



ontrack devotions

MAY

2023

NEHEMIAH

MONTHLY PRAYER SHEET

"...The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." James 5:16

Reach out...

How I will do it...

How it went...

Other requests...

Answered

How it was answered...

MONTHLY COMMITMENT SHEET

Name: _____

This sheet is designed to help you make personal commitments each month that will help you grow in your walk with God. Fill it out by determining

1. What will push you
2. What you think you can achieve

If you need help filling out your commitments, seek out someone you trust who can help you. Share your commitments with those who will help keep you accountable to your personal commitment.

Personal Devotions:

How did I do with my commitment last month? _____
I will commit to read the OnTrack Bible passage and devotional thought _____ day(s) each week this month.

Church Attendance:

How did I do last month with my attendance? _____
I will attend Youth/Growth Group _____ time(s) this month.
I will attend the Sunday AM service _____ time(s) this month.
I will attend the Sunday PM service _____ time(s) this month.
I will attend _____ time(s) this month.
I will attend _____ time(s) this month.

Scripture Memory:

How did I do with Scripture memory last month? _____
I will memorize _____ key verse(s) from the daily OnTrack Devotions this month.

Outreach:

How did I do last month with sharing Christ? _____
I will share Christ with _____ person/people this month.
I will serve my local church this month by _____

Other Activities:

List any other opportunities such as events, prayer group, etc., that you will participate in this month. _____

Today, we begin the study of this extremely practical book found in the Old Testament. It is a book that can be viewed as a manual of what to do when we find ourselves in negative situations. What should we do when our church is not what it should be? What should we do when our school or workplace is not what it should be? How does God expect us to respond to the situations we are in that need to change? The book of Nehemiah will show us. In today's reading, we see what to do first. Step #1 is to become burdened for the situation. We often become frustrated or mad instead of becoming burdened. Nehemiah did not complain or gossip about what he heard was going on in Jerusalem. Nehemiah cried. He was close enough to the situation to really care. He cared so much, the Scripture tells us, that he "mourned and fasted and prayed" for many days. The situation broke his heart. When we find ourselves in situations that need to change, we often become part of the problem by lashing out or criticizing others. Instead of being frustrated, we need to be broken. Are you? If not, begin to ask God to give you a burden.

SAY WHAT?

Observation: What do I see?

SO WHAT?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

NOW WHAT?

Application: How does it apply to me?

THEN WHAT?

Implementation: What do I do?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 1



NEHEMIAH 1:5-11

TAKE IT TO GOD

SAY WHAT?

Why is it important for us to take our burden to God before taking any action?

SO WHAT?

Why is it important for us to identify with the problem as Nehemiah did?

NOW WHAT?

What does Scripture say about the situation you are now burdened about?

THEN WHAT?

In light of this passage, what personal commitment can you make?

As you look at what Nehemiah did next, what do you think step #2 is? Yesterday, we learned that we need a burden. Today, we learn that we should take that burden to God. Nehemiah did not immediately run to the man in charge. He did not get his buddies together to complain. Instead, his burden led him to his knees before God. What did Nehemiah pray? First, he praised God. He didn't approach God with demands or complaints, but reminded himself of who God was and what He had done. Second, he identified with the problem. Circle the pronoun "we" everywhere it is found in this prayer. Third, he identified promises of God that involved his concerns. Finally, he offered himself to be used to help change the situation. He wanted to be involved and did not wait for someone else. Notice that he began praying in the month of Kislev. Tomorrow we will see that he took his next step in the month of Nisan. Four months of constant prayer went into the situation before taking action. Are you that serious about your situation? How long have you been praying? Why not start today!

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 1

Today, we continue with our theme of what to do when we are faced with a negative situation. Nehemiah continues to give us a great example to follow. He first became burdened and then brought his burden to God. Now we see step #3. Did you see it? He made himself available. Nehemiah was not a big shot who had a leadership position. He was a cupbearer. He was the man who tasted the food and drink before the King did to make sure it was not poisoned. He must have been viewed as expendable or that job would have been given to someone else. Nehemiah, however, was willing to do whatever he could with what God had placed in his hands. God can use whatever He's given you to bring about change. It is not about position. It is about availability. What platform has God given you? Athletics? Academics? Success? Begin now by using whatever God has given you to impact the world He has placed you in. No platform is too small for God to use in significant ways!

