

1. Remodel or Rebuild? **Bible Talk 02/01/2003**

Topic: Show the need for radical changes spiritually and not just superficial and cosmetic ones. Discuss how to make those changes.

Text: Nehemiah 1

Opener: Have people say two "*true*" things about themselves and two "*false*" things about themselves. Have others in the group try to figure out which are true and which are false.

Opening question: Why is it sometimes difficult to discern between what is true and what is false?

- People are into image and not reality -- **Ex.** Owning a home that's beyond your means; more into status than character; looking cool so you don't appear a fool
- People care more about the outside than the inside

Transition statement: Most people are into image (putting up a front) but today's Bible Talk is about looking into what's really going on

- Have you "remodeled or rebuilt" your life?

Let's look at Nehemiah 1 to see how Nehemiah was used by God to bring about radical changes in his life and not just superficial ones

Read: Nehemiah 1:1-4

Question: What was the condition of Jerusalem?

- The people were in great trouble and disgrace because their hometown was ruined
- Imagine if your hometown/home/school/treasured possession was totally destroyed -- how would you feel?

Leader share from own life: Explain a time in your life when you had "trouble and disgrace".

- Marriage/family was falling apart
- Financial disarray- debt and more debt
- Academic failure- academic probation; fear of facing your parents; etc.

Question: Can anyone else relate?

Question: How can you tell Nehemiah was serious about change?

- His heart was moved -- he mourned, fasted, and prayed

Read: Nehemiah 1:5-11

Question: What stands out about Nehemiah's prayer?

- His focus on God's greatness, God's integrity, and God's faithfulness and love
- He takes personal responsibility for his own sins and the sins of the people
- He gets real with where he's at and where the condition of God's people are at

Conclusion

Question: What have you done to make radical spiritual changes in your personal life and not just superficial ones?

- Studied the Bible, baptism, committed to going to church, etc.
- Got real with self and others who could help me get spiritually "hot" (*Cf.* Rev. 3:16)
- Got help with condition of marriage/family, personal life, academics, etc.

Closing statement: Where are you really at today? Do you have the heart and realness to see your spiritual condition and make radical changes? What do you personally need to do?

2. Satan's Schemes **Bible Talk 09/01/2003**

Topic: To show that Satan's Schemes can be turned back with God and his power.

Text: Nehemiah 4

Materials Needed for this Bible Talk

1. Note Paper & pen (To write a list)
2. Matches
3. Ceramic Cup
4. Bible (This goes without saying -- But we'll say it anyway)

Question: What are some ways that Satan tries to tempt us or stop us from living out the plans that God has for us? (Have someone write this list out on paper.)

Example Persecution for what we believe. Satan tells us "we can't do it." He tempts us in our purity, with our jobs (stress or putting them first before the kingdom).

Leader: Make sure you share some times that Satan has tempted you or tried to stop you.

Read: Nehemiah 4:1-3, 7-8 & 10-12

Question: How was Satan at work here?

Talk about how Satan was using these two men (Sanballat and Tobiah) and how he uses people around us to discourage and attack us. Satan will also cause us to become discouraged with the work ahead.

Question: Looking through the chapter, what are some ways that Nehemiah and the Jews responded to Satan's attacks?

- V4 -- They all pray (specifically)
- V6 -- They put their whole hearts into it
- V9 -- Prayed again
- V9 -- Put a plan into action
- V13 -- Put another plan into action
- V13 -- Unity: They were posted by Families (Our bible talks are a family)
- V14 -- they were reminded of how Great and Awesome God is
- V18 -- Worked with a sword at their side (This is the bible for us)
- V20 -- When the trumpet sounded they all joined together (Unified)
- V22 -- They were always prepared (Ref. 2 Timothy 4:2)

Conclusion:

Question: What are some ways that you have responded to Satan's Attacks lately?

- Prayed More (and are you praying specifically)
- Made the bible your standard (is it always at you side?)
- Pulled others into your life (To be real with and to fight Satan with)
- Have Plans and Dreams (Not just living day to day)

These are things that God wants us to do everyday to fight Satan's Schemes as we see with Nehemiah.

Take the list that you wrote out and set it on fire (In the ceramic cup). *Be careful!* Satan be gone!!!

Closing Statement: Satan's Schemes will burn in Hell just like this paper, but our wall will be built and will stand strong as long as we put our trust in God and his will for us.

3. Back to School
Bible Talk 16/01/2003

Opening Question and Icebreaker: Let's introduce ourselves and share one thing we dislike(d) the most about going back to school.

