

Small Group Material : New Walls, New Heart 7

Reverting to Type: Nehemiah 13.1-27

Welcome (10 mins) Was there something that your parents asked you to do as a child which you found particularly irksome? Do you recognise its value now?

Worship (15 mins) Read Leviticus 19.1-2 and Exodus 20.1-17. Sing 'Purify my heart' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lBhvTAFmlk>
Ask God to cleanse us by his Spirit - as a church, as individuals, as a nation.

Word (35 - 40 mins)

The work on the wall is finished, but Nehemiah's work on the people is far from it. After his return to Babylon the people rapidly reverted to their former life - wilfully breaking the law and ignoring the covenant they'd made. Nehemiah calls for purity and acts accordingly, but we also see his heart hurting with frustration and grief.

What happened soon after Nehemiah was no longer governor of Jerusalem? What five reforms (cf v1-9, 10-14, 15-22, 23-29, 30-31) did Nehemiah make for which he wanted God to 'remember him'?

Look at each one of these reforms.

1. v1-9. What rule had been set up to exclude what Eliashib did? Why do you suppose Eliashib did this evil thing? Why did Nehemiah act the way he did?
2. v10-14. What made it necessary for Nehemiah to rectify the 'neglect of God's House'?
3. v15-22. What made Sabbath reform necessary?
4. v23-29. What made marrying foreign women so wicked? (cf v26)

Note: Ezra dealt with the same problem of intermarriage with foreigners but quite differently from Nehemiah. see Ezra 9, esp v3-4

For discussion: Which of these reforms which Nehemiah tackles needs attention in our society? - Not looking after the needs, authority and integrity of the clergy? Not keeping the Sabbath day holy? Not marrying within the faith? How would you start to restore clergy credibility and Christian marriage? Whose hair would you pull out - your own, as Ezra did, or others as Nehemiah did?

Read Galatians 5.22 and 6.7. What do these verses tell us about 'reverting to type'? What encouragements and warnings are there here for us?

Reflection on Nehemiah: What is something significant that you have learnt from our study of the Book of Nehemiah? What life-changing application are you going to make? Is there some 'life-changing application' you are making that you would like God to 'remember' you favourably for? How can we help one another to follow through?

Witness (20 mins)

1. Pray for the mission or ministry which you support as a Small Group.

2. You might like to pray for the work of the International Justice Movement (IJM). They aim to 'rescue and restore' victims of slavery, 'bring criminals to justice' and 'strengthen justice systems'. <https://www.ijm.org>. You could pick any of the links to inspire prayer for this amazing charity.