



# Ezra & Nehemiah



## Reading the Bible Together

May 2016

### What is 'In Sync' Bible Reading?

'In Sync' encourages us to read together through the Bible, and then reflect together on what we have read from God's Word. We consider the main message and the key themes of a whole book (or books) of the Bible, and then we can share with others what we have learnt through our Bible reading.

*'I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.'* (Psalm 119:16)

### Questions to consider

Reading the Bible does not have to be an intellectual study. Anyone can read the Bible and by God's grace understand it. The main thing is that we pray for God's help as we read.

Here are some questions to help you think through what you are reading:

1. What have I learnt about God and about Jesus?
2. What does this teach me about humanity and myself?
3. What has most encouraged me from this book?
4. How does this teach me to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul and mind? (Matt 22:37-40)
5. How does this teach me to love my neighbour as myself? (Matt 22:37-40)
6. Is there anything else I should learn here to be 'equipped for every good work' (2 Tim 3:17)

### Ezra (10 chapters)

The first of six post-captivity books (of which Nehemiah is the second) focusing on the small remnant of people seeking a close relationship with God, even while most of the people were prospering in captivity and wished to stay there. The book was most likely written by Ezra himself between 457 and 444 BC and might have originally formed one book with Nehemiah. The period covered here by Ezra is estimated to be about 80 years. The first 6 chapters focus on the restoration of the temple, and the last 4 on the restoration of the people. We see God's sovereignty over all things continue, even using the actions of ungodly rulers for His own purposes. The people need godly leadership, and Ezra's spiritual leadership gives evidence of how a godly man can influence a nation for and through God.

### Nehemiah (13 chapters)

This book, also probably written by Ezra between 424 and 400 BC and is estimated to cover a period of 11 years. Ezra and Nehemiah record the rebuilding of what is broken down in Jerusalem. In Ezra we read of the restoration of the temple, and in Nehemiah we read of the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. Once the temple, city, and walls are rebuilt, then come the "grand opening" ceremonies (chapters 8-13). In this book we see how God equips and enables Nehemiah to deal with crisis after crisis. He leads by personal example, motivates others, relies on God in prayer, and perseveres, despite opposition and the threat of death. Personal and communal thanksgiving to God permeate the book. Great emphasis is placed on God's name, presence, work, Sabbath, word, worship and thankfulness to Him.

## In-Sync for June

### 1 Chronicles