- One of the things that happens on the 1st day is the clear communication of expectation(attendance, standard, etc.) to the whole class

Transition Statement: Let's look at an example of how God does this:

Nehemiah 8:1-3

- How would you describe the crowd?
- What was their attitude like during the reading?
- If you and I were there, what are some of the things we would be feeling? What if this happened this Sunday?

Nehemiah 8:5-6

- Why do you think the people stood up while Ezra read?
 - Respect
- As we study the Bible, how can we show God the respect that is due Him?
- How can we show disrespect?
- What is the heart behind being disrespectful to God's Word?
 - Pride -- we think we know better
- In what ways can our pride be seen as we read God's Word?

Nehemiah 8:7-8

- What role did the Levites play?
 - Explained the law more clearly to the people
- Why was this role necessary?
 - Prevent confusion
- Why is it important to have a teacher in school?
- Do you think it's important for us to have someone teach us the Bible today? Why or why not?
The people had to get humble before God and His Word before they could get taught.
Let's look at how God blessed this heart:

Nehemiah 8:12

- What was the result?
 - Great joy

Conclusion:

It's God's intention that everyone hear his Word. We must receive it humbly in order to really learn what it is saying.

You need to ask yourself today:

1. Does your life show humility to God's Word?
2. Are you willing to let someone teach you more about the Bible?

Make sure in our fellowship afterwards to ask each other the answers to these questions

4. Soul Talk
Bible Talk 23/01/2003

Open with discussion questions:

- Growing up, who was one of your best friends and what made you so close?
- Is it important to you, to be able to "talk about anything", with your best friend? If so, why?

Intro:

Being open about things that are going on inside of us can be challenging. And yet when we are open it produces a sense of freedom and peace of mind. Some people use analytical therapy to release daily pressures inside so they can feel free and cope with life. Some people maintain relationships so they can just talk and be open. The method may vary, but one thing is for sure: we all have a need to be open with somebody.

Nehemiah 9:2b They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the wickedness of their fathers.

³ They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the LORD their God.

1. Here we see the desire of the Jews to renew their connection with God!
2. One of the ways to do this was to be open and "confess" their sins to God. (for 3 hrs.!)
3. What kind of feelings come up when you think of the word, "confess"?
 - Religious?
 - Negative?
 - Vulnerable?
 - Sign of weakness?

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

1. The word "confess" simply means to acknowledge.
2. Definition of "confess" = "to tell or make known; to admit."
3. What are some of the benefits that we receive when we are open about our lives?
 - (note: several answers; the verse says: we can be healed)
4. What are some things that help you to be open with your life? (share and discuss)
5. When is the best time to be open or confess for you, and why? (share and discuss)

Nehemiah 1:5 Then I said: "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, ⁶ let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. ⁷ We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

1. Nehemiah believed that in order to begin rebuilding the wall, the most important element needed to be put in place: confessing and acknowledging what he and his people had done wrong. Only then could they move on with a clean slate.
2. To let your soul talk is a sign of "wanting a fresh start".
3. It is a sign of strength of character, not of weakness.
4. To be deeply open with your life demonstrates a desire to do what's right and move on.
5. Search your heart and ask "Am I allowing my soul to talk regularly so I can stay open and honest with my life?" If you do, the healing of God awaits you...

5. THE TIES THAT BIND US
Bible Talk 30/01/2003
(Neglecting the house of God no longer)

Illustration:

Pour a glass of milk in the morning before your Bible talk and leave it out...and/or get some cheese slices out and leave them out for the entire day...

At Bible talk go to take a sip of your milk and then stop letting your audience know you had *neglected* to put the milk in the refrigerator...or offer some cheese and crackers to someone then stop them and let them know you *neglected* to refrigerate that as well....

Discuss the results of neglecting that milk and cheese...

Definition of neglect- "1. to pay too little attention to; disregard. 2. to be remiss in the care of."

Why is neglect such a negative thing?

Now discuss the results of neglecting other things (your lawn, cleaning your home, in the care of kids)

Nehemiah 10:28-29 -- the people had realized they had neglected God...they came together and made a commitment to follow God wholeheartedly

How do you stop neglecting God?

1) Make some commitments

Neh 10:30-31

They made some commitments to do things differently

What kinds of commitments can we do differently? *Commit to read our Bibles regularly, commit to pray regularly, commit to change things in your life that make you feel guilty or that you know offends God*

2) Accept Responsibility

Neh 10 :32, 35, 36 -- they accepted responsibility for making God's house great.... it wasn't up to the priest, or the Levites, it was up to them...

Why do we shy away from taking spiritual responsibility for things? *Fear, not feeling adequate, bad past experiences*

Conclusion: Nehemiah 10:39b "We will not neglect the house of our God"

Practicals: make one decision to change something in your life that will help to build up God's house instead of neglecting it