can be a more effective leader.

And it's interesting to me that while our culture stresses the importance of leadership, we lack great leaders. I think there are people who would be in our culture great leaders, but they refuse to lead and I think they refuse to lead because they know how difficult it is to lead people.

[3 : 19] Our society is very individualistic, increasingly resistant to authority and hyper-critical of the decisions that leaders make.

So the people I think who could lead well don't end up leading. But someone has to lead. Someone has to fill that void.

And the people who tend to fill that void are leaders who care more about themselves than the people who are supposed to be following them. They are leaders who lead because they want position of power over others to execute that power over them and make a profit from other people. Many want to lead, but for the wrong reasons. In Matthew 20, Jesus is approached by two of his closest disciples, James and John, along with their mother.

They want Jesus to grant them leadership positions in his kingdom. They are concerned about their place in Jesus' kingdom.

[4 : 37] Perhaps they thought that they were more fit to lead than the other disciples. From Scripture, we know that Jesus' disciples sometimes argued over which of them was the greatest.

They were concerned about their ranking. They were concerned about their positioning. They were concerned about whatever role that they would have in whatever kingdom Jesus established.

It seems that although they were willing to follow Jesus, none of them was willing to follow the others. When the other disciples heard about what James and John had requested of Jesus, along with their mother, they were furious.

They were indignant. They must have been thinking, look at those two mama's boys crying to mommy, using their mother to try to manipulate Jesus to get them what they want.

The truth was they all coveted high positions of leadership next to Jesus, and they wanted those positions for the wrong reasons.

[5 : 52] And so Jesus says to them in Matthew 20, verses 25 through 28, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

Great leaders lead like Jesus.

They lead to serve others. They lead by giving of themselves to achieve the greater good of others. They don't lead to receive glory, but to give glory to God. Ezra embodied the leadership qualities taught by Jesus in Matthew chapter 20.

He led in service for God for the benefit of God's people that God would receive the glory for it all.

[7 : 09] And from these verses, we learn an important principle about leadership, and it serves as our main idea for this morning's sermon. Great leaders have a heart for God and a mind for truth.

Great leaders have a heart for God and a mind for truth. Ezra, we learn, was a great student. He was a great statesman. He was a great reformer.

He was a great preacher who just now arrives in chapter 7 at the halfway point of this book that bears his name. If you remember my message from last week, chapter 6 ended on a high note.

The temple was rebuilt, rededicated, and the people of God worshipped him with renewed reverence. And there is now about a 60-year gap in time between the close of chapter 6 and the beginning of chapter 7 in this book.

Ezra's family did not return with the first group of Jewish exiles. Why didn't his family decide to go back? We don't know.

[8 : 21] It could have been that they didn't want to go back. Perhaps they had grown accustomed to life in Babylon. Maybe Ezra's parents and grandparents didn't share the same burden as the first exiles to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

We don't know. What we do know is that Ezra cared. And Ezra was concerned about what transpired in Jerusalem since the temple had been rebuilt and rededicated.

Ezra and those who returned with him were more than likely born during that 60-year period of time between the end of chapter 6 and the beginning of chapter 7.

And during that time, the Jews living in Jerusalem began to revert back to sinful practices, the same practices that incurred God's wrath and sent their ancestors into exile in the first place.

The primary concern for Ezra was how God's people had neglected God's word. They needed a leader.

[9 : 35] They needed a preacher to remind them, to teach them, to warn them, and to encourage them to know God, to know his word, and to obey it.

They needed someone to wake them up from their spiritual slumber. They needed someone to snap them out of their spiritual lethargy.

They needed someone to stir their hearts for God and their minds for truth. God's people needed a great leader, and God sent Ezra to fill that leadership void.

I think it goes without saying that God's people today need leaders like Ezra. More than that, the church needs leaders like Jesus, who Ezra foreshadowed.

We need men in our pulpits with a heart for God and with a mind for truth. We need men who lead by serving, who live to serve Jesus so that his name will be great instead of men who use Jesus to make their names great.

