

SERMON SERIES COMPANION STUDIES
FOR SMALL GROUPS



LET'S REBUILD!

A SERIES FROM THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

REBUILDING LIFE, CHURCH, AND COMMUNITY

STUDY 2

Facing Reality and Charting Our Course

SERMON TEXT: NEHEMIAH 2:1-18

COMPANION STUDY TEXT: LUKE 14:27-33; EPHESIANS 5:15-17

Getting Started

After greeting one another, take a minute or two of silence together and offer an opening prayer. If you don't all know one another already, invite each group member to share their name.

Opening Question

Describe a time when you had to rebuild a part of your life from scratch. It doesn't need to be inherently negative – a graduation, a new job, or a big move are also times for rebuilding. Do you feel like you had a particular strategy for piecing your life back together, or was it more about figuring things out as you went?

Purpose of This Week's Study

Taking a courageous look at change and loss during the pandemic and our leadership transition and seeking God for the vision to move forward together.

INTRODUCTION TO THIS WEEK'S STUDY

This week our sermon text was Nehemiah 2:1-18, where Nehemiah asks the Persian King Artaxerxes if he can go back to his hometown of Jerusalem to help rebuild it. (Jerusalem had been sacked by Babylon in 586 BC and many of its residents exiled. Then, in 539 BC, the Persians conquered Babylon.) The King gave Nehemiah the green light, and also gave Nehemiah letters and papers that would give weight to Nehemiah's plans, as well as army officers and a cavalry.

Nehemiah didn't tell anyone with him what his plan was, and when he got to Jerusalem, he spent time one night examining the broken walls of the city. Only after he had what he needed, and had a bird's eye view of the problem, did he announce his plan and gather a team.

In our small groups this week, we will be focusing on two different texts that relate to the sermon, Luke 14:27-33, and Ephesians 5:15-17. In the first, Jesus is teaching the crowds what it means to count the cost and follow him. Just as Nehemiah made plans and surveyed the city before declaring his end goal, Jesus is telling the people to consider the entire vision he is setting before them: to build a life with him is to bury your old life and build something entirely new,

which requires foresight and commitment. The second text in Ephesians is straightforward: we are called to be careful and wise in how we live, not spending our lives foolishly. All three of these texts work together this week to show us that having a framework for our lives, especially in times of rebuilding, is an act of courage. We are called to seek God for an overarching vision for our lives and for the collective life of our community.

Scripture Reading

Invite two people from your group to take turns reading the following passages from Luke and Ephesians aloud:

LUKE 14:27-33 (NIV)

²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

²⁸ “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, ³⁰ saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’

³¹ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

EPHESIANS 5:15-17 (NIV)

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

For Reflection & Discussion

1. **Notice Luke 14:28 and 31.** What does Jesus say is the first thing someone should do before they make a big decision? With that in mind, take a moment to take an inventory of where we are right now: as individuals, family units, a small group, and as a church community. What are the challenges we are facing in each of these different spheres of life?
2. **Read Luke 14:33 again.** What is Jesus ultimately asking of us? As Christians, being disciples of Jesus is the framework for our lives. Having looked at the challenges we are facing, what would it look like to invite Jesus into all of it? What might he have to say about how we are dealing with these things moving forward?
3. In the passage from **Ephesians 5**, we read about our need to be wise and not foolish. Discuss as a group what foolishness would look like in the process of rebuilding. Maybe it would mean planning a big trip to celebrate even though it would put you in debt, or choosing to disengage from the church when we disagree with something. In contrast, what would it look like to rebuild *wisely*?

For Prayer Ministry

Take some time to be quiet before God and to wait in his presence, and give opportunity for group members to speak out impressions, scriptures, prophetic words and images, etc. Also, pray that God would reveal his vision for your group. Ask him to help you sort through the clutter of this season and to give you courage and vision for your group as you move into the spring and summer. Then take some time to respond in prayer, and to pray for one another, either as a single group or in smaller breakout groups.

For Further Reflection & Action Outside of Group

Spend some extra time in prayer this week asking God to help you “sit down and estimate” what the next season will look like. How do you want to live your life differently as we slowly come out of this pandemic? Ask God to reveal how you can be a builder of the church, as well. Is there a need in your small group you can fill? Can you serve on the hospitality or children’s team? Can you work through a divide that’s been growing between you and another church member recently? Ask God to help you create a framework for moving forward.