

Nehemiah: freenotfree
Week 1 – freedom comes from praying

Transition: We just completed our study of the book of Revelation. One way of thinking about the main message of Revelation is that it is God's encouragement to His people to endure to the end. The book of Nehemiah, on the other hand, comes at the idea of endurance from a different perspective. Namely, it is God showing us how to endure when our world has fallen apart and everything and everyone seems to be against us. And even worse, when it feels like He is distant or uncaring.

Context: The book of Nehemiah is set after the Jews had been granted permission by the Medo-Persian empire to return to their homeland. (They had been captured and led away by King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians more than 70 years earlier.) For a variety of reasons, many Jews chose to remain living as exiles in the foreign land. Eventually, Nehemiah is convicted of the plight of his people and their need to rebuild Jerusalem. This book tells the story of how God led him to lead the effort to re-establish Jerusalem so that God's people could return to their homeland and worship Him at the temple once again.

Opening Question:

- What freedoms are most important to you and why? Have you ever felt that your freedom was impinged? What happened? How did it make you feel?
- Why do you think Christians often struggle with prayer? What can be done to improve personal prayer time?

Scripture/Storying: Nehemiah 1:1-11

Discipleship Questions:

- What happened that broke Nehemiah's heart? Why do you think it had such a drastic effect on him? What was his immediate response? What do we learn about the character of Nehemiah from his reaction?
- Think of an event in your life that broke your heart. Compare your immediate response to Nehemiah's. How are they similar? How are they different? If you could go back in time, would you change anything? If so, what?
- What is the first thing that you notice about Nehemiah's prayer? What makes it noticeable to you? How will you incorporate it into your prayer life?
- One of the things that Nehemiah does is confess and repent of the sins of his people. What is your opinion of this? Why would he do it? Have you ever done it? If so, when and why?
- How does Nehemiah reveal his faith in God in his prayer? While at the same time, how does Nehemiah show that he does not presume upon God? Where is the line between faith and presumption?
- In what ways is Nehemiah free but not free? In what ways are we like Nehemiah today? How will what you learn from this impact the way that you live?
- What has the Spirit of God revealed to you through today's time together?