[10 : 48] There's a truth in these verses that those God has called to ministry need to hear. There is also a truth in these verses that God's people need to hear and need to apply to their own lives because while God may not be calling you or me to a leadership task as great as the one that Ezra had, he does call us to lead like Ezra.

whether it's in your home or in your workplace or in our church, I'm sure that if you think about it, God has in some way put you in a place of leadership.

He has given you some kind of responsibility over someone else. And if you're a student here this morning, God has put you in a place to be an example for your unbelieving friends to follow.

You are maybe the only person that they know right now who knows Jesus and they need you to set that example for them. And one day it will be your time to lead others.

And you need to know what makes a great leader because we're going to need you in the future.

We all need to know what great Christ-like leadership looks like because Jesus often warned about wolves dressed in sheep's clothing.

[12 : 29] And you don't want to follow a leader whose desire isn't to serve you but to devour you. Ultimately, Jesus is the leader whom we are all called as Christians to follow.

And if you're not following Jesus, Jesus says that you are following the path that will lead ultimately to your destruction. In Matthew 7, 13 through 17, Jesus says this, If you're not following Jesus, understand that Jesus has brought you here, we need leaders who are here today to rescue you from the path that leads to destruction and from the leaders who don't love you and who don't care about you and who want to devour you.

We need leaders like Ezra who modeled the kind of leadership of Jesus Christ. We need leaders who are here to help you and who are here to help you and who are here to help you. We need leaders who have a heart for God and who have a mind for the truth.

And again, there are many qualities. And there are many characteristics and attributes in the Bible that talk about what make a great leader.

But our text today has three. Three factors that produce a great leader. Leaders, leaders again, who have a heart for God and who have a mind for the truth as we see in Ezra.

[14 : 24] The first factor comes from verses 1 through 5. Great leaders often have a godly heritage. And please note the word often and not always.

It is not always the case that godly families produce godly children. Salvation is not passed through the bloodstream. Everyone must be born again.

And that is a work of the Holy Spirit. There are numerous examples in Scripture of parents who were devoted to the Lord, who raised their children according to His word and were godly, yet their children did not follow in their footsteps.

Take Samuel as an example. Samuel was a prophet. Samuel was devoted to the Lord. He was a man of integrity and courage, but his sons were wicked.

In 1 Samuel 8, 2 through 3, it says, The name of Samuel's firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second Abijah, and they were judges in Beersheba.

[15 : 39] Yet his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice. The Bible describes King Hezekiah as a man who had a close relationship with God.

We read about that in 2 Kings 18, chapter 18, verses 5 through 7. He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him.

For he held fast to the Lord. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him wherever he went.

He prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him. Hezekiah was a godly man. He was a godly king, a godly leader, but his son Manasseh was one of the most wicked men in the Bible.

We read about him in 2 Kings 21, too. And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out for the people of Israel.

[16 : 52] Manasseh reinstated the worship of idols. Manasseh sacrificed his own sons. He participated in the dark arts, in black magic.

Despite Manasseh's upbringing, he was an evil man who led other people to sin against God in terrible ways. Maybe you can identify with Samuel and Hezekiah.

You've prayed for your children. You've modeled Christ before them. You've brought them to church. You've disciplined them.

You've taught them to have good morals and to have good values. And you know what Proverbs 22 says. Let's read it. Train up a child in the way he should go.

Even when he is old, he will not depart from it. You know that verse. You've done your part. But your child has departed from the way that you've trained them to go.

[17 : 59] Friend, I have a few things to say to you. First, Proverbs are not promises. They are general observations of life that are typically true.

It is generally true that a child raised to love Jesus will continue to do so when they grow up.

But as we've seen from Scripture, that isn't always the case. Secondly, I want to tell you, stop beating yourself up.

We cannot save our children. Only God can do that. Only God can save anyone. You've worked hard to do your part, and God knows that.

And he certainly knows and can relate to the heartache that you feel. And third, I want to encourage you.

[19 : 05] Don't give up. Don't stop praying. Don't stop trying. And don't lose hope. There's a family in my previous church, and they had two grown sons who never came to church.

