NEHEMIAH

Fall 2022

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How to Use This Journal

In this journal you will find three sections that will help guide you in our study.

Spitiual Disciplines.
You'll notice that this journal opens with a brief excerpt on Fasting. Throughout this series, we're encouraging you to to find a consistent time each week to practice the discipline of Fasting for a meal. At the end of the week's discussion questions, you will find a small space to reflect on your experience.

Sermon Notes.
Simply stated, we invite you to come on the weekends and take notes during each sermon. Part of our formation is to engage during the worship gatherings. Use this section to help focus and lean into what is being shared each week.

Reading Plan & Discussion Questions.
Since we're in the book of Nehemiah for 8 weeks, we'll be tackling two chapters each week. While the message may not cover the entirety of the two chapters, we encourage you to follow along in the readings. For those of you who are interested in digging a little deeper in your study, we have provided questions along the way as you read.

Grace for the journey. This journal should be seen as a resource and not a legalistic tool by which you compare your righteousness to another. These are tools to better keep our attention on Christ. Insofar as these aid in that endeavor, wonderful! But give yourself grace through the journey to do what you can and engage at whatever level you are able to engage.

The point is not perfection, but progress.

-Pastor Brian

NEHEMIAH

Spiritual Practice

Fasting

Taken from Scot McKnight's *Fasting*…

Fasting is a person's whole-body, natural response to life's sacred moments…

One of prayers' companions is fasting. Here are four lines from the middle of the 35th psalm. David tells us all that when his enemies were 'sick' he didn't gloat. Instead, he got to work praying for them:

> But as for me, when they were sick, I wore sackcloth; I afflicted myself with fasting. I prayed with head bowed on my bosom, as though I grieved for a friend or a brother; I went about as one who laments for a mother, bowed down and in mourning (Ps 35:13-14)

For David, prayer was 'whole-body' activity, the way some Christians raise their hands in worship or kneel on kneelers during confession time…

Fasting, like other spiritual practices, easily drifted into self-righteousness … among ancient Israelites. If fasting did not lead to compassion for others, God revealed through the prophet Isaiah, then it was falling apart before it did its work. Isaiah made his point by asking his audience a series of questions:

> Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? (Is. 58:6-7).

Every generation needs an Isaiah to stand up in the middle of the action and say, "Hey! This isn't about us! What we give up when we fast should be given to others." …

Fasting is the natural, inevitable response of a person to a grievous sacred moment in life…

I believe fasting is 'natural'. Choosing not to eat or drink is how a person naturally responds to a grievous sacred moment. Furthermore, I also believe fasting is 'inevitable' if we encounter a certain kind of sacred moment. Next, and perhaps most important in our definition, I believe fasting is a 'response to a serious, or grievous, sacred moment'… People fasted in the Bible 'in response' to some grievous event in life - like a death or realization of sin or when the nation was threatened.

Fasting can be seen in an A -> B -> C framework. If one wants to see the full Christian understanding of fasting, one must begin with A, the grievous sacred moment. That sacred moment generates a response (B), in this case fasting. Only then, only when the sacred moment is given its full power does the response of fasting generate the results (C) - and then not always, if truth be told.

What we are getting at here is very important: fasting isn't a manipulative tool that guarantees results… The focus in our deepest Christian tradition is not moving from (B) to (C) but the A->B movement. [In other words] fasting is a response to a sacred moment, not an instrument designed to get desired results. The focus in the Christian tradition is not 'if you fast you will get,' but 'when this happens, God's people fast.' Fasting is a response to a very serious situation, not an act that gets us from a good level to a better level… (McKnight, *Fasting*, 2009)

With this in mind, we invite you to join with us in a regular time of fasting as a response to situations that surround us today. Our culture is increasingly divided, feelings of hopelessness and isolation are on the rise, and people have turned away from God, or perhaps there is a situation you and/or your family is facing that is overwhelming to you. As a response to that situation, let us choose to pray and fast.

Choose a day each week to fast from one meal. During this fast, spend the time praying and asking for God to give wisdom and discernment for how you might engage in the area of need. As you engage in the spiritual practice of fasting, use the following pages to journal about your responses and if you sense the Lord's leading in some way.

NEHEMIAH

Sermon Notes

Repent & Rebuild

Sermon Notes | October 2

Meet someone new today! What is their name?

Strategy for Rebuild

Sermon Notes | October 9

Ask someone how you can be praying for them this week. _____

God Is With Us

Sermon Notes| October 16

This Wednesday, join us for a reflective mid-week service at 7pm. This will be a restful evening of worship and prayer and we hope it fills you with encouragement as you continue your week.

