

Invite everyone to pray and confess their sins. Tell them to confess to God silently their private sins such as sexual immorality.

Explain what they must do to get renewed. God's people must do what Ezra led his people to do as a group:

- Listen carefully to the Word of God and obey it.
- Confess our sins to God and turn from them with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Make a serious covenant with each other and with God, agreeing always to confess such things daily in order to receive daily renewal from Christ.

- Discuss what a covenant is—a very serious agreement that everyone makes.
- Ask the believers to agree with each other and with God to do what the people and Ezra did.
- Agree to confess your sins daily, and to let the Holy Spirit change our hearts.
- Help everyone to memorize 2 Corinthians 4:16, “We do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”

Arrange with the children's teacher for them to tell or act out the Ezekiel's prophecy of the valley of dry bones.

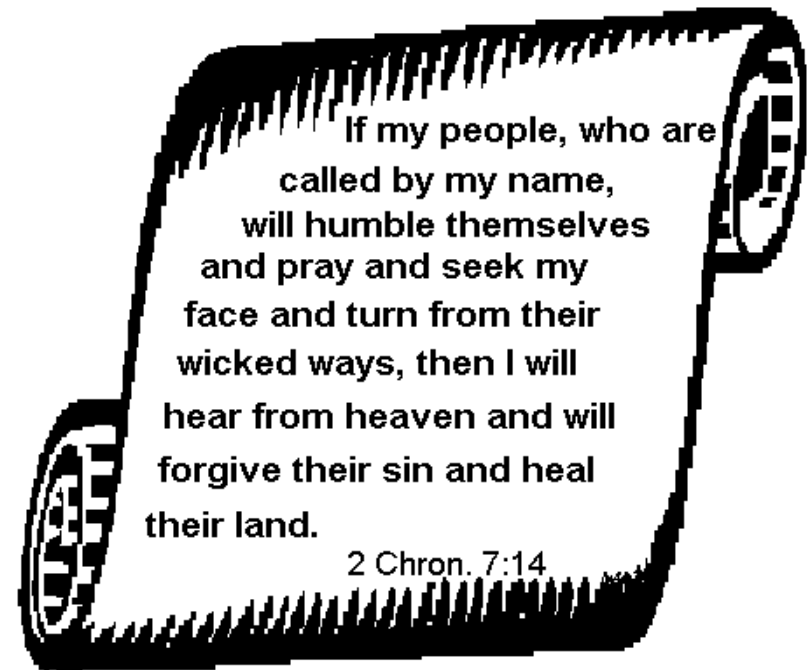
To introduce the **Lord's Supper**, briefly tell what happened in Ezra 6:19-21. Explain:

- They celebrated by eating the Passover Lamb. Today, Christ is our Passover Lamb.
- The priests first bathed ceremonially. Today, we get cleansed by confessing our sins.
- The people separated themselves from the evil practices of their pagan neighbours, so that they could eat the Passover Supper worthily. Today, we eat at the Lord's Table worthily by showing love one for another.

Ezra: Renewing God's People

Congregational Renewal and Personal Transformation
by the Holy Spirit

Those who teach children should read study #63 for children.



1. Prepare Your Heart and Mind with God's Word, as Ezra Did

Ask God to help you lead the believers into a life of daily renewal by His Holy Spirit.

- Pray for the Holy Spirit's life-changing power in your life and in the lives of the believers.

- Let Almighty God show you the things that are stopping His renewal. Confess those things.

Ezra the priest and his co-workers led the people of Israel in their first, long-lasting, national renewal, about 400 years before Christ was born. God's people still lived under the strict laws of the Old Testament. One of their many sins was to marry idolaters.

Discover what Ezra and the people did — read **Ezra 9:1 – 10:6**.

- Find in Ezra 9:3-4 what Ezra did to show his sorrow for those sins.
- Find in Ezra 9:5-7 and 13-15 how serious was Ezra's prayer of confession.
- Find in Ezra 10:1 how the people showed their sorrow.
- Find in Ezra 10:2-3 what Shecaniah suggested the people do.

The story continues in **Nehemiah 8:1 – 9:3** when God's people from many towns gathered to worship.

- Find in Nehemiah. 8:1-3 what the people did to show respect for God's Word.
- Find in Nehemiah. 8:5-6 three body positions the worshippers took.
- Ezra did not teach alone. Find in Nehemiah. 8:7-8 what the other teachers also did.
- Find in Nehemiah. 8:9 what people did as they listened.
- Find in Nehemiah. 9:1-3 what the people confessed.

The **New Testament** also tells us how to be renewed.

- Find in John 3:1-6 how the new creation begins in our lives.
- Find in 2 Corinthians 5:17 what things God makes new in every believer's life.
- Find in 1 John 1:8-10 what we must do with sin, in order to be clean before God.
- Find in 1 Peter 2:1-3 two things we must do.
- Find in Romans 12:1-2 two things we must do.

Memorize David's prayer of confession in Psalm 51:9-10.

2. Plan with co-workers what you and the believers are to do during the week.

- Plan to arrange with other congregations in your region to do what the Israelites did. Plan to meet all together to worship, confess sins and receive God's joyful renewal.
- Go, visit believers whose faith has grown cold and help them be renewed in Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

What would you tell this woman?



*“I have sinned too much, even after receiving Jesus!
God cannot renew me!”*

3. Plan with your co-workers the upcoming worship.

Prepare someone to read story of Ezra. They may tell it by memory or act it out.

Ask questions about what you found in part 1 about Ezra chapters 8 and 9.