

Nehemiah 10 Community Group Study Questions

We are almost at the end of this great book. And as we have explored the 2nd half of Nehemiah, it has become abundantly clear that God was not just about building a wall. He was also building a community of faith. This has always been the purpose of God, to be in relationship with His people. God has done a mighty thing, and Nehemiah gathers them to rejoice and give thanks to God for what He has done. The people read the law of God, confess and repent of sin and worship God. And God shows up powerfully amongst the people.

I'm sure that some were filled with national pride. This great city of their ancestors and of David has been repaired, its people are back, and its enemies are held at bay. As a result, the people make a covenant (re-commitment) to obey God and support His house.

I think it's important to point out what led them into repentance. Too often, we are not moved to repent until either our wrong is uncovered or our situation has become hopeless. Here their repentance is a direct response to hearing and understanding the Word of God. They realized their condition in light of their eternal God. This is repentance according to the Word of God.

As the "house of our God" today is His Church, we should see in all this a parallel for us. We must all be committed to separating ourselves from the world, obeying God in all areas of our lives and providing for the needs of the Church and the work He has given it to do.

Reflect on the following questions.

1. Read Nehemiah 9:38. In chapter 9, the people are reminded of the covenant God has made with them. Using the following cross references, write down something you learn about God's everlasting covenant with Israel: Genesis 9:16, Isaiah 24:5, Isaiah 55:3, Hebrews 13:20.

How is this similar to or different from the "new covenant" Jesus made with us? (see Ezekiel 36:26-27; Jeremiah 31:31,33; Luke 22:20)

2. Nehemiah 10:1-27 lists the names and titles of the people of Israel who affixed their seals to this agreement with God. Why do you think it was important for the leaders to place their "stamp of approval" on this agreement? What is significant about the list of names as it relates to unity? Imagine what the result of this agreement would be if only half of the people agreed.

The people took their commitment seriously. The people were so serious about their commitment that they were willing to take upon themselves a curse if they didn't follow through. The commitment they made was not an empty one. They had every intention to follow through. What steps can we take to help ensure that we follow through on commitments we make to God?

Biblical insight: "The way someone 'signed' a document in the ancient world was similar to the use of a wax seal in more recent times. A distinctive seal was pressed into soft clay. The pattern of the seal showed what authority issued that document." (Nelson Study Bible, note on Nehemiah 10:1)

3. Read Nehemiah 10:28-29. In verse 28, "separation" is referenced. From whom did they separate and why? What emotions arise as you think of God calling you to be separate from others and the world?

Read Leviticus 20:26, Joshua 23:6-7, Judges 2:1-2, Ezra 9:1. Write down something you learn about God's people being "separated." Using 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, what is the main principle to be learned?

What action can you take to better live a separated life unto God?

4. The people make specific commitments to their covenant. Special mention is given to the covenant of not intermarrying with people from the neighboring nations.

What do you think God's purpose was to prohibit His people from marriage to foreign peoples? (Note: Refer to 1 Kings 11:1-6 to help you with your answer.) How does this commitment sit with you? How can you encourage others if you are married to a non-believer? (see 1 Corinthians 7:14-17, 1 Peter 3:1)

The people also agreed in the covenant to observe the Sabbath. The Sabbath command is appropriately known as the "test commandment" (compare Exodus 16, especially verse 4) because it presents a strong challenge for people to set aside their normal everyday wants and business in order to worship God.

One of the major problems of the Israelites after the return to Jerusalem was that they pursued their own "kingdoms" instead of God's. We learn in Haggai that they were making luxurious upgrades to their own houses while the temple was not even built and the city was in ruins. As a culture and as a people, they had become very materialistic. How does observing the Sabbath keep us from falling into materialism and selfishness?

5. Read Nehemiah 10:32-38. Highlight how often *firstfruits*, *firstborn* and *tithe* are mentioned. What does this covenant speak to us about bringing God our best? What do you think is meant by "not neglecting the house of God"?

As believers, we should bring our firstfruits to God and not give Him what is left over. So, how are you doing with giving back to God financially? Are you giving to Him off the top, or giving Him what's left? How does the thought of financial giving as worship sit with you?