A guide to deeper understanding, closer community, and broader application October 26, 2019

**Warm up question:** Identify one way our study of the life of Nehemiah changed you.

**Prayer Focus:** Prayer for God to revive our spirits and renew our devotion to His way.

**Ask the following Thought & Discussion Questions giving plenty of time for discussion.**

1. More important than fulfilling your vision for the world, is God fulfilling His vision for you. According to your best understanding, what is God’s vision for your life? How do you see God working to fulfill that vision in you?
2. We tend to think of the conviction of sin as a negative thing. How can we help ourselves and others come to see God’s correction and rebuke as a something to be valued?
3. How can grief and mourning over our sins be turned into joy as it was with the people in Nehemiah 8:10?
4. What did Jesus promise to those who mourn (their sin)? What does that mean? How have you experienced that promise?
5. In what way is the joy of the Lord our strength?
6. Have you ever experienced a personal or congregational revival like the people in Nehemiah’s day? What might that look like if it occurred among us today? What might help us to bring such a renewal about?

**This Week:** Read God’s word expectantly. Look for Him to reveal Himself and His will to you anew. Be prepared to be convicted and changed. Allow yourself to experience both the grief of sin and the joy of renewal.

**Close by singing:**Light the Fire

I stand to praise You

But I fall on my knees

My spirit is willing

But my flesh is so weak

Light the fire

In my soul

Fan the flame

Make me whole

Lord, You know

Just where I've been

So light the fire

in my heart again

I feel Your arms around me

As the power of

Your healing begins

Your breathe new life right through me

Like a mighty rushing wind

Your grace enfolds me

As you heal me complete

Your truth upholds me

As a lamp unto my fee.

**Envision #7 – *It’s Not Just A Wall***

Nehemiah 8:1-12

In Nehemiah 6:15a it says, “*So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days*.” After laying in ruins for over a century, the job that nobody believed was possible was completed in less than two months because of the godly vision and leadership of Nehemiah.

But why was it so important that Jerusalem be restored? Because it was the city that housed God’s temple and where the promised Messiah was to be enthroned. From Jerusalem God’s salvation was to go forth and bless all the nations of the earth, with its walls called *salvation* and its gates *praise* (Isaiah 60). Isaiah understood that this could not happen unless the people themselves were renewed, just like the walls had been. What point is there in protecting a city that is just as corrupt inside the gates as the world outside it?

Nehemiah wasn’t just concerned about making the citizens safe, he wanted them holy. He knew that giving people food, clothing and security was not enough to create virtuous citizens. Man does not live by bread alone. So how do you reform a people who have lost sight of their purpose? In chapter 8:1-8, Nehemiah gathers the people to hear Ezra the scribe read and explain the law of God. This impacted the people in two ways:

 1. The people were grieved as they became aware of their sin and how it had led to their downfall (v.9).

 They had grown accustomed to life at the bottom and hearing the word awakened them.

 It is good to mourn over our sin, because you can’t change what you don’t see as a problem.

 2. The people rejoiced as they became aware of God’s mercy (vv.11-12).

Some people get stuck in sorrow. But the sorrow is what leads you to repentance and repentance leads you to joy! Were it not for God’s mercy and forgiveness there would be no hope, but because His mercies are new every morning there is hope and joy. We must learn to wield joy as a weapon against sin and the damning accusations of the enemy.

The people of Jerusalem were experiencing *revival*. I love that word. It literally means - to make alive again. It’s when the people of God are re-awakened to a fresh appreciation of His will and His presence. For the people in Nehemiah’s day, it came in the realization that what had been accomplished was far more than they were capable of on their own and that God had been working on their behalf, long before they knew it. It was as if the wall receded into the background and the God who made it possible came to the fore. So here is great point to ponder:

**A God-given vision will always lead back to God.**

In this final quarter of 2019 - I can look back and see that the hand of God has been on us. To the extent that we open ourselves up to that reality, we will see revival. Let’s close-out this year with a sense of wonder as we experience God’s work in us and through us. Like the people of Jerusalem let us:

 Open our minds to experience God revealing Himself in His word (vv. 1,5).

 Open our ears to hear His law and grieve over our sin (v. 9c).

 Open our hearts to receive His pardon and find strength in the joy of His salvation (v. 10a).

 Open our hands to share with those who have nothing (v. 10b).

 Open our mouths to declare His way to those far from God and stranded in sin.

Nehemiah’s vision was big, but it was only one piece of God’s massive project to redeem the world. That project ran through Jerusalem where the Great King came to be enthroned on a cross. After conquering death, He empowered His church to bear witness to Him beginning in Jerusalem and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

The earthly city of Jerusalem no longer has a special place in God’s redemptive purpose, but the new Jerusalem, the spiritual city, the church, continues the mission. We aren’t building a wall to keep the world out, we are the army of the Great King laying siege to the gates of Hell. Leading captives who are stranded in sin into a transforming relationship with Jesus. May God revive us again and give us the vision to fulfill His purpose in our time.