

Chapter 19 – The Return Home

Day One – Time to Go Home

Today's reading: Page 263 through middle on page 265

This reading covers: Ezra 1, 3

Summary: After years in a far away land, it was time for God's people to go home.

Do together: Talk about a long trip the family has taken together. Discuss the frustrations of travel and the hassle of being away from home. What do we miss the most? What do we wish we could take with us when we leave?

Talk about how good it feels to come back to your own house, your own bed, your own toys, your own friends.

Think about: God's children in our story were gone for a long time. But they were not on a vacation. They were away from home because of their disobedience.

When we come home from a long trip with unpacking to do, and grass to cut, and laundry to get done, we are still glad to be in our own house and the things we are comfortable with.

Also read: Psalm 60:1-4

Prayer: Thank you for our home. Thank you for the memories that we are making in this home and the way we are all growing up in you. In Jesus name. Amen.

Think ahead: Plan a small-scale work project that the family can do together before devotions tomorrow. Choose something that every member of the family can help with.

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Day Two – Time to Work

Today's reading: Break on page 266 through break on page 270

This reading covers: Haggai 1; Zechariah 8

Summary: God used his messengers to challenge his people to work on his house.

Do together: Hopefully, you had time to do the work project you had planned. If not, talk about working together to get a big job done. Talk about how it feels when all is finished and you can stand back and see the completed task. It feels good!

Think about: When you did your job, who was the biggest encourager? Who kept us going? How did we feel when the work was done?

Sometimes we have to do work first, before we play. And after a big job is completed, it always feels good to stand back and enjoy the results.

God's people had a big job to do. God sent his helpers to encourage them in their task and to keep them going.

Also read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you that you never give us more than we can handle. Even when you ask us to do a big job, you are there to encourage us, and you send helpers to encourage us. Thank you for helping us to finish our job. Thank you for the example of people in the Bible who finished their jobs too. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Chapter 19 – The Return Home Day Three – Time to Celebrate

Today's reading: Break on page 270 through end of chapter

This reading covers: Ezra 5-6

Summary: God guides his people to complete the work, which calls for a celebration.

Do together: Enjoy a small family party. You can be as creative as you like and include aspects your family particularly enjoys.

Think about: Explain that you are celebrating a job well done, just like the people in our Bible story celebrated. Aren't you glad it didn't take many years to do the job you did yesterday? The people in the Bible story took a very long time to build the temple. They looked forward to this celebration for many, many years. They had not worshiped God in his Temple for a very long time. They were very happy!

Also read: Psalm 145

Prayer: God, Thank you that you are always with us. Even when we are working hard and doing a big job, you are with us. We know you are happy when we work together. And we know that you like to celebrate with us when we are done. In Jesus' name, Amen.