

SESSION 9

LEADERS, DEDICATION AND SERVICE

Nehemiah 11-12 / Personal Study

Opening Prayer

Gracious Father, incline my heart to Your testimonies. Open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things in Your Word. Unite my heart to fear Your name and satisfy me with Your steadfast love. I ask this by Your Spirit and through Your Son.

Introduction

God promises the Israelites that they will be His people and that He will be their God. He promises them the land of the Canaanites as their possession. He promises that they will rule and that His glory will stretch through them to the ends of the earth. But then they are exiled - no land, no temple, no home. Does God forsake His promises? Does He forget about His people?

Then, by His grace, God allows His people to return to Israel and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. God remains faithful. As a response to His goodness, the people celebrate and worship with great joy: "And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away" (Neh.12:43).

Read Nehemiah 11-12 and answer the following questions:

1. The people commit to bring tithes (one tenth) of their income to the house of the Lord (10:38). What kind of tithe do they commit to in 11:1-2?
2. Why is the repopulation of Jerusalem a logical next step in fulfilling the promise of 10:39 that "We will not neglect the house of our God."?
3. Though lots are cast to select them, the leaders go willingly to live in Jerusalem (11:2). What does this say about God's faithfulness to Israel (see also Ps. 122)? What does it say about Israel's commitment to God?
4. Why do you think Nehemiah devotes so much care to recording the names of the priests and Levites in 12:1-26? Look up Numbers 3:9-10 to help with your answer.
5. What musical instruments accompany the songs and hymns (12:27)? What

about music makes it such an appropriate universal response in worship?

6. Chapter 12 describes joyful worship occurring after the people have repented and taken an oath. How are faithfulness and repentance linked to joyful worship?

7. Do you feel great joy during worship? What act of faithfulness or repentance might add to your joy?

8. What does the information recorded in 12:44-47 tell us about the eagerness of the people to fulfill their oaths? Look back at 10:38-39.

9. Read and reflect on Psalm 48:9-14, a song reflecting on a similar time of celebration. What truths about God are celebrated?

10. Think about your own life as a believer. What completed work of "rebuilding" can you worship God for? What area in need of rebuilding can you trust him for?

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for being so merciful to me. I ask that You will give me a heart of great joy. I ask that, by Your Spirit, You will help me remember that You are merciful and kind. Help me to serve willingly in the place You have marked for me. Remind me of the rebuilding You have done and continue to do in my life. I bless Your name for turning mourning into dancing. I give You glory and honor in Jesus' name. Amen.

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Answer the following questions:

1. What thoughts do you have based upon this week's personal study?
2. What stood out to you? What challenged you? What prompted questions?

Read Nehemiah 11-12 and answer the following questions.

3. Though the repopulation of Jerusalem is decided by casting lots, those selected respond with willingness to relocate. What other possible responses could they have had?
4. What other passages in Scripture tell of people given significant roles they might not have chosen for themselves? How did God use these people for His glory and their good?
5. Have you ever had to take on a responsibility that was clearly the will of the Lord but one that you never would have willingly volunteered for on your own? How did the Lord work through your willingness to serve?
6. What causes the Israelites to worship with such joy and extravagance? Does your worship focus on your own feelings or on giving God the honor He is due? What is the key to right focus in worship (see Ps. 96:7-9)?
7. Look at the first words of 12:44. What do they communicate about the people's willingness to fulfill their oaths to the Lord? What makes us slow to deliver on the promises we have made to God and others? What does our slowness reveal about what we believe to be true about God?
8. What recent commitment have you made in the sight of God that needs your eager, willing fulfillment? What action can you take this week to fulfill it?
9. What long-standing commitment needs your ongoing, faithful fulfillment? What action can you take this week to fulfill it?

Guide to Prayer

- Confess and repent of places in your life where you have withheld your joyful worship for the Lord. Ask Him for a desire to experience more joy in worship.
- Thank the Lord for the work of rebuilding He has done and continues to do in your life.
- Ask Him to remind you of your commitments to Him and to prompt you to act on those commitments.
- Thank the Lord that His oath to you is sure and certain, that your salvation is sealed in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

LEADER GUIDE

SESSION 9

Leaders, Dedication, and Service / Nehemiah 11-12

1. Personal response

2. Personal response

3. They could have refused to go or gone unwillingly.

4. There are numerous examples. In the Old Testament: Abram, Jacob, Moses and more. In the New Testament: Paul, Peter, John the Baptist and more.

5. Personal response

6. They remember and delight in what God has done to restore Jerusalem. They also rejoice at the forgiveness of their sins. The key to right focus in worship is to set aside any expectations for what worship will do for us and train our expressions on ascribing God the glory He is due. This kind of worship does feel great, but how we feel is the by-product rather than the goal.

7. "On that day" - these words show an eagerness to fulfill what they have purposed to do. When we are slow to deliver on our promises, we reveal that we do not believe God holds us accountable for our words. Our obedience reveals the extent to which we "fear the Lord" (5:9, 15).

8. Personal response

9. Personal response