

Christian student ministry workers in Sweden developed a series of questions to ask when reading a Bible passage. Called the “Swedish Method” because of its origins, these questions can be used when reading the Bible by yourself or with others.

The daily readings in this family worship guide have a few questions. However, we encourage you, as appropriate for your family, to ask the following general questions of the text each day.



Is there something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most, or draws attention?



Is there something you don’t understand, or a question the passage raises in your mind?



Is there a personal application to your life?



Is there something you plan to share with someone else – and who will you share it with?



How do ideas in the passage interrelate? Or with other passages in this book – or in the whole Bible?

*Worshipping Together* is part of the vision and is a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Frankston, Victoria, Australia. [frankstonrp.org.au](http://frankstonrp.org.au) [bit.ly/WTrpcaf](http://bit.ly/WTrpcaf)

The concept and layout draws heavily from *Let’s Worship God*, a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Airdrie, Scotland. [airdrierpcs.org](http://airdrierpcs.org)

The readings are from Tim Chester’s 3-year weekly reading plan. [bit.ly/WkBbl](http://bit.ly/WkBbl) or [bit.ly/3yrBbl](http://bit.ly/3yrBbl)

The quote on the cover is from the article *What Shampoo and Family Worship Have in Common*, Written by Randy Greenwald, (Quoted from *Tabletalk* magazine, Nov 1997.)

Notes this week are drawn in part from commentaries on commentaries on Ezra by Ralph Davis, Peter Williams, and James Smith, and notes from the HCSB Study Bible, and the Reformation Study Bible

# Worshipping Together



We love God because He first loved us.

And we love to tell God that we love Him.

Joyful and faithful worship together twice each Lord’s Day is the highlight of our week. We are glad that they said, “Let us go to the House of the Lord.” Corporate worship prepares us for the week and prepares us for Heaven.

In addition, we regularly worship God as families and as individuals.

One father put it this way:

*The back of my shampoo bottle says, “Lather, rinse, repeat.” Simple enough that even I can do it. Though family worship may be a bit more complicated than shampooing hair, it ought not to be rated with “home dentistry” in the scale of difficulty.*



*If you could buy family worship in the store, it would come in the form of a Bible, and the directions would simply say, “Read, pray, repeat.” Men\* should gather their families at least once daily. They should read a portion of the Scriptures to them. And they should pray with them. There need be no fireworks or pizzazz to keep the kids interested. There needs to be only a father\* with a heart-love for God – who desires to see that love appropriated by his children.*

*Read, pray, repeat.*

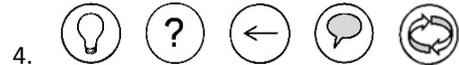
\* Fathers leading their family in worship is always the goal. When, in the Lord’s providence, the father is absent or uninterested, a godly mother will lead her children

**Reading** Ezra 3:1-2 Gathered as one man

**Notes** (See back page for authors)  
The return from exile has begun. God moved the heart of King Cyrus to issue a proclamation to let any Israelite exiles who desired to, to return to Jerusalem and rebuild God’s house. So they came, some 50,000 people (2:64ff) with articles that had been taken from the temple (1:11) and other offerings for God’s house (2:68ff). Those who arrived settled in and around Jerusalem (2:70).

In the 7<sup>th</sup> month (or as the 7<sup>th</sup> month approached) of the year they returned, they gathered together in Jerusalem – as one man. Williams notes that *the phrase ‘gathered together as one man’ clearly speaks of unity of purpose. They were evidently united and zealous in this desire to re-establish the old ways of truth and righteousness, for they were quite prepared to leave their fields, and the rebuilding of their own homes, in order to gather as ‘one man’ in Jerusalem for the work of reconstruction. When a local church or company of Christian people is united as ‘one man’ with the same purpose, desiring to promote the gospel of Christ, the possibilities are incalculable. Paul had this kind of unity among believers in mind when he used the same expression as we have here in Ezra to urge the Philippian Christians to ‘stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel’ (Phil. 1:27, NIV).*

- Questions** (see back page for explanation of symbols)
- Who decided to have the exiles come back?
  - Why was the 7<sup>th</sup> month important for God’s people?
  - How can a church have a unity of purpose?



