

From Brokenness to Healing:
Rebuilding the Church by Serving Ezra 2
Extended Version

Now these were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town. (2:1 ESV)

LEADERS (1-2) They came with

1. Zerubbabel (Seed of Babylon; Grandson of last legitimate king of Judah in the line of David; genealogy of Jesus)
2. Jeshua (“Yahweh is Salvation”, a priest)
3. Nehemiah (“Comfort of Yahweh”)
4. Seraiah (“Yahweh is Prince”)
5. Reelaiah (“Yahweh has Thundered”)
6. Mordecai (“god of Bablyon”)
7. Bilshan (“their Lord”)
8. Mispar
9. Bigvai (“happy”, Persian name)
10. Rehum, and (“God has been compassionate”)
11. Baanah.

FAMILIES (3-19) The number of the men of the people of Israel:

1. the sons of Parosh, 2,172. (“flea”)
2. The sons of Shephatiah, 372. (“Yahweh has judged”)
3. The sons of Arah, 775. (“wild ox”)
4. The sons of Pahath-moab, namely the sons of Jeshua and Joab, 2,812.
5. The sons of Elam, 1,254.
6. The sons of Zattu, 945.
7. The sons of Zaccai, 760. (“pure”)
8. The sons of Bani, 642. (“Yahweh has built”)
9. The sons of Bebai, 623. (“pupil of eye”)
10. The sons of Azgad, 1,222. (“God is strong”)
11. The sons of Adonikam, 666. (“Lord has risen”)
12. The sons of Bigvai, 2,056.
13. The sons of Adin, 454. (“delight”)
14. The sons of Ater, namely of Hezekiah, 98.
15. The sons of Bezai, 323. (“shadow of God”)
16. The sons of Jorah, 112. “autumn rain”)
17. The sons of Hashum, 223. (“nose”)

VILLAGERS (20-35)

1. The sons of Gibbar, 95. (5 miles northwest of Jerusalem)
2. The sons of Bethlehem, 123. (5 miles south of Jerusalem)
3. The men of Netophah, 56. (South of Jerusalem)
4. The men of Anathoth, 128. (3 miles north of Jerusalem)
5. The sons of Azmaveth, 42. (2 miles north of Anathoth)
6. The sons of Kiriath-arim, (8 miles northwest of Jerusalem)
7. Chephirah, and
8. Beeroth, 743.
9. The sons of Ramah and (5 miles north of Jerusalem)
10. Geba, 621. (5.5 miles northeast of Jerusalem)
11. The men of Michmas, 122. (8 miles northeast of Jerusalem)
12. The men of Bethel and Ai, 223. (12 miles north of Jerusalem)
13. The sons of Nebo, 52. (East of Jerusalem on Mt. Scopus)
14. The sons of Magbish, 156. (Southwest of Adullam)
15. The sons of the other Elam, 1,254. (East of Marisa)
16. The sons of Harim, 320. (“dedicated to God”)
17. The sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 725. (10 miles southeast of Joppa)
18. The sons of Jericho, 345. (East of Jerusalem, north of Dead sea)
19. The sons of Senaah, 3,630. (“hated one”)

PRIESTS (36-39) The priests:

1. the sons of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, 973. (“Yahweh has known”)
2. The sons of Immer, 1,052.
3. The sons of Pashhur, 1,247.
4. The sons of Harim, 1,017. (“Dedicated to God”)

LEVITES (40-42) The Levites:

1. the sons of Jeshua and
2. Kadmiel,
3. of the sons of Hodaviah, 74.

SINGERS (41) The singers:

1. the sons of Asaph, 128.

GATEKEEPERS (42) The sons of the gatekeepers:

1. the sons of Shallum,
2. the sons of Ater,
3. the sons of Talmon,
4. the sons of Akkub,
5. the sons of Hatita, and
6. the sons of Shobai, in all 139.

