

# Connection Group Participant Guide

June 27, 2021

## Zechariah 7

### Introduction

The people of Bethel thought they were being extra-faithful in keeping all these feasts and fasts, and it seems like they wanted a break. But God's response? You haven't been faithful at all. God asks, "Were the fasts for Me?" No, they were not. "Were the feasts for Me?" Again, no. They were missing the whole point and the whole purpose of these observances. And then God tells them that this is not a news flash. He warned them about this very issue with the earlier prophets. In fact, part of the reason that Israel went into captivity in Babylon runs along these lines.

With all this mind, what does God really want from His people? He tells them plainly once again, just as He had done so repeatedly for hundreds of years. Yes, the rebuilding of the temple was nice, but God wanted more than that – He wanted their hearts and their lives. He wanted them to love what He loved. He didn't just want their individual faithfulness, but to see a society where God's values reigned. But notice – and this so reveals the heart of God – don't concern yourself only with justice, but (Zechariah 7:9) ... show mercy and kindness to one another.

Have you ever noticed that people who are big on justice are often lacking in mercy and kindness? And it is something that we have to guard against in our own hearts. Justice does not require cruelty – it can be administered with mercy and kindness. And no one knows how to mix justice with mercy like the Lord Himself. Look at the cross – the price of justice was paid; but in the mind-boggling mercy and compassion of God, He paid it Himself.

### Highlight

What 4 things did Lord previously asked of the people through the former prophets? (Zech. 7:9)

### Explain

What is your experience with fasting? Do you think of fasting as part of a healthy Christian spiritual life, or is it something you do to *get* healthy spiritually? Is it food or medicine?

### Apply

How can you obey Zechariah 7:9-10? What do your heart-felt actions of justice and mercy say to God? To the world?

### Respond in Prayer

Read through John 4:23-24 and listen with your heart to what it has to say. We recommend praying through this text on your own at home and together with your Connection Group.