They brought their grandchildren, and they brought them every time the door was open. It was the grandparents who were bringing them to Sunday school. It was the grandparents who were bringing them to Awana. It was the grandparents who often were their Sunday school teachers and Awana leaders.

One of those sons wanted nothing to do with the church, said, I'm an atheist. The other son didn't seem to care, and he never came to anything.

I know that they prayed for them. I know that we talked and we counseled about their sons and how heartbroken they were. And eventually, over time, one of those sons started coming to church.

And years later, he's now an elder of that church. And I got to witness on Facebook him baptize his daughter. The other son, as far as I know, still doesn't believe.

[20 : 24] But I know that family, and I know those grandparents, and I know that they haven't given up. Don't you give up. And don't beat yourself up.

And don't lose hope. We should all desire and strive to leave behind a godly legacy for the next generation.

And that takes work, and that takes prayer. Fathers, this is primarily your responsibility. Ephesians 6.4 says, So I ask you, fathers, do you care more about your kids' achievements on the sports field, in the classroom, in the performing arts?

Do you care more about those things than you care about their walk with the Lord? Do you provoke them to sin and rebellion because you, yourself, you're not modeling Christ-like love and devotion to them?

Pray that God will help you establish a legacy, a heritage that honors him. Some of you ladies have had to take on this role because the father of your children or grandchildren has refused it.

[22 : 03] thank you for what you're doing. And be encouraged by the example of Timothy.

Timothy's father and grandfather did not share the faith of his mother or his grandmother. And so they, those women, took that role on themselves. And Timothy became a great man of God.

Paul talks about that in 2 Timothy 1.5. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice.

And now I am sure dwells in you as well. So great leaders often, but not always, come from a godly heritage.

And I need to add another caveat here before I get into Ezra's heritage. Great leaders can also come from ungodly families.

[23 : 03] Great leaders can come from an ungodly heritage. King Josiah was the son of an ungodly father and grandfather. Josiah was only eight years old when he inherited the throne and he brought sweeping reforms throughout the kingdom.

He learned from their mistakes and he set right and undid many of the wrongs that they had done. I have a friend, he's a pastor of a big church.

He was the product of a broken family. He was radically saved in his early 20s from a very sinful life.

And he has sons. And one of the times I was talking with him, he told me that one of his sons, his oldest son, was going to seminary. Now I had heard pastors with sons before who had discouraged their, they had sounded like they had discouraged their sons from entering the ministry because, and understandably so, they didn't want their sons to think that, well, you just have to do what dad does.

Because many sons do want to follow in their father's footsteps. And so I asked him the same, is that something that you discouraged him from doing? And his answer surprised me. He said, no, I've been praying for this.

[24 : 23] I've prayed that God would change my family's legacy. Friend, God brings dead people back to life, does he not?

And if he can do that, he can bring a, or he can begin, I should say, a heritage in you that produces godly men and women who have a heart for the Lord and a mind for the truth.

It can start with you. Now let's look at Ezra. Ezra was a priest descended from priests whose heritage traced all the way back to Aaron.

The list of names in verses one through four might cause us to yawn. It might cause us like me to get our tongues twisted up. But it was significant. It was significant for the work that God had raised him up and called him to do.

In Jewish societies, genealogies were very important. And so Ezra's genealogy served as his resume. It provided him with impressive credentials that the Jews living in Jerusalem took notice of. [25 : 34] He had the heritage, he had the training, the wisdom, and the skill that had been lacking in their leaders for centuries. But Ezra was a great leader not simply because of his heritage, which leads me to the second factor.

What makes a great leader who has a heart for God and a mind for truth? Great leaders are hard-working students of Scripture. Great leaders are hard-working students of Scripture. Look again at the beginning of verse 6. This Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses that the Lord, the God of Israel, had given him.

Again, we know, we've gone over. Ezra's family was not perfect. Nobody's family is perfect. They chose not to return with the first wave of exiles, but they did raise Ezra to know God's Word, which he studied with great skill.

Now, the word translated as skill can also in the Hebrew be translated as rapid. The idea here is that Ezra devoured the Word of God.

[26 : 47] God blessed him with a sharp mind, which he used to study, to memorize, and to absorb the Word of God.