Restore Justice

Sermon Notes | October 23

This Saturday, you can transmit hope to our community by being present at the Community Breakfast & Food Distribution taking place at Our Daily Bread from 8-10am. Let us know if you can help!

Protection of Faithfulness

Sermon Notes | October 30

Ask someone today what challenges they have coming up this week, and commit to pray for them throughout the week. _____

Importance of God's Word

Sermon Notes | November 6

Reconnect with someone you met during previous weeks and ask how their Fall season is going!

Covenant Promises

Sermon Notes | November 13

How can Crossroads be praying for you? Fill out the communication card in the Worship Folder and drop it in the give boxes at the entrance to the Worship Center.

Set Apart for Joy

Sermon Notes | November 20

Come back tonight for our Hanging of the Greens service at 6:30pm! We'll be opening up the night with carols and story telling before decorating our church to welcome guests during this season!

NEHEMIAH

Further Study

Study Questions

October 3-8 | Nehemiah 1

Read Nehemiah 1.

Why is it good to begin prayer by focusing on the character of God rather than the issue at hand?

Why is it so challenging to confess sin?

Nehemiah demonstrates a heart for the well-being of others. Spend time praying for the well-being of others.

Did you practice fasting this week? Reflect on your experience.

October 10-15 | Nehemiah 2-3

Read Nehemiah 2-3.

Why is it that often before we step out in faith, we are overcome by fear?

Nehemiah gathered people around to help assess the issue. Why do people fear that level of community/ vulnerability?

When we decide to deal aggressively with an issue, there usually is some opposition. How do you typically handle opposition? What does Nehemiah's response teach us about handling opposition?

Did you practice fasting this week? Reflect on your experience.

October 17-22 | Nehemiah 4-5

Read Nehemiah 4-5.
How is this an example of faith and works working together?

Nehemiah had someone right next to him to sound the alarm. Who is the person in your life who would 'sound an alarm' if needed?

Every person involved in the build had also to be ready for battle. What does that mean for us individually to be ready to overcome obstacles in our faith?

Did you practice fasting this week? Reflect on your experience?

October 24-29 | Nehemiah 6-7

Read Nehemiah 6-7.

How might Nehemiah have been prepared to successfully oppose an enemy? (Think about his role with Artaxerxes).

How do you know someone is a trustworthy person? What character qualities demonstrate that?

After the wall was completed, what did Nehemiah organize? Think about your spiritual heritage. Who poured into you and introduced you to deeper understanding of God? Are you laying that foundation for someone?

Did you practice fasting this week? Reflect on our experience?

Oct. 30-Nov. 5 | Nehemiah 8-9

Read Nehemiah 8-9.

Why do you think it was difficult for some people to understand what Ezra was reading?

How would you describe worship? What is 'required' for worship? What can we learn about worship from the people's response?

How does God bless us? What happens when we forget Gods' goodness towards us? Take the time to process the various blessings of God in your life.

Did you practice fasting this week? Reflect on our experience?

November 7-12 | Nehemiah 10-11

Read Nehemiah 10-11.

The maintenance of the building is certainly in view in 10:32-39. But paying attention to the house of God also implies participating in worship and entering into fellowship with the people. Can you think of ways your participation in worship forms your heart?

The city of Jerusalem had walls and a temple but few people. Yes, there were priests and Levites, but ordinary folds were needed as well. Every congregation has its leaders, but the Church moves forward on the shoulders of working people. A simple blessing is to appreciate those who willingly offer lives in service. This week when you come to church, find someone who is volunteering and give them thanks.

How does God bless us? What happens when we forget Gods' goodness towards us? Take the time to process the various blessings of God in your life.

Did you practice fasting this week? Reflect on our experience?

November 14-19 | Nehemiah 12-13

Read Nehemiah 12-13.

What role does celebration play in the life of a follower of Jesus? How might joyful celebration be a way others will come to know the work of God?

Why did Nehemiah need to cleanse the storehouse?

What challenges arise when marrying people who do not carry the same vigor for worshipping God?

What was Nehemiah's last request? Why do you think he made it?

Did you practice fasting this week? Reflect on our experience?

Crossroads Church of God

Nehemiah

Fall 2022

"Inviting People to Apprenticeship to Jesus:
learning to live by faith,
transmit hope,
and be known by love."

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Sundays at 9 & 10:45 am
Online at 10:45am

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