SAY WHAT?

Observation: What do I see?

SO WHAT?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

NOW WHAT?

Application: How does it apply to me?

THEN WHAT?

Implementation: What do I do?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 1

NEHEMIAH 2:1-10

ASK FOR A PLAN

SAY WHAT?

Which of the steps that we have covered so far do you need to take next to help change the situation you are in?

SO WHAT?

What do you need to do in order to take that step?

NOW WHAT?

How are you going to follow through on the steps given to make a difference in your situation?

THEN WHAT?

In light of this passage, what personal commitment can you make?

Today, we conclude the section of Nehemiah that tells us what we need to do when we are confronted with a negative situation. We have learned that we must gain a burden, take the burden to God, and make ourselves available. Today, we find step #4 which is to ask God for a specific plan. We are prone to run ahead and do something without asking God what His plan is. We often rely on our own wisdom before seeking God's. Nehemiah asked God to help him come up with a plan that would solve the problem and change the situation. He did what James told us to do when we need wisdom. Just ask. Only after seeking God and receiving His direction did Nehemiah take action. God helped him determine what he could do, how he could do it, and what it would take. God had placed him close enough to the King to gain a hearing. God provided a King who cared about Nehemiah personally. God then gave Nehemiah a plan that he could share with the King. How do you go about resolving problems? Have you dealt with problems the way Nehemiah did? What step do you need to take to help in the situation you are burdened about?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 2

Did you find Nehemiah's actions immediately after arriving in Jerusalem amazing? After all he had been through to this point, you would think he would arrive anxious to begin working. However, according to verse 11, he waited three days before he did anything. What was he waiting for? He wanted the timing to be right and to be sure that he was personally ready for the challenge. He wanted to be sure that no detail was overlooked. He was waiting for God's timing to share his plan and to determine who he should share it with. People needed to be prepared, the plan needed to be communicated and he wanted to be sure he was ready and he was not jumping ahead of God. He also waited for God's timing to confirm who was to be involved in the plan. It is possible to share the right plan before those involved are ready and miss the opportunity to proceed. We often rush ahead and do not wait for God to confirm when to share the plan and who to share it with. Our desire to see a change made cannot cause us to rush ahead of God. When God moves, we need to be prepared to take the next step, but not before He moves.

SAY WHAT?

Observation: What do I see?

SO WHAT?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

NOW WHAT?

Application: How does it apply to me?

THEN WHAT?

Implementation: What do I do?

EXTRA READING

NEHEMIAH 2

NEHEMIAH 2:11-20

IMPLEMENTATION

SAY WHAT?

How are you going to begin involving others in your burden to see positive changes take place?

SO WHAT?

What can you do to prepare yourself for the opposition that will come?

NOW WHAT?

What specific step should you take next?

THEN WHAT?

In light of this passage, what personal commitment can you make?

In this passage, we read about Nehemiah's next step. He is ready to involve others who can help him. Notice how he went about making his case. First, Nehemiah chose the right people to help him. He only shared with a few men who would most likely have the same concern for Jerusalem he had. Second, he was careful to communicate correctly. Notice he didn't say, "You guys have really dropped the ball here." He included himself and identified with them. He used words like "us" and "we." He shared with them not only the burden, but what God had done up to that moment. Third, Nehemiah graciously motivated them. He didn't berate or threaten them. He simply showed them that it was the right thing to do. Finally, Nehemiah prepared for opposition. He did so by realizing that it would come eventually. He knew that not everyone would be supportive of his plan. He also prepared for opposition by keeping his focus on God. In verse 20, he reminded those listening that God would give them success. Are you ready to involve others in your plan? Have you prepared for opposition? What would it take to be ready?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 2

The book of Proverbs was designed to help us in "attaining wisdom and discipline; in understanding words of insight; in acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; in giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young." As you read through this chapter, write down the verses that are most significant to you in your present circumstances.

