

## September 24 Answers

- 1) The story of Ezra's reform teaches us several lessons. First, it shows us that any **relationship** that endangers or compromises wholehearted devotion to God is forbidden. This applies not only to marriage, but also to **friendships**, business partnerships, and military alliances. Second, it teaches us that our relationship with God is more **important** than any other relationship. This is clearly seen in the Law where God commanded that if a man's wife enticed him to idolatry, he was not to spare her or have pity on her, but was to bring her before the people and **stone** her (Deut 13:6–11). Since the Jewish men had voluntarily married these foreign women, **knowing** that they worshipped other gods, and since the women were unwilling to give up their idolatry (cf. Ezra 6:21), separation was a **merciful** solution to the problem. It spared the women, and it removed the spiritual danger they posed to their husbands and the entire community. Third, it teaches us that our actions affect the **community** in which we live. What 113 men had done brought the **entire** remnant under God's wrath (Ezra 10:14). Corporate holiness is therefore an **individual** responsibility. Our community will be holy only as we and the other members separate ourselves from sin and set our hearts to seek God.