



BEYOND WALLS

A STUDY IN NEHEMIAH

Getting Started

What is something that always brings a smile to your face?

Active Faith

Throughout Nehemiah we see a faith that moves God's people to action.

- Has anyone had a chance to use their talents and skills as a blessing and display of the gospel toward unbelievers this week?
- Have you had a chance to use your words to proclaim the good news, or share your own story of redemption and restoration with someone who is not a Christian this week?

Take a moment to thank God for the opportunities you've had to show and speak the gospel, and ask him to help you see how you might share your faith in the coming week.

Restoring Order

Imagine you have a friend who goes to prison for stealing. This friend spends several years locked up in a cell and away from his home. Finally, after finishing his sentence he returns to society. You decide to pay your friend a visit and, to your dismay, you find out that he has returned to a life of stealing. How do you feel? How do you respond?

This scenario is similar to that of Nehemiah. Israel and Judah are exiled for idolatry and disobedience but are eventually allowed to return to Jerusalem. Nehemiah organizes and accomplishes the rebuilding of the wall and the repopulating of the city, setting in place solid leaders to govern. His term as governor is complete, he goes back to the court of King Artaxerxes. Returning three years later for a second term, he discovers that Jerusalem's people are still doing the very things for which they were exiled.

Read Nehemiah 13:1-31 aloud together and reflect on the questions that follow.

1. How would you summarize chapter 13 in the greater context of the the book of Nehemiah?
2. How does Nehemiah address Tobiah's unacceptable living situation (13:8-9)? Compare his response to that of Jesus in Matthew 21:12-13. How are they similar?
3. The Jews learn that their commitment to remain separate from pagans needs to extend beyond intermarriage. Have you ever repented of a sin only to find that the problem went deeper than you first thought? Why are we sometimes slow to understand the depth of our sin?
4. Nehemiah is a chapter about forgetting and remembering. What commands do the people forget during Nehemiah's absence?
5. Based on the pattern in Nehemiah, what should we do to gain a better picture of our sinfulness so that we might repent? Look up James 1:22-25 to help with your answer. Explain the comparison.
6. Does the amount of time you give to learning Scripture reflect a desire to confront or avoid sin? What wrong thinking causes us to hide from the mirror of God's Word?

CONCLUSION

Having now completed our study of Nehemiah, what have you learned about the nature and character of the Lord?

How has this study affected your view of God, the gospel, your community, and your own heart?

Is there one particular take-away from this study that you want to process, pray through and act upon in the days and months ahead?

PRAY

Take time to pray together as a group:

- Confessing and repenting of places in your life where you have failed to follow God's commands.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you enjoy righteousness and hate sin. Ask the Lord for a greater desire for holiness.
- Pray for a desire to follow God's commands and encourage others to do so out of a loving and kind heart.