**Praise** Psalm 108a<sup>2</sup>

- Pray**
- Commit you and your family in prayer to work together with others in the church, by God’s help
  - Pray for a member of your church
  - Pray for your family
  - Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

<sup>1</sup> You will notice we only have a printed guide for 6 days. We recommend each Lord’s Day you review the previous week’s readings and/or the previous or current week’s sermons and pray together

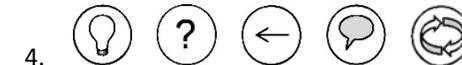
<sup>2</sup> Psalm selections are taken from the *Book of Psalms for Worship*. We encourage our congregation to sing the same selection each day for a week to gain familiarity with the selection

**Reading** Ezra 3:12-13 Joyful shouts and weeping

**Notes** (See back page for authors)  
The people were filled with joy as the foundation of the temple was laid. Yet we’re told some of the older ones wept as loud as the others shouted with joy. Davis comments that *sometimes nostalgia like this can kill a church. We can also have problems if a church does not meet our expectations in its ministry or fellowship... we tend to think that what is low-key, ordinary, plain, simple and quiet must be rather worthless – and this attitude can infect God’s people. Sometimes we ... may forget that it’s possible to be faithful even when God doesn’t send revival. We can still engage in family worship, sincere public worship, loving intercessory prayer, consistent Christian living in school or workplace. Don’t despise the “day of small things” (Zech. 4:10)...The question is not “Is it jazzy here?” but “Is Jesus here?”*

Williams notes that another reason might explain the old men’s weeping. *They could have been remembering what had made this day of celebration necessary. It was the nation’s sin and idolatry, and disobedience to God’s law, that had brought divine judgement upon them in the form of the exile in Babylon. They were upset when they called to mind how they and their fathers had grieved God. If that were so, their weeping was not a bad thing, for the tears were those of repentance. It is right that we shed tears at times when we recall how often we grieve the Holy Spirit and wound God’s heart by the poor quality of our Christian lives.*

- Questions** (see back page for explanation of symbols)
- What was the mixed response of the people?
  - Why might they have been shouting joyfully?
  - Why might they have been weeping?



**Praise** Psalm 108a

- Pray**
- In prayer, rejoice in God’s goodness and sorrow over your sin
  - Pray for your family
  - Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member
  - Pray for the reading and preaching of God’s word tomorrow

**Reading**

Ezra 3:10-11 The foundation is laid

**Notes**  
(See back page for authors)

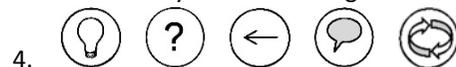
Jeremiah had prophesied this, *I will restore the fortunes of Judah and of Israel and will rebuild them as in former times... This is what the LORD says: In this place, which you say is a ruin, without man or beast—that is, in Judah’s cities and Jerusalem’s streets that are a desolation without man, without inhabitant, and without beast—there will be heard again a sound of joy and gladness, the voice of the groom and the bride, and the voice of those saying, Praise the LORD of Hosts, for the LORD is good; His faithful love endures forever as they bring thank offerings to the temple of the LORD. For I will restore the fortunes of the land as in former times, says the LORD.* Jeremiah 33:7, 10–11

Davis asks us to think what it must have been like when the Babylonians finally creamed Jerusalem and the temple (the situation Jeremiah’s word presupposes). In that heap of rubble and smoking destruction, who would ever have thought that this day (of Ezra 3:10-11) would come? Do you see why the lyrics of Ezra 3:11 are so important? They show that Jeremiah 33:11 was beginning to be fulfilled! Against all human likelihood, God’s people saw God’s goodness again! It’s very simple in one way, but sometimes you need to hear that word in your despair and sadness: you will yet see the goodness of God again. That is, by the way, typical of God (cf. Ps. 30:4-5; Joel 2:25 RSV).

The Lord is good! His faithful love endures forever!

**Questions**  
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. What did the people do when the foundation was laid?
2. What had Jeremiah prophesied at Jerusalem’s destruction?
3. How have you seen God’s goodness and faithful love?



**Praise Pray**

- Psalm 108a
1. Rejoice with your family that the Lord is good and merciful
  2. Pray for a member of your church
  3. Pray for your family
  4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

**Reading**

Ezra 3:3-5 Burnt offerings to the Lord

**Notes**  
(See back page for authors)

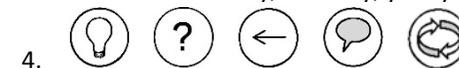
How should we worship God? Pastor Ken Smith speaks of how this question is often approached. *Back in 1970 I went to a conference in northeastern Pennsylvania with the theme: “The Church, Youth, and the World.” One day they asked a group of youth to act as a panel to discuss “worship,” ... I listened with interest. To my surprise, they discussed worship for forty-five minutes, but the word “God” was never once used! None of these youth seemed to consider God as having anything to do with what they “liked.”*