TEMPLE SERVANTS (43-54) The temple servants:

1. the sons of Ziha,
2. the sons of Hasupha,
3. the sons of Tabbaoth,
4. the sons of Keros,
5. the sons of Siaha,
6. the sons of Padon,
7. the sons of Lebanah,
8. the sons of Hagabah,
9. the sons of Akkub,
10. the sons of Hagab,
11. the sons of Shamlai,
12. the sons of Hanan,
13. the sons of Giddel,
14. the sons of Gahar,
15. the sons of Reaiah,
16. the sons of Rezin,
17. the sons of Nekoda,
18. the sons of Gazzam,
19. the sons of Uzza,
20. the sons of Paseah,
21. the sons of Besai,
22. the sons of Asnah,
23. the sons of Meunim,
24. the sons of Nephisim,
25. the sons of Bakbuk,
26. the sons of Hakupha,
27. the sons of Harhur,
28. the sons of Bazluth,
29. the sons of Mehida,
30. the sons of Harsha,
31. the sons of Barkos,
32. the sons of Sisera,
33. the sons of Temah,
34. the sons of Neziah, and
35. the sons of Hatipha.

SERVANTS OF SOLOMON (55-58) The sons of Solomon's servants:

1. the sons of Sotai,
2. the sons of Hassophereth,
3. the sons of Peruda,
4. the sons of Jaalah,
5. the sons of Darkon,
6. the sons of Giddel,
7. the sons of Shephatiah,
8. the sons of Hattil,
9. the sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, and
10. the sons of Ami.

All the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants were 392.

UNKNOWN GENEALOGIES (59-63) The following were those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, though they could not prove their fathers' houses or their descent, whether they belonged to Israel:

1. the sons of Delaiah,
2. the sons of Tobiah, and
3. the sons of Nekoda, 652

Also, of the sons of the priests:

1. the sons of Habaiah,
2. the sons of Hakkoz, and
3. the sons of Barzillai (who had taken a wife from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called by their name).

These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but they were not found there, and so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean. The governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food, until there should be a priest to consult Urim and Thummim.

Total: The whole assembly together was 42,360, besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337, and they had 200 male and female singers.

Resources: Their horses were 736, their mules were 245, their camels were 435, and their donkeys were 6,720. Some of the heads of families, when they came to the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem, made freewill offerings for the house of God, to erect it on its site. According to their ability they gave to the treasury of the work 61,000 darics of gold, 5,000 minas of silver, and 100 priests' garments.

Location: Now the priests, the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their towns, and all the rest of Israel in their towns. When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem. (Ezra 3:1 ESV)

Summary of the Nation of Israel Returning to Jerusalem

Now these were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town. (2:1 ESV)

Verses	Categories	Units	Total Count	%
2:2	Leaders	11 individuals	11	.03%
2:3-19	Families	19 family names	15,509	52%
2:20-35	Villagers	22 city names	8635	29%
2:36-39	Priests	4 family names	4,289	14.3%
2:40-42	Levites	3 family names	74	.2%
2:41	Singers	1 family name	128	.4%
2:42	Gatekeepers	6 family names	139	.4%
2:43-54	Temple Servants	35 family names	392	1.3%
2:55-58	Solomon's Servants	10 family names		
2:59-60	Unknown Families	3 family names	652	2.1%
2:61-63	Unknown Priests	3 family names		
Totals		117 families	29,829	
2:64	Whole Assembly		42,360	
2:65	Male and Female servants		7,337	
2:65	Male and Female singers		200	
2:66	Horses		736	
	Mules		245	
2:67	Camels		435	
	Donkeys		6720	
2:68-69	Darics of Gold		61,000	
	Minas of Silver		5,000	
	Priest's Garments		100	

When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem. (Ezra 3:1 ESV)

THE LEADERS, PRIESTS, AND LEVITES: THE SERVICE OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

I. ROLES OF ELDERS

The job description of an elder today may vary greatly from church to church, causing some in the church to ask, “What should elders be doing? The scriptures layout the major responsibilities of elders—portrayed powerfully with two word pictures.

SHEPHERDS the church as a shepherd cares and protects his sheep (I Peter 5:1-5; Psalm 23). As a shepherd, an elder...