The Lord blessed Ezra with abilities, but he didn't download the Scriptures into his mind. Don't you wish that it could work like that? Like, our mind could just be like a computer and you just download the whole Bible inside of it.

Doesn't work that way. Didn't work that way for Ezra. It was up to Ezra to sharpen the abilities that God had given him.

Ezra had to read. Ezra had to write. Ezra had to study. And because he worked hard to study God's Word, he was prepared for the hard work of leading God's people.

There's a couple of applications for us at this point. First of all, all of us should be hard working in our study of the Bible.

[27 : 46] When Jesus prayed for his disciples, including you, who he saved, he asked that God the Father in John 17, 17 through 19, would sanctify them in the truth.

Your Word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake, I consecrate myself that they also may be sanctified in the truth.

Another application here. Again, geared at you husbands. You are commanded to lead your wives by loving them as Jesus has loved his church.

Ephesians 5, 25 through 26. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word.

Husbands, you are to be the hardest working student of Scripture in your family.

[28 : 58] And the more you do that, the better you will lead your wife. God expects you to be the Bible expert in your house.

Wives and children, if your husband is not fulfilling that role, ask him to. Ask him to. Young people, you are more so than any generation, more so than any generation, you are bombarded on a consistent basis with lies and with deceptions by those who do not know the Lord and do not love the truth.

Psalms 119 is for you. How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your Word.

Study the Word. Know the Word. And God will bless you as a result of that. Paul instructed Titus, a pastor, to work hard to study God's Word so that his hard work would impact the hearts and the minds of all the people in his church, of all of the different generations in the church.

In Titus 2, 1-10, listen at what he says. Look at this instruction. But as for you, Titus, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

[30 : 30] And here's the impact. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior,

not slanderers or slaves to much wine.

They are to teach what is good. And so to train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands that the Word of God may not be reviled.

He goes on, likewise urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned so that an opponent may not or may be put to shame having nothing evil to say about us.

Bond servants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. They are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior.

So God expects all of us to be hard-working students of His Word and especially those whom He's called to teach it and whom He's called to preach it.

[31 : 53] James 3.1 says, not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

This isn't meant to discourage people from teaching God's Word, but it is a warning. If you are going to teach, if you are going to preach God's Word, you can't take it lightly.

You cannot take shortcuts. You cannot just go up there and wing it. you must be willing to work and you must be willing to work hard and if you truly believe that the Bible is God's Word, you will work hard.

Ezra gave himself to study the Bible because he believed that the Scripture was God's Word. He was a great leader because he knew from God's Word how to live and as a result of that, he knew how to lead.

His hard work had an impact in reforming God's people. It also had an impact on his unbelieving boss who was the king.

[33 : 09] In verse 6, the rest of verse 6, it says, and the king granted him all that he asked for the hand of the Lord was upon him. King Artaxerxes didn't just decide out of nowhere, out of the blue, you know what?

I'm going to send Ezra to Jerusalem. No. Ezra, like Nehemiah later on, probably heard reports from visiting merchants who had traveled from Jerusalem that concerned him.

Instead of thinking, you know, someone should help them, someone must do something about that. No, I think instead he prayed, God, send me. Ezra's hard work and commitment to God's word put him in a position where he could petition the king for permission to go back to Jerusalem.

Like Joseph, Ezra must have proven that he not only worked hard, but in knowing God's word and obeying God's word, he must have demonstrated before this pagan king that this was a man of integrity, that this was a man who could be trusted, that this was a man who was capable of leading. So at some point, Ezra probably approached the king with this request and because he knew God's word, he knew God's will and he desired to lead God's people.

[34 : 50] And as a result, we read that God's hand was on him and the king was moved to do whatever Ezra asked him to do.

Another application here is for those of you who work, those of you who have supervisors, when you work hard to study God's word and you work hard in applying God's word to your life, unbelievers will take notice of that.

When you show up to work on time every day, when you complete your tasks and you do them well, when you set a good example for others, when you treat your co-workers and your supervisors and your customers the way that you would want people to treat you, when you don't take advantage of whatever flexibility you may have, when you don't steal or fudge on your expense reports, you gain people's trust.

