

SERMON APPLICATION GUIDE

NEHEMIAH: BUILDING BEYOND THE WALLS

Nehemiah 9

DISCUSSION 1: A FITTING RESPONSE

1. In Nehemiah chapters 8-9 we see God's people not only reading it (or hearing it) but responding to it? What's the difference between reading and responding? How can you be more intentional about building application, response, or obedience into your life so that you're a doer of the Word and not a hearer only (James 1:23)?
2. As you study the Bible on your own or as a small group, what are some of the ways we can respond to God? Which of these do you feel like you personally neglect and would like to lean into more?

DISCUSSION 2: CONFESSION

1. When you're wrong, sin against someone, or offend someone, what makes asking for forgiveness or apologizing hard? What makes confessing our sin to God difficult?
2. Describe what role confession to God looks like in your life right now.
3. What are some of benefits and results of practicing biblical confession?
4. In the 1st of his 95 Theses, Martin Luther wrote, "When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said 'Repent', He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." Do you think confession and repentance should characterize the whole of our life, as Luther claims? What might that look like?

DISCUSSION 3: GRACE IN CONFESSION

1. How does a right view of God (in his glory, holiness, and goodness) and a right view of ourselves (as fallen, dependent, and sinful) lead to confession? The challenge this assumes we are often seeing how big God is and how small we are. Do you think that happens regularly in your life? Why or why not?
2. Read 1 John 1:8-2:2. Why should our confession of sin always be paired to clinging to Christ's work?
3. When you know you've failed or sinned against God, how might that create a sense of distance between you and God or a fear to draw near? How does confession help us draw near, return to, and experience friendship with God rather than hide or drift?
4. How might a regular habit of confession produce some of the following: dependence on God, gratitude and thanksgiving, patience and grace toward others, and humility?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. Why is it so important to respond to God's Word and not just read it or hear it?
2. When we confess our sins to God, how do we know that we're forgiven?
3. God wants us to confess our sins to God, but also to confess and ask for forgiveness when we sin against or wrong others. Why is it good to confess, apologize, and seek reconciliation with others when we do wrong?

Praying in Confession

Consider taking time to pray together through Psalm 32 or 51 to guide a time of confession-oriented prayer.

Or, use the group time of prayer to confess together, pray for one another, and give thanks for the forgiveness and cleansing in Christ.

Confess any sins to God that he has brought to mind. (Are there any sins God has been convicting you of as you've read this book? Are there any "respectable" sins that you regularly struggle with?) Ask for his mercy and forgiveness for committing those sins and for the sin in you that led to them, but also ask for help as you turn from them (repent).

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!" (Psalm 51:1-2)

See also Psalm 51:1-11; 32:1-5; 38:18; 2 Samuel 24:10; James 5:16; 1 John 1:8-2:2.