

NEHEMIAH

return + rebuild



NEHEMIAH OVERVIEW

The book of Nehemiah tells the story of the return of God's people to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. But this isn't just about physically returning to Jerusalem. This story is about returning to God and his ways – what the Bible calls repentance.

This is a story for all of us. It's a story about all of us. We all go through seasons of rebellion and ruin. And we all have the opportunity to return and rebuild, repent and restore.

Thankfully, we have a God who never gives up on rebellious people and offers means for us always to return to him and be made new. Israel was given the means to return and rebuild through foreign kings. We are given the means to return and rebuild through King Jesus.

To learn more about Nehemiah, watch this Bible Project video on Ezra-Nehemiah: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/ezra-nehemiah/>.

PART 8: CONFESSIONAL STORY

Read the text: Nehemiah 9:1-17

Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads. And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day; for

another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the Lord their God. On the stairs of the Levites stood Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani; and they cried with a loud voice to the Lord their God. Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, "Stand up and bless the Lord your God from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

"You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you. You are the Lord, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. You found his heart faithful before you, and made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous.

"And you saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea, and performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land, for you knew that they acted arrogantly against our fathers. And you made a name for yourself, as it is to this day. And you divided the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on dry land, and you cast their pursuers into the depths, as a stone into mighty waters. By a pillar of cloud you led them in the day, and by a pillar of fire in the night to light for them the way in which they should go. You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven and gave them right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments, and you made known to them your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and

statutes and a law by Moses your servant. You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you had sworn to give them.

“But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments. They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them.

After celebrating the Feast of Booths and rejoicing over God’s joy in them; the Jews now turn to a time of corporate confession. Yet, as we will see, their confession focuses primarily on who God is and what He has done. Out of the 1,119 words in this chapter of confession, 779 words are used by the returned exiles to confess the story of who God is and what He has done. Only 340 are used to confess their fathers’ and their own sin. In this, we learn that God invites us in our confession to start with a confession of who He is and what He has done for us. When we’re grounded in this reality, we then can rightly see our sin and yet be comforted by the Father’s steadfast love for us.

Discussion Questions:

These questions are written for DNA groups, but you can use in any setting, including missional communities. Because they were written for the intimacy of DNA friendships, you may need to adjust for larger groups.

1. When you think of confession, or in your own practice of confession, are you more focused on “confessing” who God is or now what you have done? Do you think it makes any difference? Why might focusing on God and what He has done be important before confessing your own sin?

As Pastor Alex mentioned, the Jews focused on confessing who God was and what He had done in six specific ways. For the rest of your time, focus on these six areas of confession using the following questions. Take time to go through each and think about what your confession might be like.

1. **God is the Creator of all things.** What is it about God as Creator that you want to make part of your confession? Will you name one thing, big or small, from His creation that you want to attribute to Him?
2. **God is the Promise Maker and Promise Keeper.** What is it about God as Promise Maker and Promise Keeper that you want to make part of your confession? Is there a promise God has made personally to you or one He has made from Scripture that is personally meaningful to you?
3. **God is their Rescuer and Redeemer.** Where have you experienced God's rescue or redemption in your life. Be specific! Where, when, and from what has God rescued you?
4. **God is the Giver of the true, good, and right Words of life.** What are some true, good, and right Words of life that God has spoken to you? Do you have a life verse or a verse God has brought to your heart and mind for this specific time? Why have those words been so meaningful to you?
5. **God is their Provider.** What provisions has God made for your life? Will you name one time when you recognized you were receiving a good and perfect gift coming down to you from the Father of lights?
6. **God loves them with a steadfast love.** When have you experienced the preserving power of God's steadfast love to keep you in relationship with Himself?