

## Nehemiah: FreeNotFree

Week 10 – freedom comes from partnering

**Transition:** Last week we saw how the Jews remembered their covenant with God...they took ownership of the reality that their fathers had sinned against God, which had subsequently caused their nation being divinely disciplined by being exiled to Babylon. Taking stock of this, and once again being brought back to the land of promise, together as one, they solemnly committed themselves to abiding by the covenant that their ancestors had originally entered into through Moses after their exodus from Egypt.

**Context:** For the nation of Israel, from the time of King David onward, Jerusalem was the epicenter of their religion. First, it was the location of the temple, where holy God met with man. Second, it was where the sacrifices were made to appease and worship and honor Him. Third, God mandated that every man make the trek to Jerusalem at least three times a year to celebrate certain festivals together as one people. Finally, through the inspiration of God, the prophets spoke of Jerusalem as the place where their Messiah, the Son of David, would rule forever. In short, for the Jews of Nehemiah's day, the worship of God was centrally located in Jerusalem.

### Opening Question:

- Share with the group something that you've willingly sacrificed in order to benefit others. What was the experience like for you? Would you do it again?
- What is the easiest move (from one home to another) that you have made? What was the hardest? What makes a move easy or hard for you? If you've never moved, respond hypothetically...do you think it would be easy or hard for you to move, and why?

### Scripture/Storying: Nehemiah 11

**Before the group meets:** ask everyone in the group to read the Bible passage and to be prepared to discuss it together.

**When the group meets:** re-build the passage together as a group by asking everyone to share what they remember about the passage and its flow. (Someone from the group can be assigned ahead of time to lead the group through this.)

**When the group meets:** read the passage out loud (invite the group to participate, especially if the passage is long).

### Discipleship Questions:

Encourage participation and self-reflection from all group members. Please feel free to come up with your own questions. Be sure to reserve ample time for personal application. And remember, you may not have time to cover every question, so plan ahead by choosing the ones that you intend to discuss. The rest can be done if there's time.

- In v1, the people cast lots to determine who will live in Jerusalem. Why do you think they found it necessary to get people to move there? In what ways might we apply this idea to our lives today?
- Notice also that it says that the ones who were chosen moved there willingly (v2). When has God selected you to do something, and how did you respond? What does willingness signify and how does it impact the rest of the community? How do we come to understand God's specific will for us today without needing to cast lots?
- Also in v2, the people blessed the men who left their homes and willingly moved to Jerusalem. When have you celebrated someone who made a difficult decision that was a sacrifice for themselves, but was in response to a call from the Lord? What are some ways that you can acknowledge/bless those who make such decisions now? Does anyone in particular come to mind? If so, how will you bless that person?
- In what ways is coming to Jerusalem to worship similar to coming to church today? In what ways is it different? What are the strengths of having a central place to worship? What are some pitfalls to be aware of and avoid?
- Three times certain men are called either valiant or men of valor. What is valor? What do you think these men might have done to earn that distinction? What are some ways that we can be valiant as we follow Christ today?

**Prayer time:** Please leave ample time to pray. Pray that we will willingly obey whatever God calls us to do.