

WEEK ONE, DAY SIX - Bible Study Guide

INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with, or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPENING QUESTION(S)

If you could have a sit down with an historical figure, aside from Jesus Himself (too easy), who would it be and why? Could be a Bible character, a family member, or anyone from history.

HEAD

1. Read Ezra 1:1-4, 4:24-5:2, Haggai 1:1-6, Ezra 4:14, Nehemiah 1:1-2, 11, together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading? What stands out?
2. As we begin this series, were there any items shared this week that you were surprised to learn? Any assumptions or preconceived ideas about Nehemiah's story?
3. In Ezra, we see God using someone outside the children of Israel to help accomplish His plans. Can you think of others in Scripture who were "outsiders" that God used/called?
4. Why do you think the people were delaying the rebuild of the temple that to them, wasn't just a building, it was a part of their identity?
5. It seems like the Israelites, as described in Haggai, couldn't get no satisfaction. Can you think of any teaching from Scripture that could have helped them put their energies into that which matters most instead of chasing after temporal things?

HEART

1. If we can embrace God's ability to use anyone, like King Cyrus of Persia, how might that open us up to how we see those we consider "the others" in our culture?
2. What excuses do we use today that keep us from partnering with God to help accomplish His plans for us and our neighbors?
3. "For such a time as this" is phrase used often in the faith world to talk about how God is calling us to serve. Is there something you've been sensing God calling you too, "for such a time"? If so, have you said yes to partnering with Him or are you giving excuses as to why now isn't the best time?
4. Why do you think we have such a hard time answering God's call(s) in our lives?
5. Who are some of your "heroes" in Scripture, and in what ways were they far from perfect?

HANDS

God is almost always stirring our heart toward some kind of call in our lives. Maybe it's to serve in our community, become a leader in our church, address a conflict with a

friend or colleague, or even carve out some time to spend with Him. There's all sorts of ways He asks us to partner with Him in the work of the kingdom. Take some time this week to pray and ask God to reveal what it is He's asking of you "for such a time." Then ask for the courage to say yes, and give Him time to work on heart.

LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

"This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Joshua 1:9 NLT

"And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father."

Colossians 3:17 NLT

WEEK TWO, DAY THIRTEEN - Bible Study Guide

INTRODUCTION

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OPENING QUESTION(S)

Do you have someone in your life who is your prayer warrior? Someone you love to hear pray or that you look up to as it relates to their prayer life? When it comes to prayer, what is one thing that is easy for you, and one thing that is harder for you?

HEAD

1. Read Nehemiah 1:2-11, 2:1-4, together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading? What stands out?
2. What kind of response do you think Nehemiah hoped for when he asked his brother for an update concerning Jerusalem?
3. After taking it all in and weeping, letting his heart break, what was Nehemiah's first response to the news that was shared?
4. Why do you think Nehemiah was quick to confess before asking for what he wants? And is he confessing just for himself, or for the people? Why?
5. In chapter 2 verse 1, why would it be dangerous for Nehemiah to appear sad before the king as the king's cupbearer?
6. Once Nehemiah tells the king why he is sad, which was still dangerous to do, and the king asks how he can help Nehemiah, before responding to that question what does Nehemiah do? Why?

HEART

1. Why do you think we're so quick to problem-solve, as opposed to following Nehemiah's example and spend time in prayer, with God, first?

2. A famous prayer says, “Lord, break my heart with the things that break your heart.” Concerning the things of God, what breaks your heart, what causes you to weep? If so, what do you do about those things that weigh heavy on your heart?
3. Nehemiah was a man of prayer before action. Why are we more quick to act than pray, if we pray about it at all? Do you think we struggle to believe that God will act, so we act for him to speed things up?
4. Nehemiah could have asked the king for anything. What can we learn about Nehemiah’s approach to problem-solving to bring into our lives today?

HANDS

This week, try each day to pray this prayer and then take some time at the end of the week to take inventory of your feelings, your heart, and see if God used that prayer to shift something in you: “Lord, break my heart with the things that break your heart.”

LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

“One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up.”

Luke 18:1 NLT

“Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NLT

WEEK THREE, DAY TWENTY - Bible Study Guide

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OPENING QUESTION(S)

We’re you ever called into the principals office when you were in grade school or high school? If so, and you’re willing to admit, share why you were called in and what happened.

HEAD

1. Read Nehemiah 2:4-16 together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading? What stands out?
2. What kind of person must Nehemiah have been for the king to treat him with such high regard? He was “just a servant” right?
3. After Nehemiah asked for and received his first request from the king, he asks for another. What helped him be so bold?
4. Immediately, Nehemiah faces opposition. Why not just turn back and give up?
5. Why do you think Nehemiah was so secretive, even to those that were traveling with him?

HEART

1. Following God comes with consequences, and not all of those consequences are easy. What consequences have you faced for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ? How can we find the courage to follow God even when it's hard?
2. Why do you think we're so quick to give up when we face opposition? What are some ways we can help discern, encourage and remind each other of God's call in our lives?
3. There is no such thing as risk vs no risk. Everything involves risk. What kinds of things are you so convicted of that you are willing to take risks for the kingdom of God today?

HANDS

Spend time this week praying about someone in your life that might need some encouragement to keep fighting the good fight of the faith. Then, think of a way to encourage them this week. Maybe its a text of appreciation, a word of encouragement, a cup of coffee and a hand written note. Whatever it is, offer that support to them this week.

LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

"God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way."

Matthew 5:11-12 NLT

WEEK FOUR, DAY TWENTY-SEVEN - Bible Study Guide

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OPENING QUESTION(S)

Can you remember a speech, or a favorite quote, that is deeply meaningful and inspiring to you? If so, share and tell the group why?

