

Reviving Marriages: Cooperating with God's Word and Spirit

As we conclude our journey through the Book of Ezra, chapter 10 brings us to a powerful finale about restoration, repentance, and revival. The key message is clear: revived marriages happen as we cooperate with God's Word and God's Spirit. When we align ourselves with God's design and direction, powerful and lasting results follow.

How Do People Respond to Spiritual Conviction?

In Ezra 10, we see four significant responses from the people after witnessing Ezra's deep grief over their sin:

1. Cries of Brokenness

The people wept bitterly over their sin. This wasn't a quiet, inward sorrow but an outward, grievous emotional response. Sometimes we need to let sin hit home harder in our lives. When God convicts us, whether through a message or prayer time, the goal is always to connect us back to Him.

God often starts revival by poking at one heart in particular, setting a small fire that begins to affect others. Sin needs to trouble us before it can be addressed.

2. Confession of Sin

Their emotional response led to verbal confession: "We have trespassed against our God." No excuses—they called out their sin directly. True revival always includes confession. The closer we get to God, the more we see our own ugliness and confess it.

Even in their confession, they recognized hope: "There is hope in Israel in spite of this." God doesn't show us sin to push us deeper into it but to lift us out. That's the essence of the gospel—we are sinners, but Christ died to set us free from bondage.

3. Setting a New Course

The people didn't stop at weeping and confession—they established a new direction. "Let us make a covenant," they said. Weeping is good, but reform is better. They committed to putting away sin and returning to God's Word.

Setting a new course requires courage, faith, and sacrifice. We can't keep doing things the same way and expect different results. Sometimes we must get radical with sin to root it out of our lives before godliness can flourish.

4. Encouragement for the Journey

The people encouraged one another in moving forward: "We also are with you. Be of good courage and do it." When conviction comes, confession is made, and a new course is set, it can be scary to put it into motion. We need brothers and sisters alongside us saying, "I'm praying for you. Let's get on the right track together."

What Does Commitment to Change Look Like?

Ezra's response to the people's conviction was to formalize their commitment:

Put It in Writing

Ezra made the leaders swear an oath before witnesses and the Lord. For significant life changes, especially in marriage, putting commitments in writing creates accountability. When couples make vows before God and witnesses at their wedding, they're essentially saying, "Hold me to this."

Continued Intercession

Even after the leaders committed to change, Ezra continued mourning—fasting from food and water. Why? Because he was concerned about how the rest of the people would respond. Leaders may be ready for change, but will everyone follow?

Decisive Action

A proclamation went out requiring all men to gather in Jerusalem within three days or face serious consequences. Sometimes leaders must speak forcefully out of love—like a parent who shouts at a child running into traffic. The urgency isn't meant to hurt but to help.

How Should We Handle the Process of Correction?

When the people gathered, trembling both from the cold December rain and the seriousness of the matter, they demonstrated wisdom in their approach to correction:

Acknowledge Reality

They observed practical challenges: "There are many people... it is the season for heavy rain... this is not the work of one or two days." They didn't deny the problem but recognized its scope and complexity.

Develop a Sensible Solution

Rather than rushing, they proposed appointing times for each case to be heard individually. They would meet with city leaders, elders, and judges to address each situation properly.

This teaches us an important marriage lesson: When couples fight, sometimes it's better to set a time to address issues later rather than forcing immediate resolution. This allows for:

- Clear heads
- Calm emotions
- Time to pray individually
- Opportunity to bring solutions, not just complaints

Expect Resistance

There will always be resistance to godward change. Some opposed the plan, preferring to maintain their sinful status quo. In our social media world, we can always find someone to support our wrong choices, but true friends will lovingly confront our sin.

Exercise Patience and Focus

The process took time—they began on the first day of the tenth month and finished by the first day of the first month. Some changes happen immediately; others require patience and persistent focus. Don't give up in the process; grow up in it.

What Does True Repentance Include?

The final section lists 114 men who had taken pagan wives. Their repentance included two key elements:

1. A promise to put away sin
2. A sacrifice (trespass offering) acknowledging their guilt

This pattern applies to us today. When God convicts us of sin, we:

- Confess it to Him
- Commit to turn from it
- Look to Christ's sacrifice that paid for our sin

God promises that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). He invites us: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18).

Life Application

God longs for transformed lives and marriages—people who will walk according to His Word through the power of His Spirit. He wants to use such people to reach and change the world.

This week, consider these questions:

1. What area of sin has God been convicting you about that requires not just sorrow but decisive action?
2. In your marriage or relationships, are you seeking godly counsel that points you toward obedience, or are you looking for voices that simply affirm your desires?
3. Where do you need to put something in writing or make a formal commitment to change?
4. How can you encourage someone else who is trying to make difficult changes to honor God?

The invitation remains open: "Lord, here am I. Use me, change my life, change my marriage, change me through and through." Our God is bent on reviving and restoring those willing to surrender to His work.