These returning exiles, obviously, weren’t at that conference! They set up the altar and began to offer sacrifices as God had prescribed and specified v4-5. Isn’t sincerity enough? These men of Israel didn’t think so. As J Smith notes, *these men were not religious innovators. Thus they built according to the specifications set forth in the law of Moses (Exod 27:1–8).*

In addition to the honour of God, these believers came in their fear. Davis points out *that verse 3 ... implies that their fears drove them to worship, to seek God. Is that legitimate? Should we have higher motives? Maybe. But what’s wrong with this? In our fears, what better recourse can we have than God? Why shouldn’t we take our fears to his altar (cf. Jacob’s very candid prayer in Gen. 32:11-12)? In their altar building they unashamedly assumed that God was their refuge.*

**Questions**  
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. How did these Israelites worship God?
2. Why did these Israelites worship God?
3. What use are daily, monthly, yearly sacrifices?



**Praise Pray**

- Psalm 108a
1. Commit yourself and your family in prayer to worship God as He directs, with God’s help.
  2. Pray for a member of your church
  3. Pray for your family
  4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

**Reading** Ezra 3:6-7 Sacrifice and provision

**Notes**  
(See back page for authors)

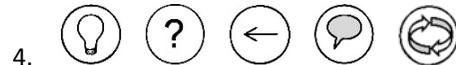
These returning exiles initiate God’s offering system as soon as they rebuilt the altar. Yet they desired to see God’s temple rebuilt too.

Smith comments that *at that first great worship gathering in the seventh month a collection was taken. Masons and carpenters were hired. Negotiations with the Sidonians and Tyrians were completed. Like Solomon before them, the Jews would exchange agricultural products for cedar from Lebanon. The logs were transported from the mountains to the Mediterranean Sea, lashed together, and floated to the seaport at Joppa. Then those logs would be hauled by animal power up to the heights of Jerusalem. This transaction between two separate provinces of the Persian empire would not have been possible without the permission of King Cyrus.*

Notice how important worship was to these exiles – both the act, and the place of worship. Psalm 137 tells how hard it had been for these people of God to sing God’s songs in a foreign land. Now, in God’s care, they were back in their land. And they sought to worship God as He desires and in the place He appointed. Now, the specific place now is wherever God’s people gather in Jesus’ Name. Is the act and the place of worship as important to us as it was to these believers?

**Questions**  
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. What was needed once the altar was in use?
2. How was provision for the temple provided?
3. Does it matter where we worship today? (defend your answer)



**Praise Pray**

- Psalm 108a
1. Commit yourself and your family in prayer to worship God with His people, with God’s help.
  2. Pray for a member of your church
  3. Pray for your family
  4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

**Reading** Ezra 3:8-9 The rebuilding starts

**Notes**  
(See back page for authors)

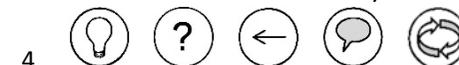
What is your purpose? What is your life seeking to accomplish? These exiles had come back, at Cyrus’s invitation, to build the house of God (1:3). Having gathered the necessary provisions over some 7 months, the people begin rebuilding the temple – God’s house.

Smith notes that *again [see 2:2] Zerubbabel (representing the Davidic line) and Jeshua (representing the priestly lineage) were in the forefront. The enthusiasm of the group is indicated by the fact “All who came from the captivity” offered their services. The Levites as a group supervised the work of the laymen. Three families of Levites—Jeshua, Kadmiel, Henadad—were appointed to supervise the Levite foremen. All of this Levitical involvement was to make sure everything was ritually correct.*

This rebuilding is closely connected with the pre-exile life of the people with God – at the time of Israel’s previous spiritual strength and blessing. The RSB notes that *the second month...is the same time of year that Solomon began building the original temple (2 Chr. 3:2) [and this] phrasing [to supervise the work of the house of the LORD] is virtually identical to the language used about Solomon’s temple (1 Chr. 23:4).*

**Questions**  
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. Why had the people come back from exile?
2. Who were the leaders in the rebuilding work at this time?
3. Why does it matter if the time and language of rebuilding was similar to Solomon’s day?



**Praise Pray**

- Psalm 108a
1. Rejoice with your family in prayer that God connects His people throughout His history together
  2. Pray for a member of your church
  3. Pray for your family
  4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member