VERSE | WHAT TRUTH IT COMMUNICATES | HOW IT IMPACTS MY LIFE

NEHEMIAH 3:1-16

RESTORATION

SAY WHAT?

Observation: What do I see?

SO WHAT?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

NOW WHAT?

Application: How does it apply to me?

THEN WHAT?

Implementation: What do I do?

Passages of Scripture that give names and details can often be read mindlessly. When we do that, we can miss something exciting. This passage could fall into that category. In verse 11, we are given the name of a man who helped in the work. A closer examination reveals an important truth. The man's name was Malkijah. There isn't much that we would notice at first glance, but his name also appears on a list found in Ezra 10. In that chapter, we are given the names of 113 men who were descendants of priests but had married foreign women. These were men who had violated the requirements of the office of priest. Malkijah was obviously a man who dealt with his sin and was restored. He was now part of the group still in Jerusalem. In this chapter, he was given leadership in the rebuilding of the walls. His life is an important example of God's forgiveness and His desire for us to be restored back into useful service to Him and fellow believers. Nehemiah understood this truth. Do you? Have you refrained from being involved because of a past sin? That is not what God wants. He has a job He wants you to do. Are you ready to start doing it?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 3

Did you notice how many different occupations were listed in today's reading? It would have been incredible to witness all those different people coming together to accomplish a great task. All classes of people worked on the repairs—priests, goldsmiths, perfume-makers, rulers, women, Levites, and merchants (vs32). One group, however, did not pitch in to help. Did you notice who they were when we read verse 5 yesterday? It was the noblemen of Tekoa. They refused to work, perhaps because they had pledged allegiance to Tobiah. It may have been because they were rich and lazy. Regardless of the reason, the example of those who were involved should motivate us. Many people from a variety of occupations were involved in a huge undertaking. They could have easily focused on the few who weren't involved and missed the joy for those who were unified in the task. We can find great encouragement observing fellow believers working together to change a negative situation. As the work begins, determine to stay focused on those who are working with you, not those who aren't. God is at work. Trust Him.

SAY WHAT?

Observation: What do I see?

SO WHAT?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

NOW WHAT?

Application: How does it apply to me?

THEN WHAT?

Implementation: What do I do?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 3

NEHEMIAH 4:1-6

OPPOSITION

SAY WHAT?

What kinds of comments will people make to discourage you about the size of the task?

SO WHAT?

What kinds of comments will people make to doubt your ability to finish the task?

NOW WHAT?

How can you use Nehemiah's example to help when you face opposition?

THEN WHAT?

In light of this passage, what personal commitment can you make?

Have you ever begun a project and were excited to see how well it was progressing? After praying that God would move, you saw change taking place? As progress and enthusiasm builds, opposition arrives in obvious forms. These are the circumstances Nehemiah found himself in. You can imagine how he felt. In the next few days we will learn how Nehemiah dealt with the opposition that came his way. Today, we see that the opposition began with ridicule and jeering. Its content was designed to communicate that the task was overwhelming and could not be done. These kinds of verbal attacks usually come from those who are not part of what is going on. Second, they questioned the ability or skill level of those doing the work. Even if the job was possible, it could not be done by these ill-equipped people. Nehemiah's response was to give the situation to God. He was being publicly ridiculed, but he did not get caught up in it. He did not lash out or debate the issue. Often, we get sidetracked from the task by defending ourselves or get involved in meaningless debates. Our first reaction to opposition should be prayer. Is that your response?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 4

When opposition comes, it does not usually stop with just the two kinds we identified yesterday. In these verses, we see opposition that advanced to a greater level against Nehemiah. It rose to a threat of violence. Since Sanballat and Tobiah could not verbally intimidate them into stopping the work, they threatened them with violence. They wanted to clearly communicate that if the work continued, there would be a price to pay. This often happens to us too. If their comments, like the ones we saw yesterday, do not deter us, they communicate that if we continue, it will cost us. Today's opposition doesn't usually threaten to physically harm you, but instead they ignore you. They may sit with you at lunch, but won't include you in conversations. They have parties, but you are not invited. They are not happy with what God is doing, so they try to threaten you to make you stop. When the opposition elevates to this level, respond like Nehemiah. Stay on course and be courageous. Pray for strength and do not allow the threats to cause you to give in. Allow God to give you what you need to stand firm and hold your ground.