- Meets the spiritual needs of the people
- Makes them feel secure and restful
- Cares for their spiritual thirst
- Builds them up when they fail
- Leads them to obey God’s will
- Stays beside them in times of danger
- Disciplines them lovingly when they sin
- Provides spiritual food
- Provides healing for their hurts and wounds (Gene Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*, 140-141).

PARENTS the church as a mother and father oversees and loves their family (I Timothy 3:4-5). As a parent, an elder...

- Instructs the church in the Word
- Disciplines the church with gentleness and care
- Does not rule over the church harshly
- Provides for the spiritual needs of the church
- Protects the church from harm and danger
- Models godly behavior to the church
- Forgives the church when they repent

These two word pictures also capture the role of the church member—sheep and children. Christians need the care, protection, discipline, and love of a shepherd and of a parent. This is why scripture calls the church to “respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you, Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work” (I Thessalonians 5:12-13).

2. ROLES OF DEACONS

Every church has a multitude of spiritual needs, needs the elders are to oversee. In addition, every local church has many additional needs, practical needs that also need to be met—preparing communion, mowing the church grounds, printing the bulletin, etc. To meet these needs, elders are to delegate those cultural responsibilities to other qualified men and women, identified in the Bible as deacons (Acts 6). Like the elders, deacons are to be chosen for their spiritual qualifications as outlined in I Timothy 3:8-13. The importance of the deacons’ roles cannot be underestimated. They provide a valuable ministry for the day-to-day needs of a church while freeing up the elders to focus their limited amount of time on their spiritual role as a shepherd to his sheep and as a parent to his family.

“Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 3:8-13 ESV)

3. QUALIFICATIONS

The type of elder God desires to lead the church is first and foremost derived from a series of qualifications—descriptions of a leader’s Christian character. This criterion takes priority over a person’s spiritual gifts, learned skills, or natural abilities. The list is explained in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. **An elder is:**

- **HUMBLE**—willing to obey God’s call to serve and not motivated by a hidden personal agenda.
- **ABOVE REPROACH**—blameless of character with no grounds of accusing the person of improper Christian behavior.
- **FAITHFUL TO HIS SPOUSE** (if he is married)—a “one woman man”, not flirtatious with other women or emotionally or physically involved with a woman not his wife.
- **TEMPERATE**—expressing self-control over the lusts of the flesh, the desires of the eyes and the pride of life.

- **PRUDENT**—sensible, wise and balanced in his judgments.
- **RESPECTABLE**—demonstrates good behavior as one who adorns himself to Christ.
- **HOSPITABLE**—graciously invites strangers into his life to share his blessings with them.
- **ABLE TO TEACH**—communicates the Word of God to believers and nonbelievers in a nonargumentative and gentle manner, building up the believer while defending the faith from heretical teachings.
- **NOT AN ADDICT**—not addicted or enslaved to any type of substance such as alcohol or drugs. (This is not a teaching on total abstinence of alcohol; yet great care and wisdom is needed in this area—Romans 14).
- **NOT PUGNACIOUS**—does not strike back, verbally or physically, at others but gently listens and cares for others.
- **UNCONTENTIOUS**—does not seek to argue for the sake of arguing.
- **FREE FROM THE LOVE OF MONEY**—graciously shares his financial blessings, not hoarding his resources nor wasting his money on frivolous purchases.
- **MANAGES HIS FAMILY** (if he is married)—demonstrates respect and care for his family, providing for all of their needs—physical, emotional, and spiritual.
- **NOT A NEW BELIEVER**—has not recently made a profession of faith but has walked with the Lord for a period of time, producing visible spiritual fruit.
- **RESPECTED BY THOSE OUTSIDE OF THE CHURCH**—walks with integrity and respect among his nonchristian co-workers, neighbors, and family.
- **NOT SELF WILLED**—does not display a stubborn spirit rather is sensitive to other’s ideas and opinions.
- **NOT QUICK TEMPERED**—does not become angry quickly that leads to sin but rather is able to “be angry and not sin” (Ephesians 4:26).
- **LOVES GOOD**—follows after God’s own heart, desiring to obey His will, not his own.
- **JUST**—shows fairness and impartiality, making objective judgments based on God’s word.
- **DEVOUT**—lives a holy and separate life from the world.
- **COMMITTED TO THE WORD OF GOD**—shows stability in his faith and obedience to the Word.

