

LIFE GROUP LESSON

Prayer on the Run • Week of September 29

The prayer in chapter nine of Nehemiah recounts God's faithfulness and great patience with a rebellious people, the nation of Israel (Nehemiah 9:5b-37). God alone led Israel through their history, rescuing and warning them relentlessly. After seventy years in exile, these returned-descendants of Jacob, stood for six hours – three hours as the Book of the Law was read and three more to confess their sin and worship the LORD (Nehemiah 9:3). Too often we project onto God our limited love. But Israel understood God's love is not limited. His love is un-failing and ever-faithful. God's eternal truth brought deep conviction to the people that day, but also hope as they recognized His goodness in allowing them to return and rebuild their identity.

In response to God's faithfulness, the returned exiles recommitted themselves to the LORD: "In view of all this, we are making a solemn promise and putting it in writing. On this sealed document are the names of our leaders and Levites and priests" (Nehemiah 9:38). A list of names is recorded in the first 25 verses of chapter ten. "Then the rest of the people... together with their wives, sons, daughters, and all who were old enough to understand –joined their leaders and bound themselves with an oath... They solemnly promised to carefully follow all the commands, regulations, and decrees of the LORD our Lord" (Nehemiah 10:28-29). God had given them a second chance to be a people set apart for Him.

Read Nehemiah 10:28-39

The people wanted to make *right* what they had neglected in previous times, which had resulted in the seventy-year exile. For example, intermarriage had led to idol worship (think about Solomon's downfall and the divided kingdom); neglect of the Temple, proper offerings and tithes had robbed them of God's best blessings; and dishonoring the Sabbath day (even neglecting to allow the land to 'rest') resulted in the land lying desolate for seventy years —"So the message of the LORD spoken through Jeremiah was fulfilled. The land finally enjoyed its Sabbath rest, lying desolate until the seventy years were fulfilled, just as the prophet had said" (2 Chronicles 36:21; see also Leviticus 25:3-4, Jeremiah 29:10).

1. Read together:

"This is what the LORD says, 'You will be in Babylon for seventy years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again. For I know the plans I have for you,' says the LORD. 'They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope'" (Jeremiah 29:10-11).

Though sin is highly destructive, God is all about rebuilding when we are ready. How have you personally experienced the destructive nature of unrepentant sin?

Often after turning from sin, consequences are already set in motion. But God is always merciful. How are you experiencing God's mercy these days? How is the Holy Spirit encouraging you to move forward and rebuild the desolate places in your life?

The returned exiles (beginning with the leaders) were wise in recognizing God's great mercy. The nation of Israel had not been completely destroyed! They still praised God and chose to recommit themselves, though under foreign rule and surrounded by enemy nations. We may forget that God's mercy causes us to 'get caught' or experience a wake-up-call in the first place. The Lord loves and disciplines us out of love, *for our good*. "My child, don't reject the LORD's discipline, and don't be upset when He corrects you. For the LORD corrects those He loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights" (Proverbs 3:11-12, also Hebrews 12:5-9).

2. The people purified themselves, promising "together not to neglect the Temple of our God" (v39b). Through worship—adoration, praise, confession, obedience—they began cultivating soil for the harvest. What does Jesus say about obedience in John 15:10?

Read together—

"Plant the good seeds of righteousness, and you will harvest a crop of love. Plow up the hard ground of your hearts for now is the time to seek the LORD, that He may come and shower righteousness upon you"
(Hosea 10:12).

3. Re-read Nehemiah 10:35-39 aloud. According to these verses, planting the 'good seeds of righteousness' takes on a practical nature—intentionally giving God your first and best opens up the floodgates of heaven. When you give God the first 10%, He blesses the remaining 90% of your resources! What would '90% - Blessed' look like for you?

The Bible says to throw off your old way of living and “Instead let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy” (Ephesians 4:22-24). Why not adopt a new outlook on tithing: a “Hey I can live on ‘90% - Blessed’ Attitude!” Cultivating a new attitude can create a refreshed sense of joy in your walk (friendship) with Christ. There is abundant harvests ahead. And according to Jesus, the fruit you harvest is “people brought to eternal life” (see John 4:36).

Life really is a series of choices. Every day we choose whether or not we will follow Christ. It is easy to go with the culture. But going with the culture can sap our strength and joy. And while it may be hard to keep to the narrow path, our journey with Christ prepares us for heaven. Jesus said, “You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). Prayer-on-the-Run keeps us focused on the things that really matter, our friendship with Christ and helping connect others around us to Christ. Will you begin the good work of cultivating and planting?

One Year Bible Reading
Sept. 29: Isaiah 57:15-59:21, Philippians 1:1-26, Psalm 71:1-24, Proverbs 24:9-10
Sept. 30: Isaiah 60:1-62:5, Philippians 1:27-2:18, Psalm 72:1-20, Proverbs 24:11-12
Oct. 1: Isaiah 62:6-65:25, Philippians 2:19-3:3, Psalm 73:1-28, Proverbs 24:13-14
Oct. 2: Isaiah 66:1-24, Philippians 3:4-21, Psalm 74:1-23, Proverbs 24:15-16
Oct. 3: Jeremiah 1:1-2:30, Philippians 4:1-23, Psalm 75:1-10, Proverbs 24:17-20
Oct. 4: Jeremiah 2:31-4:18, Colossians 1:1-17, Psalm 76:1-12, Proverbs 24:21-22
Oct. 5: Jeremiah 4:19-6:15, Colossians 1:18-2:7, Psalm 77:1-20, Proverbs 24:23-25



Text: Nehemiah 10:28 - 39, Hosea 10:12-14

PLAIN TRUTH:

If we don’t _____ and _____ in the spring, we can’t enjoy the _____ in the winter.

Power Point: Disobedience leads to the _____ of our prayer life. Obedience leads to the _____ and _____ for a harvest.

Two primary ways to cultivate during the spring and summer times of our lives which prepare us for the winter seasons...

- 1. Purity of _____.
 - a. Purity of heart through _____
 - b. Purity of heart through _____
 - c. Purity of heart through _____

- 2. Vow to never neglect the _____ of God.
 - a. Worship involves _____.
 - b. Worship involves _____.
 - c. Worship involves _____.
 - d. Worship involves _____.
 - e. Worship involves _____.

September 28 & 29, 2019