

SERMON STARTERS

PREPARING FOR MINISTRY

“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.” (Ezra 7:10)

There are several actions which Ezra took that commend themselves to us as Christians who desire to serve the Lord. What did he do?

(1) ***He prioritized his life.*** *“Ezra had prepared his heart.”*

That is past tense – *“Ezra had prepared.”* Before he prepared his heart he had to prioritize his life; he had to determine to put first things first, else he would not have embarked upon the discipline of heart preparation! Priority means precedence; to arrange in order of importance or urgency.

Jesus’ command is: *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”* (Matthew 6:33) Kingdom principles, when wholeheartedly adopted, prioritize one’s life.

(2) ***He prepared his heart.*** *“prepared his heart.”*

To prepare one’s heart is to humble one’s self, confess all known sin, hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6) and be ready and willing to be totally submissive to whatever God reveals.

(3) ***He perused the Scriptures.*** *“to seek the Law of the LORD.”*

The New International Version renders the statement as follows: *“Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD.”* Why would he, or anyone, do that? Two reasons: First, in order to know the Lord of the Law and second, to know the Law of the Lord. To know the Law of the Lord, which is the Word of God, is to know the will of God. Ezra desired to know what God willed for him to do.

(4) ***He practiced the truth.*** *“and to do it.”*

He applied the truth to himself before he announced it to others. I believe that the average Christian knows more of the Word and will of God than is practiced. James wrote: *“Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves...But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does”* (James 1:22 and 25).

(5) ***He propagated God’s teachings.*** *“and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.”*

He was a channel, not a reservoir of God’s river of truth. Not all are to be a public proclaimer on a platform but all are to go public with their Christianity and by lifestyle, if not lips, be messengers of Glad Tidings.

We would do well to imitate Ezra’s example!

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