HEAD

1. Read Nehemiah 2:16-3:3, 4:1-5, Ecclesiastes 4:7-9 together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading? What stands out?
2. Knowing how important Jerusalem and it's walls were to the Jews and their identity, how do you think it felt to the community to have a leader finally courageous enough to restore Jerusalem?
3. Immediately, criticism comes. Why do you think these characters, Sanballat, Tobias, and Gesham, are so quick to criticize this plan?

4. As the saying goes, many hands make light work. How do you think it made Nehemiah feel to have so many people jump on board so quickly?
5. What was Nehemiah's response to criticism? Why might this practice be important before responding to said criticism?

HEART

1. Where did Nehemiah find the courage to go to Jerusalem and do such a daunting task? There's at least more than one answer.
2. When someone criticizes you and/or your community, how do you respond? Quickly? Emotionally? Do you take your time to think and pray first? And are there criticisms you should listen to and one's you shouldn't?
3. Community is so important for our journey as a church, for our growth as individuals and community. How do we go about developing, growing, and keeping strong our communities of faith?
4. There is strength in numbers. It is easier to discourage one, than many. How can you and I go about encouraging one another in the faith and looking out for the lonely, discouraged, and troubled in our communities?
5. So many are lonely. The church can help combat that loneliness as we reach out and keep our eyes on Jesus. Share about your ideal church, what it does and how it functions and who it reaches, then share about what you may be doing now to help that kind of community come into fruition.

HANDS

Leadership can be a lonely position at times, that is bolstered by a supportive community. Who are the leaders in your own faith journey, in your church? Take time this week to specifically offer them encouragement in some tangible way; a text, a card, a prayer that you let them know you're offering up for them.

LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

Hebrews 10:25, NLT

WEEK FIVE, DAY THIRTY-FIVE - Bible Study Guide

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OPENING QUESTION(S)

What is one of your favorite songs of worship, hymn or contemporary, and what is it about that song that speaks to and uplifts your soul so much?

HEAD

1. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-10, Nehemiah 4:10-23 together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading? What stands out?

2. In the 2 Corinthians passage, Paul speaks to trouble on every side, perplexed, hunted, knocked down. As the Jesus movement was growing, what brought this opposition? How do you think a follower of Jesus facing these challenges day after day was able to keep going, some even to their death holding on to their belief in Jesus?
3. Paul said the life of Jesus can be seen in our bodies through the way we live in and die. How do you think people come to see Jesus in us?
4. Notice again in Nehemiah 4:6-9, how quick the people are to prayer. Knowing that for many of us, prayer is sometimes the last resort, what are some ways we could seek to make it our first?
5. Then comes burnout. What does Nehemiah try to help the people do, in verse 14, to encourage them to keep going?

HEART

1. Paul suffered much for the sake of Christ, as did many in the early church. How were they able to hold on to Jesus through it all?
2. Are there seasons in life you find yourself praying more than others? What are those seasons and why do you think that is? Are there ways we could help each other pray and lean on God more often as a community?
3. How do we break cycles of negativity in the church?

HANDS

Every faith community needs more workers/volunteers “in the field” for the harvest. As Jesus said, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. This week, pray for each of our Crosswalk communities. Pray to the “Lord of the harvest” for more “workers in the field” to encourage those that have been leading and volunteering, and to make an even bigger impact for the kingdom of God.

LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

“The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into the fields...”

Luke 10:2, NLT

“...And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:20b, NLT

WEEK SIX, DAY FORTY-TWO - Bible Study Guide

INTRODUCTION

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OPENING QUESTION(S)

Can you think of a favorite worship spot, or a favorite worship experience that you’ve had, that you’re willing to share with the group, as well as what made it so special.

HEAD

1. Read Nehemiah 5:1-11, 6:1-16, 8:5-10 together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading? What stands out?
2. How hard is it to keep working, keep trying to build up the community of faith, when you struggle take care of your own family, or when there is constant negativity?
3. Do you think Nehemiah's speech helped them feel remorse? Did they not realize how bad they were being or did they know and Nehemiah calling them out helped them turn?
4. What qualities do you think Nehemiah had that caused the people to listen to him so quickly?
5. How was Nehemiah able to keep so resolute in all this mess?

HEART

1. Remember, the devil doesn't care what you're focused on as long as it's not Jesus; finances, appearances, jealousy, rules. When this happens, how do we put Christ back at the center, for us and our communities?
2. Why do you think fighting and judging and attacking within the community of faith is so common? Knowing that at CRSWLK, we have loads of people that have come out of those kinds of situations and communities, how do we help them heal, and how do we keep our communities from falling into the same traps?
3. For some reason, we love to gossip and spread rumors in the church. We often look at "other" sins and call them out, but we continue to gossip? Why do you think we do this, and how do we seek to stop it?
4. Fifty-two days to build rebuild a wall with great opposition seems...miraculous. Is there anything that has been done in your life that you knew it was only with God that it was able to be done?
5. Celebration and praise is always important. it reminds us to remember all that God has done, is doing, and has promised to do. Other than going to weekly worship, what are ways you celebrate and worship to help you remember?

HANDS

This week, take some time to reflect back on all the good things you have seen God do, the blessing you have in your life (family, work, community, friendships, shelter, food, etc...). Write them down and simply spend time in thanksgiving, praise, and celebration to God for the many ways He shows up in your life, even when you may not feel it.

LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

"Praise the Lord! Give thanks to the Lord for he is good! His faithful love endures forever."

Psalms 106:1, NLT