4. PLURALITY

The example from the first century church is a church with multiple leaders with no one person given complete care and responsibility for a church (Titus 1). This allows for multiple spiritual gifts, callings, and skills to be utilized in the oversight of the church. Numerous churches today recognize the senior minister—a paid staff position—as one of the elders; other churches may not. In addition, each church should consider the role of all of the paid staff in conjunction with the elders, designating specific roles and responsibilities. This can help the staff, the elders, and the congregation understand what the expectations are for all involved.

FAMILIES, VILLAGERS, SINGERS, GATEKEEPERS, AND SERVANTS: THE SERVICE OF MEMBERS

Nearly 85% of the Jews who returned to Jerusalem were not leaders, priests, or levities—this group was made up of the families from the tribes of Judah and mainly Benjamin. This group included specific roles of singers and gatekeepers. The families would be involved in the majority of the day-to-day construction of the temple; they were the labor force. Their one major requirement was their heritage—they must be Jewish and able to demonstrate their pedigree as part of the nation of Israel.

Likewise, the vast majority of a local church body are the members of the church, not the elders or deacons. This group of members share the same requirements as these families—they must be Christians and able to demonstrate their pedigree as part of the body of Christ through their repentance and baptism. Although all of these families share a common heritage, they were diverse in their contributions to rebuilding the temple. Although all of the members of the body of Christ share also a common heritage, they too bring a diverse and varied contribution to building the church through the service of their diverse spiritual gifts.

The New Testament church, lead by elders and deacons as shepherds and parents, functioned by the work of each member using his or her spiritual gifts to serve others “to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” (Ephesians 4:15-16 ESV)

Spiritual gifts reflect the exact nature of God—a unity of purpose yet a diversity of roles—as a father, a son, and a comforter. Even the three descriptions of spiritual gifts in the New Testament reflect this trinity. The book of Romans describes the gifts of the Father; the book of Ephesians the gifts of the Son, and the book of I Corinthians the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

I. SPIRITUAL GIFTS FROM GOD, THE FATHER (ROMANS 12:3-8)

Unity of Purpose: For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

Diversity of Service: For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them:

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| 1. if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; | 5. the one who contributes, in generosity; |
| 2. if service, in our serving; | 6. the one who leads, with zeal; |
| 3. the one who teaches, in his teaching; | 7. the one who does acts of mercy, with |
| 4. the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; | cheerfulness. (Romans 12:3-8 ESV) |

2. SPIRITUAL GIFTS FROM CHRIST, THE SON (EPHESIANS 4:1-16)

Unity of Purpose: I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is

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| 1. one body and | 5. one faith, |
| 2. one Spirit—just as you were called to the | 6. one baptism, |
| 3. one hope that belongs to your call— | 7. one God and Father of all, who is over all and |
| 4. one Lord, | through all and in all |

Diversity of Service: But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the

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| 1. apostles, the | 4. shepherds and |
| 2. prophets, the | 5. teachers, |
| 3. evangelists, the | |

to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:1-16 ESV)

3. SPIRITUAL GIFTS FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT (I CORINTHIANS 12:1-31)

Unity of Purpose: Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

Diversity of Service: To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and
2. to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,
3. to another faith by the same Spirit,
4. to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

5. to another the working of miracles,
6. to another prophecy,
7. to another the ability to distinguish between spirits,
8. to another various kinds of tongues,
9. to another the interpretation of tongues.

All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. (1 Corinthians 12:1-11 ESV)

UNKNOWN GENEALOGIES: THE SERVICE OF GODLY SEEKERS

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Radical Renewal: The Problem of Wineskins Today by Howard Snyder. Wipf and Stock. 2005.
The Equipping Church Guidebook: Your Comprehensive Resource by Sue Mallory and Brad Smith. Zondervan. 2001.

