



# NEHEMIAH

## Epilogue

### Renewal Follow Up

- ❖ How has scripture connected you to God?
- ❖ What are the questions you have about the Bible?
- ❖ How can we acknowledge our questions yet still trust scripture?
- ❖ To those who read James: what thoughts leaped out at you?

### Recap Nehemiah 8, 9 & 10

Upon completion of the wall, Ezra the priest reads to the gathered people from the Law. The people celebrate and rejoice for a week the walls completion and the reading of the Law. After the celebration the Israelites gather together to corporately confess their and their father's sins. They recount the many ways God had historically provided and protected them and how they had turned away from God. The people agree to sign a binding agreement of their commitment to God for the future. They agree to maintain the temple, its practices and sacrifices as well as to avoid watering down their faith through involvement with foreign nations. They end by stating that, "We will not neglect the house of our God."

### Foothills Community Church Covenant

Together, as the family of Foothills Community Church we commit ourselves to:  
**Loving God passionately and Loving Others radically**  
To this end, we promise to pursue a lifestyle of:  
**Discipleship, Community, and Mission**  
that we might proclaim and demonstrate the good news of Jesus Christ and make his kingdom tangible in our homes, our neighborhoods, our city,  
and around the world.

### Questions:

- ❖ Why did the Israelites make their covenant?
- ❖ What was the mood like among the Israelites after celebrating the completion of the wall and signing the covenant?
- ❖ What were the core issues that needed to change in order for them to up hold their covenant?
- ❖ Why would you sign Foothills covenant?
- ❖ How will you follow through with this covenant commitment?
- ❖ Compare and contrast the Israelites and the people of Foothills Community.

### Read this passage to your group, and then discuss it based on the questions below:

"In the days that followed," said John Lewis, "too much of the national press, in my opinion, focused not on the substance of the day, but on the setting. Their stories portrayed the event as a big picnic, a hootenanny combined with the spirit of a revival prayer meeting. Too many commentators and reporters softened and trivialized the hard edges of pain and suffering that brought about this day in the first place, virtually ignoring the hard issues that needed to be addressed."

Indeed, there was an exuberance that rang throughout the March. It was a success because so few people thought that it would happen at all. Now, the leaders of the March and the attendees would have to somehow translate that moment into action. They would have to change the attitudes, opinions and beliefs of people who did not want change, nor believed that the country needed it.

Although the event made an impression on people around the world, it was not immediately clear whether it would achieve its ultimate goal—passage of a civil rights bill.

*Like a Mighty Stream: The March On Washington August 28, 1963* by Patrik Henry Bass

- ❖ Why was it easier for the press to talk about the success of that day rather than the struggle it took to get there?
- ❖ How did the enthusiasm of that day translate to nation wide reform?
- ❖ Forty-five years later, how has America fulfilled the ideals expressed that day?
- ❖ How have we as a society drifted away from those ideals?
- ❖ What causes the drift?

*It's crucial that we keep a firm grip on what we've heard so that we don't drift off.  
Hebrews 2:1 MSG*

## Study the Scriptures

Nehemiah 13 NIV (selected verses)

<sup>6</sup>But while all this was going on, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes King of Babylon I had returned to the king. Some time later I asked his permission <sup>7</sup>and came back to Jerusalem. Here I learned about the evil thing Eliashib had done in providing Tobiah a room in the courts of the house of God. <sup>8</sup>I was greatly displeased and threw all Tobiah's household goods out of the room.

<sup>11</sup>So I rebuked the officials and asked them, "Why is the house of God neglected?"

<sup>17</sup>I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this wicked thing you are doing desecrating the Sabbath day? <sup>18</sup>Didn't our forefathers do the same things, so that our God brought all this calamity upon us and upon this city? Now you are stirring up more wrath against Israel by desecrating the Sabbath."

<sup>25</sup>I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God's name and said: "You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves.

<sup>28</sup>One of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. And I drove him away from me.

## Questions:

- ❖ What idea kept Nehemiah going as he fulfilled his commitment in Persia?
- ❖ How did his time away impact his zeal for God's law and Jerusalem?
- ❖ Why then was he so angry when he returned?
- ❖ What were his key points of disagreement?
- ❖ Were his actions justified?
- ❖ What caused the Israelites to drift?

*We must fight the temptation to treat our faith the way we treat our careers—as a source of entertainment, fulfillment, and happiness. Remember the warning of C. S. Lewis: If you're seeking happiness, don't choose Christianity, choose port wine.* "Evangelical Drift", by Charles Colson and Anne Morse

### **Questions:**

- ❖ How do we avoid drifting away from our commitments?
- ❖ What does "drift" look like in your life?
- ❖ How can we rejoice in the moment yet protect and guard our future?
- ❖ What are the different "covenants" you have made in your life?
- ❖ How can this group help you fulfill those commitments?

**Homework:** Take time this week to write down the areas of your life that you sense some drift. Take that paper and put it some place where you will be reminded to stay true to those commitments. Commit to share those thoughts with someone who will help you stay focused.

**Digging Deeper:** Read John 2:13–17 and Revelation 2:1–7. How does the character and response of Nehemiah compare to Jesus' responses in these passages? What can we learn of God's character from these verses? What is the application to our everyday lives?