

ICEBREAKER

In the sermon this week Rob focused on Israel's experience of rebuilding the temple which took a total of 21 years.

What's the longest home improvement or building project you've ever attempted? How long did it take you? How did you feel when you had finished it?

IDEA 1 - UNMET EXPECTATIONS BASED ON PAST SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

In the sermon, Rob described the Israelites' anticipation and excitement for the dedication of the 2nd temple based on the stories passed down about the dedication of the 1st temple. And yet what ended up happening, didn't match their hopes and expectations. The spiritual high that had previously been experienced with the tangible presence of God filling the temple was, was absent this time around.

"I imagine that many of the people of Jerusalem found themselves in "unsettled and questioning" - the excitement they felt on their journeys to the temple had likely turned to confusion as they walked back to their villages - unmet expectations - why hadn't the fire of God returned in such a visible way?"

- **In your spiritual journey, where are the places you are looking to recreate an experience with God? Where do you long to relive a past encounter with God?**
- **Where have your spiritual experiences not matched up to your expectations or past encounters with God? How do you respond to these moments?**
- **Why do we have to be careful not to place too value much on the spiritual experience and the emotional high?**

IDEA 2 - THE SLOW WORK OF PURSUING GOD

Rob also pointed out that with the rebuilding of the temple can the re-establishment of priesthood and spiritual practices of the Israelite community. After years of lacking these liturgies and disciplines, they get them back.

He goes on to say - *"The transcendent experiences and the slow formative power of the spiritual disciplines aren't competing for value - they go hand in hand."*

and

"The spiritual highs are a complement to the slow work of pursuing God daily."

- **What's your perspective on the balance between seeking spiritual highs and developing consistent daily spiritual practices?**
- **Do you tend to prioritize spiritual experiences, structured practices, or a combination of both?**
- **How do we maintain a balance of both of these things in our life?**

EXPERIENCING GOD TOGETHER: REFLECTION

At the end of the sermon Rob highlighted how the incomplete restoration among the Israelites pointed forward to a greater future fulfillment in Jesus.

Take time as a group to be quite together, reflect and process with God:

- **God where are the "incomplete restorations" in my own life?**
- **How might you be using those to point to a greater future fulfillment in Jesus?**

After a few minutes, report back as a group.

PRACTICE FOR THIS WEEK - BALANCE INVENTORY

This week take some time to reflect on the balance of spiritual experience and spiritual practice in your own life.

You may find it helpful to follow these prompts below:

1. Grab a journal or notebook and create two columns:

- "Mountain Top Moments" - List significant spiritual experiences
- "Daily Rhythms" - List your regular spiritual practices

2. Assess your current patterns

- How often do you participate in spiritual experiences (conferences, worship nights, etc)?
- How often do you participate in spiritual practices? (prayer, scripture reading, community, etc)?

3. Reflect on your motivations

- Am I seeking experiences to avoid the discipline of daily practice?
- Do I dismiss powerful moments because I overvalue routine?

4. Share your answers

- Share these reflections with a trusted friend and/or your life group
- Ask for specific feedback about areas of imbalance

5. Take your next step

- What's one tangible next step you can take towards a greater balance between experiencing spiritual highs and the slow work of pursuing God daily?