

RISE & REBUILD
Week 3 Group Discussion Guide
The Joy of the Lord: Nehemiah 7–9

Big Idea: Revival doesn't make us more confident in our faithfulness to God. It restores our joy in the faithfulness of God.

Read Together

Nehemiah 8–9 (or selected portions: Nehemiah 8:1–12; 8:13–18; 9:5–21; 9:32–37)

Digging Into the Text

1. Revival begins with a hunger to hear God.

Read Nehemiah 8:1–8 and Ezra 7:10.

Ezra had devoted himself for years to studying, obeying, and teaching God's Word. Now the people themselves ask him to **“bring the book.”**

- What stands out to you about the people asking Ezra to bring God's Word?
- Why is there a difference between simply hearing Scripture and understanding it?
- What does Ezra 7:10 teach us about the relationship between studying God's Word, living God's Word, and teaching God's Word?
- What might genuine hunger for God's voice look like in our lives today?

Key Statement: Revival isn't merely when God's Word is preached. Revival is when God's people hunger to hear God's voice.

2. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

Read Nehemiah 8:9–12.

As the people understand God's Word, they begin to weep. They see God's holiness and their sin, God's faithfulness and their unfaithfulness. Yet Ezra and Nehemiah tell them not to remain in their grief because **“the joy of the LORD is your strength.”**

- Why do you think understanding God's Word caused the people to grieve?
- Why would Ezra tell them not to remain in that grief?
- What is the difference between godly conviction and shame?
- The word translated *strength* carries the idea of a refuge, fortress, or stronghold. How does that deepen your understanding of this verse?
- Where are you most tempted to look for strength or security instead of finding your refuge in God?

Read Psalm 34:8.: “Taste and see that the LORD is good. How happy is the person who takes refuge in him!”

Key Statement: The joy of the LORD grows wherever the faithfulness of the LORD becomes deeply known.

3. Remembering God's faithfulness produces joy.

Read Nehemiah 8:13–18.

The people discover the command to celebrate the Feast of Booths. After spending fifty-two days rebuilding permanent walls, they leave their homes and live in temporary shelters as a way of remembering how God sustained Israel in the wilderness. The result is **“tremendous joy.”**

- Why do you think God repeatedly commanded Israel to remember?
- What would living in temporary shelters have reminded them about their ancestors' dependence on God?
- What is the significance of doing this immediately after rebuilding Jerusalem's walls?
- How can remembering God's past faithfulness strengthen our trust in Him today?
- What is one specific example of God's faithfulness in your life that you need to remember right now?

Key Statement: The wall may provide security. But the wall was never their Savior. God was.

4. Confession becomes worship when we see God's faithfulness.

Read Nehemiah 9:5–21 and 9:32–33.

The prayer of Nehemiah 9 tells Israel's story through a repeated pattern:

God is faithful.

The people wander.

God remains faithful.

They finally confess: “You have acted faithfully, while we have acted wickedly.”

The prayer becomes less a testimony to how terrible Israel has been and more a testimony to how faithful God has always been.

- What actions of God are repeated throughout this prayer?
- What actions of the people are repeated?
- What does Nehemiah 9:17 reveal about God's character?
- How is saying, “Look how faithful You have been,” different from confession that focuses only on, “Look how badly I've failed”?
- How can remembering God's character keep confession from turning into shame or despair?

Key Statement: Our faithfulness ebbs and flows. His never does.

Living It Out

The people of Nehemiah 8–9 experienced genuine revival. They heard God's Word, understood it, experienced conviction, worshiped, celebrated, confessed, and obeyed. Yet their story wasn't over. Their future failure reminds us that even sincere spiritual commitment cannot ultimately transform the human heart.

Discuss together:

- Are you more likely to measure your relationship with God by **your faithfulness to Him** or by **His faithfulness to you**?
- How does focusing primarily on our own performance affect us when we're doing well? What about when we're failing?
- Why isn't the answer to our wandering simply, "Try harder and be more committed"?
- How does Jesus and the promise of the New Covenant give us something greater than another attempt to become better people?

Read Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:26–27, and Hebrews 9:15.

God promises not merely better behavior, but **new hearts, His Spirit, and a new covenant mediated through Jesus**.

Prayer Together

Spend time praying through what the people discovered in Nehemiah 8–9.

Thank God

- Thank Him for specific ways He has been faithful in your life.
- Thank Him that His faithfulness is not dependent upon the consistency of ours.
- Thank Him for Jesus and the New Covenant.

Ask God to Reveal

- Ask God to use His Word to help you see Him more clearly.
- Invite Him to expose places where you are trusting your own strength, performance, security, or ability to obey.

Ask God to Restore Joy

- Pray for those who have allowed failure, guilt, or disappointment to become stronger than their awareness of God's grace.
- Ask God to restore the joy that comes from deeply knowing His character and faithfulness.