

SERMON SERIES COMPANION STUDIES
FOR SMALL GROUPS



LET'S REBUILD!

A SERIES FROM THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

REBUILDING LIFE, CHURCH, AND COMMUNITY

STUDY 9

Consecration and Commitment

SERMON TEXT: NEHEMIAH 9:38-10:39

COMPANION STUDY TEXT: ROMANS 6:13-19; ROMANS 12:1-2

Getting Started

If you haven't done so already, share this PDF, or the link to this study, with other members of your group.

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. Have pen and paper handy for an activity you will do during group.

Opening Question

We have all likely encountered ideas concerning "commitment issues." For some, the idea of committing – whether it be to a job, a relationship, or something else – brings on intense feelings of anxiety and an urge for avoidance. What is it about "long term" that can make us feel so apprehensive?

Purpose of This Week's Study

Taking time to reflectively and intentionally (re)commit ourselves to God, and to the work of rebuilding – both in our own lives, in the church, and beyond – in the season ahead.

INTRODUCTION TO THIS WEEK'S STUDY

In this scene from the book of Nehemiah (Neh. 9:38-10:39), we see the next steps of a people who have just laid bare their sin before the Lord in repentance. What they do next is remarkable: they engage their wills to re-identify themselves as the people of God, and they do so with specific and concrete commitments that are both personal and communal in nature.

This week, we turn to a few passages from Romans to further consider how we ourselves can re-identify ourselves as the people of God, and to steward the work which God has uniquely and communally called each of us to give ourselves to.

Scripture Reading

Invite two or three people from your group to take turns reading aloud the following passages from Romans:

ROMANS 6:13-19 (NIV)

¹³ Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means!

¹⁶ Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

¹⁹ I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness.

ROMANS 12:1-2 (NIV)

¹ Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

For Reflection & Discussion

1. Read verse 13 again. Consider what action Paul is urging his reader to take. Notice the action is not something done to us, but rather it is an invitation.
 - How would you describe the invitation of the text? (Hint: An invitation to engage our wills, affirming our agency in what we do with our *self* – to offer our self to God or to sin)
 - What might it look like, practically speaking, to offer one's self to God?
2. Read verse 14 again, where Paul brings up the concept of grace.
 - What do you think Paul means when he writes that we were once under the law, but now we are under grace?
 - What role does the law have now?
 - What is the difference between grace and mercy? (Hint: Grace is receiving a gift from God that you neither earned nor deserve. Mercy is not receiving something that you rightfully deserve.)

3. We then are introduced to a metaphor that Paul uses from his culture's everyday life to describe a believer's liberation from sin – slavery (vv. 15-19). It is important to note that the reference here is not to American chattel slavery.
 - Why do you think he chooses this metaphor? In what way is this intense picture an apt description to you?
 - Can you think of an everyday metaphor that might more readily fit our own culture? Share your ideas with the group. Hints/suggestions:
 - i. Nicotine: To kick a nicotine addiction, and to use the newfound freedom to steer clear of cigarettes, or to test your freedom, only to pick the habit back up again
 - ii. Prison: Being released from prison, only to go back and live in your old cell
 - iii. Debt: Having paid off your credit card, and to use that financial freedom to once again use that same credit card to spend money you don't have
 - Consider the prayer of thanksgiving Paul offers in v. 17. What allegiances tend to be present into your own heart? Might there be any allegiances that have laid claim to your heart that are counter to the way of Jesus?
4. Let's turn now to Romans 12:1-2.
 - In what ways has Paul moved into even more specificity? (Hint: He has moved from a more general idea of "self" to the specific idea of "your body.")
 - Why do you think he uses the phrase "in view of God's mercy" here?
 - To what end does the renewal Paul is urging us toward take us? (Hint: God's will – a life laid down in humility)
5. Let's take some time to consider our own commitments. Take your pen and paper or create a note on your phone. Take some time in quiet to ponder the commitments you currently have in your life, both personal and communal:
 - What commitments do you have that you are proud of? What commitments do you have that you are less proud of?
 - Are there any commitments you are avoiding or neglecting?
 - Take some time to ask the Lord what he might be calling you back to. Perhaps God is inviting you to a (re)commitment to your neighborhood, intentionality with a particular relationship, to regular rhythms of spiritual practice and community participation, and so on.
 - Write out the commitments you believe God has asked of you.
 - Invite a few people to share their (re)commitments aloud with the group

For Prayer Ministry

1. Begin by taking some time to further wait for God to speak. Invite the Holy Spirit and spend a few minutes in silence. It would be good to ask the Lord to search you and show you where you have offered a part of yourself to sin.
2. Spend a few minutes sharing any impressions, pictures, or scriptures that have come to mind as you waited.
3. Pray for each other, either as a group or in smaller groups of two or three.
 - Spend some time blessing the commitments or recommitments each have made.
 - If you find you have offered a part of yourself to sin, simply practice confession and repentance.

For Further Reflection & Action Outside of Group

1. Spend some time reading Psalm 139 this week, with intentional time given to allowing the Holy Spirit to search you and know you.
2. If you have come to see an area where you have strayed from a prior commitment, what action could you take to reengage that commitment? If it involved others, consider what steps you can take to “clean up your mess” by acknowledging and owning your neglect with the people you have wronged. This could involve asking what impact your neglected commitment had on the individuals involved, and listening without defensiveness, followed by an apology and recommitment.

