

# Discussion Guide: What it means to be a people of God

*Let us examine the Scriptures like the Bereans who "received the message with the great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." Acts 17:11 (NIV)*

**August 10, 2003:** "What it means to be a people of God" by Elder Jim Livengood of College Park Church, taken from Zechariah 7:1-8:23. He began his sermon by making a vivid comparison what Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 evokes in our minds and what the destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem in 587 B.C. meant to the Jews of that era. To commemorate the destruction of the temple, the Jews in the sixth century B.C. had set aside a day of commemoration to mourn and fast. Now that the second temple was nearing completion in 518 B.C. the people asked the priests and prophets if they should continue to mourn and fast [in memory of the temple's destruction] as they had done for so many years (7:3).

God's answer to this question was itself a four-fold question: (1) When you celebrate your religious ritual are you worshipping Me the way I have ordained or according to your own thoughts, 7:4-7; (2) If you want to know what really pleases Me try this, 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or fatherless, the alien, or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other,' 7:8-14; (3) Do you believe and trust God's Word to live steadfastly today, or do you cave into the pressure of the moment, 8:1-9; (4) Trust Me daily but keep an eye on the future, 8:18-23.

## Discussion and Application Questions

Begin your discussion/application with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to illumine the hearts and minds of your Flock and to protect your thoughts and deliberations from Satan's interference as you study and apply God's Word together.

Open your Bibles and read together as much of Zechariah 7:1 - 8:23 as you will cover in your discussion.

**Begin** with several content related questions to stimulate your group's thoughts into action.

1. Does someone remember an interpretation or illustration from Jim's sermon that especially struck you and that you would be willing to share—what about the one where on the way to Anderson he was ruminating about getting even with someone who had done him wrong and was so engaged in his thoughts that he missed the Anderson exit, and the Muncie exit, and was only a few miles from Ft. Wayne before he realized how intent he had been on getting even?
2. Do you appreciate being a part of a church where when the senior "preaching" pastor is away that one of the other pastor/elders is able to fill the bill, so to speak?
3. How would you rate Jim's deftness at taking his preaching principles directly from sixth century B. C. Scripture and then applying those ancient principles to our everyday twenty-first century lives? Would this model be a good example for us to follow in our devotions? in our Flock Group discussion?
4. These discussion guides on the Internet are the Flock Group Council's effort to help leaders and participants employ prayer and the Word, and to enlist the help of the Holy Spirit with

relevant discussion and application, to produce spiritual strengthening, encouragement and comfort to your lives. Do you think that our effort is meeting our aim to help you in your upbuilding and everyday living?

**Continue** your Flock Discussion by focusing on the application of God's Word specifically to your 24/7 living.

1. Read aloud once more the sermon title: "What It Means To Be a People of God."

Now read God's first question to the Jewish people: "Are you worshipping My way or your own way?"

God's intention is for worshippers to come before Him, enter wholeheartedly into the service and listen intently to songs, prayers, and preaching in order that they might understand God's Word and bring forth fruit—a hundred or sixty or thirty-fold (See Ecclesiastes 5:1; Matthew 13:9, 23). Do you have trouble with intentional participating and listening during Sunday worship services? Have you considered that a weakness here is what allows Satan to snatch God's Word away from you (13:19)?

2. From Zechariah 7:8-10, discuss God's second answer regarding what really pleases Him. Was failure to heed the last part of 7:10 the very thing that got Jim into trouble on his trip to Anderson? Can you relate a similar instance how disobedience to God's express instructions landed you into hot water?
3. Discuss and apply God's third response: "Do you [people of God] believe and trust God's Word to live steadfastly today, or do you cave in to the pressures of the moment (8:1-9)? Do you have some specific instances either negative or positive?"
4. Discuss and apply God's last response: "Trust Me fully but keep an eye on the future," 8:18-23.

### **Helping Your Flock Members to Apply and Act**

1. Recall some of Jim's illustrations of man-made traditions that get elevated to doctrinal status: good Christians don't wear facial hair – church music must not be too fast or slow or loud etc. – drums should never be played in church, etc.

Can you add other examples to his list?

Discuss how we might give over to God the "little things that don't really matter," and how that would enhance the spiritual life an individual or family or church or workplace environment.

2. Identify (in your mind at least) someone you can help lift up this week by encouraging that one to become or remain faithful in the face of whatever trial is confronting him or her.
3. Write a note of thanks or make a call to someone whose example of faith has strengthened you. Let this person know how much their living out the "Christ-life" has encouraged you.