

“Defeating Drift”

Sticks & Stones week #5

Introduction

Nehemiah had led the rebuilding effort through difficult challenges including external threats and internal doubt and discouragement. And the successful and even miraculous completion of the wall in only 52 days proved to all that God was helping His people bring glory to His name and blessing to His people. The wall was just the start of what God wanted to do in rebuilding of the spiritual life of Jerusalem and its people. Once the wall was completed, there was a great ceremony and celebration as people acknowledged God and promised anew to walk in His ways. Nehemiah then returned to King Artaxerxes in Babylon. But there was now another challenge for the people which was less obvious. In this study we will see how God’s people then drifted from their calling and broke their promises. We will also see how Nehemiah came back to help them rebuild the walls of their spiritual life which had broken down.

Ice Breaker (Optional):

Share a time you suffered from being momentarily distracted?

Study Questions (45 MIN)

Our Promises in Answering God’s Call

Q1. Read Nehemiah 9:38; 10:28-31, 39

In Nehemiah chapter 7 we see that once the wall was built, Nehemiah restored the priests and workers in the temple and repopulated the city to make that possible. In chapter 8 we see that Ezra read aloud to the people the Book of the Law of Moses with great response. In chapter 9 we see that after 24 days of this, people recounted the historical acts of God’s faithfulness to them, repented and set themselves apart again to God with a binding agreement. What four promises can you find in that agreement (Ne 10:28-29, 39)?

If we were to see God’s call and command for our lives in the same way, we might see them as: 1) to abide in and by God’s Word, 2) to keep our identity as a set-apart person of God, 3) to participate as a member of His Body (His church), and 4) to keep the Sabbath as a discipline of trusting God. Share which of these you enjoy most and which is the most difficult. Why?

Drifting from our Promises

Q2. Read Nehemiah 13:6-9, 10-12, 15-17, 23-25

In each of these passages, we see how the people drifted from God and broke their promises. In each case, Nehemiah called out their drift and brought them back into obedience. We don’t know exactly how they drifted but we do know the tendency to drift since we have it also. Reflect for a moment and share where you may have drifted in your walk with God and want to rededicate your attention. This may include areas related to: obedience to God’s Word, identity in God, participation in God’s church community, or trusting God’s provision.

Defeating the Drift

Q3. Read Proverbs 3:5-6; Hebrews 12:1; Lamentations 3:19-23

We can all drift whether it’s because we are distracted, lazy, won’t learn from others’ wisdom, or lack regular discipline. We may be able to afford drifting from a goal or new year resolution, but we can’t afford to drift from the overarching call of God on our lives. Spiritual drifting is backed by a real and forceful enemy - Satan. The sooner we can correct the drift, the better we are. What does Proverbs 3:5-6 and Hebrews 12:1 say we are to do if we want to stay on track? When we are tempted to avoid correction out of embarrassment or shame, how does the truth of Lamentations 3:19-23 help us?

Wrap-Up

Nehemiah was called to rebuild not just the wall around Jerusalem, but the spiritual life of God’s people. He saw how they had drifted from God and called them back to right living and the promise of His blessing. Let us pursue with passion God’s call to be His people.

Memory Verse

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,

Hebrews 12:1 NIV

Prayer (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life and other needs (see space to write on back).

Challenge: Jettison anything hindering you from your calling as a child of God. Consider asking someone if you have any ‘blind spots’ where you may have drifted from God and set about the work of rebuilding in that area.

Q1

Read Nehemiah 9:38 in your Bible

[Neh 10:28-29, 39 NIV] "The rest of the people--priests, Levites, gatekeepers, musicians, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand-- 29 all these now join their fellow Israelites the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the LORD our Lord. 30 "We promise not to give our daughters in marriage to the peoples around us or take their daughters for our sons. 31 "When the neighboring peoples bring merchandise or grain to sell on the Sabbath, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on any holy day. Every seventh year we will forgo working the land and will cancel all debts. ... 39 The people of Israel, including the Levites, are to bring their contributions of grain, new wine and olive oil to the storerooms, where the articles for the sanctuary and for the ministering priests, the gatekeepers and the musicians are also kept. "We will not neglect the house of our God."

Q2

[Neh 13:6-9 NIV] 6 But while all this was going on, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Some time later I asked his permission 7 and came back to Jerusalem. Here I learned about the evil thing Eliashib had done in providing Tobiah a room in the courts of the house of God. 8 I was greatly displeased and threw all Tobiah's household goods out of the room. 9 I gave orders to purify the rooms, and then I put back into them the equipment of the house of God, with the grain offerings and the incense. *[neglected God's Law - Word]*

[Neh 13:10-12 NIV] 10 I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites and musicians responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields. 11 So I rebuked the officials and asked them, "Why is the house of God neglected?" Then I called them together and stationed them at their posts. 12 All Judah brought the tithes of grain, new wine and olive oil into the storerooms. *[neglected God's House - Church]*

[Neh 13:15-17 NIV] 15 In those days I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, together with wine, grapes, figs and all other kinds of loads. And they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Therefore I warned them against selling food on that day. 16 People from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them in Jerusalem on the Sabbath to the people of Judah. 17 I rebuked the nobles of

Judah and said to them, "What is this wicked thing you are doing-- desecrating the Sabbath day? *[neglected God's Sabbath - Trust]*

[Neh 13:23-25 NIV] 23 Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. 24 Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah. 25 I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God's name and said: "You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves. *[neglected Identity in God - Witness]*

Q3

[Pro 3:5-6 NIV] 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

[Lam 3:19-23 NIV] 19 I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. 20 I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. 21 Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: 22 Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

[Heb 12:1 NIV] 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,

Prayer Notes cont.