You may be promoted for that, you may not be promoted for that, but you will be doing what pleases the Lord. Colossians 3, 23 through 24 says, whatever you do, whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

You are ultimately always serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Bottom line here, great leaders have a great heart for God, they have a mind for truth.

[36 : 36] They work hard for God because they work hard to study and to apply his word, the truth, to their lives. And as a result of that, they don't take shortcuts.

Christians don't take shortcuts. Jesus did not take shortcuts.

I'm not talking about traveling, take shortcuts when you travel, sure, but I'm talking about just when you work and in your life and when it comes to God's will and what it says in obeying him. You know the commercial, I don't know, I think it was Staples or something, had the easy button?

Oh, how often we wish that easy button was a real thing. Well, it's not a real thing. And even if it was a real thing, Jesus never looked for the shortcut. He never took the easy way out.

Neither should we. He doesn't call us to easy. He calls us to follow him and that means bearing a cross. Great leaders are willing to work hard work.

[37 : 43] But don't be a workaholic. Don't sacrifice time with the Lord and family for work. Hard work is good so long as it doesn't cause you to sin.

Now, the third factor here. Ezra had the heritage. He was a hardworking student of God's Word. Great leaders are heroic in their obedience to God.

They're heroic in their obedience to God. Verses 7-9 record when Ezra departed from Babylon and who he departed with. This was a four-month journey. In chapter 8, we learn that Ezra and his fellow travelers carried a lot of treasure with them that they were going to take back to Jerusalem and that they were going to offer to God there.

Ezra led the people to fast and to pray and to prepare for this journey that would be taken with women and with children through lands where there would be thieves awaiting a group like this to ambush them and to steal from them and probably kill them.

No doubt there was fear in the hearts of those who were returning with Ezra. But Ezra's heart for God and his mind for truth made him a heroic leader.

[39 : 02] He trusted in God, not in people. He trusted in God, not in himself. And his courage emboldened the faith of others. In Ezra chapter 8 verses 22 through 23 says for Ezra is speaking here, I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way.

Since we had told the king, the hand of our God is for good on all who seek him and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him. So we fasted and implored our God for this and he listened to our entreaty.

Ezra was heroic because God's people are hard to lead. The Israelites had a history of rebelling against their God appointed leaders.

Jerusalem was in disarray. Ezra was going to go back and he was going to challenge and change the status quo.

He was going to challenge the sins that people no longer thought were sins. He was going to change the way that they had a grown accustomed to doing things.

[40 : 19] And that takes courage because we all know how much God's people love change, don't we? I have another pastor friend when he first started at his church.

He noticed that out in their foyer was this huge coat rack that nobody used and it took up a lot of space when people were trying to fellowship and there were other things that he was planning to put out there.

And so he took it out and he put it someplace else. And once people started finding out, emails, phone calls, text messages, what did you do with our coat rack?

One lady stopped coming to church altogether because she was so upset about her or their coat rack and whatever had happened to it.

It's sad. It's sad that in the church we become so attached to things, and to our traditions that have nothing to do with God's word.

[41 : 35] They have nothing to do with God's word and they have nothing to do with our mission as God's people. Jesus changed things, didn't he?

He changed things. Jesus challenged the status quo, didn't he? You bet he did. Jesus was committed to God's will all the way to the cross.

People got in his way, but he was undeterred. We need more leaders who dare to be heroic for the glory of God.

And it's a shame that moving a coat rack would be considered a heroic thing for someone to do in ministry. We need heroic leaders, and we need people in the church who encourage leaders to be

heroic.

Ezra was heroic because he was raised to know God. He worked hard to know and to study God's word. And as a result of that, he knew what to do.

[42 : 49] He knew what needed to be done. He was heroic to face the challenge. He was heroic to answer the call. And in verse 10, it says, for Ezra set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach his statutes and his rules in Israel.

Great leaders have a heart for God. They have a mind for truth. They are heroic because they have studied the Bible, they do the Bible, and they teach the Bible.

