

## The Story: Chapter 19 “Coming Home”

Let’s define “exile” again: When you are taken from your home and kept someplace else against your will.

Let’s look at another definition of “exile” just for us: Anytime we are living outside of the presence of God.

- If we have chosen a pattern of sin that is keeping us from fellowship with the Father.
- We are so wrapped up in bitterness that we can’t connect with God through prayer.

See, the main benefit of a relationship with God is that we get to be in His presence.

- The blessing of Heaven is not that we have been forgiven.
- It’s not that we get to stay out of hell.
- It’s that we get to spend all of eternity in the presence of God.

Some of us may be in exile from His presence right now, for any number of reasons.

But, if that’s you today, I have some very...

**Good news:** When you are ready to come home to God, from wherever you are currently in exile, GOD WILL MAKE A WAY HOME!!

And, we’re going to learn that in our first part of The Story, chapter 19, today.

### **Ezra 1:1-4**

**1** In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: <sup>2</sup>“This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. <sup>3</sup> Anyone of his people among you—may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel,

the God who is in Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> And the people of any place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.’ ”

God promised His children that He would bring them home at the end of their captivity. And, when God makes a promise, He will come through. Even when we don't see a way that makes sense.

- God moved in the heart of a pagan King and made sure the people had all they needed to make it home and rebuild the Temple.
- He even made sure they had a way to get all the resources needed for the rebuild.
- Cyrus could have been reading the prophecy of Jeremiah that mentioned him by name 150 years before he was born.
- Whatever it took, God provided a perfect way for the people of Judah to get back home.

**EX:** This is how crazy that was: If the President of Mexico called President Trump and said, “You know what, I think I will pay for that wall. And, I say we build it higher than ever!”

Here's how that connects to us:

- If your marriage is falling apart...
- If you're addicted to pornography and it's destroying your relationship with the Father... and others around you...
- If you're bitter over something someone did to you in the past and you've never been able to get past it...
- If you just feel disconnected from God and are looking to reconnect...

**HE WILL MAKE A WAY!!!!**

- We have never run so far from God that He can't make a way to get us home to Him.
- It all depends on how much you want to come home.

You may be enjoying where you are.

- You may have decided you like “exile” enough to stay for a while.
- You won't come back to the presence of God until you choose to come home.

But, I can assure you, when you do choose to come home to the Father, He will make a way for you.

### **Jeremiah 29:13-14**

**13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you,” declares the Lord,**

He’s telling them this while in captivity about the time that He will bring them back home to Jerusalem.

And, He’s showing us a picture that there is always a way home for us as well.

So, if that’s you today, **Welcome Home**. How about we don’t let anything stand in the way of us being in the presence of God today?!

Now, let’s look at what life should look like once we get to come home:

- How did the Israelites react when they got to come home?

These are pointers that will help us STAY in the presence of God once we get back INTO the presence of God.

### **1. They Rebuilt the Foundation**

#### **Ezra 3:1-3**

**3 When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, the people assembled as one man in Jerusalem. 2 Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. 3 Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the Lord, both the morning and evening sacrifices.**

They took time to rebuild the foundations of their relationship with God.

- They started doing the things they knew He had told them in the past.
- They DID NOT ask Him for another King because they had learned that He was the only King they needed.

**For us:**

What are the foundations of your relationship with Jesus that you need to rebuild today?

- What are the basic disciplines of the Christian life that you need to start doing again?
- Are there areas in your life that you know the Father has called you to bring back to Him?

## [2. They Guarded Against Distractions](#)

### [Ezra 4:1-3](#)

[4](#) When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the Lord, the God of Israel, <sup>2</sup> they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, "Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here."<sup>3</sup> But Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, "You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us."

**For us:** When we come home to the Father, the enemy is going to do everything in the world to try to distract us from Him and get us back off track.

- What steps of accountability will you put in place to make sure you stay in line with the Father?
- How surrendered will you be to make sure you stay connected to Him?

## [3. They Repented When Needed](#)

### [Haggai 1:1-8](#)

[1](#) In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest: <sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come for the Lord's house to be built.' " <sup>3</sup> Then the

word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: <sup>4</sup> “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?” <sup>5</sup> Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. <sup>6</sup> You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.” <sup>7</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. <sup>8</sup> Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the Lord.

Then the Lord made clear to them where they had gone wrong.

### **Haggai 1:12-15**

<sup>12</sup> Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the message of the prophet Haggai, because the Lord their God had sent him. And the people feared the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> Then Haggai, the Lord’s messenger, gave this message of the Lord to the people: “I am with you,” declares the Lord. <sup>14</sup> So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the Lord Almighty, their God, <sup>15</sup> on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius.

They had basically gone home and started working on their own homes and left the Temple of God in ruins.

EX: When we keep our resources to ourselves because we need it for us...

Do you remember the patter of the Kings? God would tell them where they were wrong and what they needed to do to be forgiven and their pride would simply not let them repent.

These people remained humble enough to listen to the correction of the Lord, repent for their sin, and obey Him moving forward.

**For us:**

- This is huge for us. We must be willing to listen, repent, and obey when the Lord speaks.

We have learned over the years the importance of dealing with the sin in our lives.

- We must be willing to be real with ourselves and deal with the sin that tries to creep back into our lives.