God's people need great leaders who likewise know the Bible, do the Bible, and teach the Bible.

God's people need leaders who do and follow the instruction of what Paul told Timothy, or I should say, we need heroic teachers because of what Paul warned Timothy about in 2 Timothy 4, 3-4.

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry, and in doing so, Timothy would be heroic.

[44 : 27] Set your mind to learn the scriptures. Do not settle for anything else. Do not allow yourself to be distracted from that because the church, our nation, needs great leaders.

We need leaders who will tell people about Jesus. We need leaders who will act like Jesus. How do we adjust our lives according to this message?

I think it's this. Great leaders follow Jesus. Couldn't think of an H there. Sorry for those of you that might bother you. But ultimately great leaders are followers. The greatest leaders follow Jesus.

Jesus had the greatest heritage, didn't he? He's the eternal son of God. God. Jesus worked hard on earth, didn't he? He worked hard obeying all of God's word.

He worked hard to provide us that righteousness that we could never have on our own. He worked hard by going all the way to the cross. He worked hard as a child. We don't have many verses about Jesus as a child, but one we do have comes from Luke 2 40.

[45 : 37] And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him. We can see Jesus studying God's word, though he was the word incarnate. Jesus was heroic.

Again, he didn't take any shortcuts. Satan offered him shortcuts, didn't he? In the wilderness, hey, if you just do this, hey, if you do this, if you just bow down and worship me, no cross for you.

He didn't take any shortcuts. Even when he was troubled in his own heart and his own mind, even when he was anxious in the garden of Gethsemane, knowing what he was about to endure on the cross, where he would be forsaken, where he who knew no sin would become sin so that we, by faith in him, would be saved.

He didn't take any shortcuts. He knew there was no other way for his people to be saved, and he served.

He saved us by dying in our place for our sins, sins, and rising again, victorious, that we who believe in him are saved, we're forgiven, we're cleansed, we're made right with God forever.

[46 : 50] Our great leader, our great shepherd, heroically laid down his life for you. And if he's given you a position to lead, how can you not follow that example?

And if you're here today and you are not following Jesus, today Jesus is calling you to follow him. Today he is calling you to turn to him. Today he is calling you to put your faith in him.

He wants to save you, he wants to forgive you, he wants you to know his love and the hope and the joy and the peace that that gives and lasts forever.

For those of you who are saved, what can you do or what are some other things that you can do?

After hearing what you've heard, I think a few. Pray.

If you haven't already started to, pray that God will establish or continue to establish a godly legacy through you in your family. study God's word.

[48 : 01] There are so many great resources out there to help us be better students of God's word. If you don't know what they are, please come and find me after church this morning. I would love to tell you those things and share some of those resources with you.

Another, learn from the example of other great leaders. Have mentors in your life, people that you can talk to, people who have done it or doing it, who you can learn from, resolve to be a great leader for Jesus.

Love God. Devote your mind to the truth and God will take care of the rest. You follow Jesus. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for this example that we have in our scripture this morning of a man like Ezra. Lord, a man who knew that there was problems and who is willing to be the one whom you sent to resolve the issues and to bring your people back to you.

[49 : 08] And God, we've seen that in order for that to happen, it's a blessing to come from godly heritage. Lord, I pray for each one of us that we would strive to incorporate more of your word into our family time together.

That God, we would strive and that we would not sacrifice church for other things but that we would make discipling our children an important task. God, I pray that we would study your word harder.

Lord, I pray that we would work hard, especially those of us whom you've called to teach and preach your word. That Lord, we would understand the great responsibility that you've given us and that we wouldn't take it lightly and that you would use us to teach well and to preach well.

And God, I pray that we would all be heroic. Right now, Lord, our nation is in need of heroic people. And Lord, I pray that your church, your people, would be the heroes that are needed, that we would speak the truth in love, that we would not be ashamed in our proclamation of the gospel because we know that it's only those who follow Jesus who are saved.

And so, God, we pray for your help and Holy Spirit, we trust that you will provide that help to us as we study, as we work hard to be on the mission that you've called us and commanded us to do.

[50 : 27] And we ask that all of it, Lord, would give you glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.