SAY WHAT?

Observation: What do I see?

SO WHAT?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

NOW WHAT?

Application: How does it apply to me?

THEN WHAT?

Implementation: What do I do?

EXTRA READING

NEHEMIAH 4

NEHEMIAH 4:10-15

DISCOURAGEMENT

SAY WHAT?

What can you do to communicate to those around you that you understand their concerns?

SO WHAT?

What can you do to communicate that you understand why they are discouraged and fearful?

NOW WHAT?

How can you encourage and reassure those around you?

THEN WHAT?

In light of this passage, what personal commitment can you make?

While you might be courageous against the opposition, what should you do when fellow workers begin to show signs of discouragement? Again, God's Word gives us some helpful advice. Nehemiah was faced with very real threats against the people who were building the wall. In verses 10 & 12 we read that rebuilding the wall was going to be much more difficult than some expected and the opposition was real. Nehemiah did not minimize or ignore their concerns. He listened carefully to what they said and took steps to reassure and protect them. His actions addressed their fears and concerns, specifically. He also reminded them that God was in control and would fight for them. This had a great effect on how they felt and they went back to work. When discouragement comes, it helps to remind ourselves that there may be fellow believers who are not as courageous as we are in hard times. Our job is to reassure them and to hear and acknowledge their concerns. Most importantly, we must remind them of God's provision. He is responsible to care for us. Listen, and then point others to God.

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 4

Someone once said, "To pray only is a presumption, to plan only is a lack of faith." Do you agree with that statement? We would all agree that we cannot use faith as an excuse to avoid hard work. We would also agree that we should not trust in our ability, but in the Lord. Nehemiah demonstrates how we can plan and use prayer. He realized that the threats made were real and that people's lives were at stake. He placed certain men in strategic positions as guards. The obvious implication was that the progress on the wall would slow down, but he was wise enough to know that the workers protection and safety was his priority. In his wisdom, he also made sure that his people continued to pray and seek God's protection. Nehemiah understood that the key to their success and safety was not found in his plan or their ability, but in the Lord. When we find ourselves in difficult situations, it shows great wisdom to plan and be prepared and to trust God with the details. Are you being presumptuous or faithless? What will you do about it?

SAY WHAT?

Observation: What do I see?

SO WHAT?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

NOW WHAT?

Application: How does it apply to me?

THEN WHAT?

Implementation: What do I do?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 4

PROVERBS 10

The book of Proverbs was designed to help us in "attaining wisdom and discipline; in understanding words of insight; in acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; in giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young." As you read through this chapter, write down the verses that are most significant to you in your present circumstances.

VERSE | WHAT TRUTH IT COMMUNICATES | HOW IT IMPACTS MY LIFE

What can we learn about revival from today's reading? We see that when revival begins, sin becomes evident. In other words, when God begins to move, He will reveal sin that must not be ignored. If exposed sin is not acknowledged and forsaken, it will destroy the revival that God is bringing about. We read in today's verses that there was great turmoil among the Jews in Jerusalem. Nehemiah realized that the physical needs of his people were not being met. Large families were struggling to make ends meet. Famine was causing people to be destroyed financially. On top of the famine, property taxes imposed by the Persians were causing people to go into heavy debt. On the spiritual side, people were violating direct commands of God, not demonstrating sympathy towards fellow Jews, and taking advantage of their brothers by making money off their misfortune. While building the wall was hard physical labor, it began to reveal some spiritual problems that the people were struggling with. What is God revealing to you about the condition of your heart? What are you doing about it?

SAY WHAT?

What physical needs have you seen in others that no one is meeting?

SO WHAT?

What spiritual needs have you seen that should be dealt with?

NOW WHAT?

What steps can you take to begin dealing with those issues in both your life and in the group?

THEN WHAT?

In light of this passage, what personal commitment can you make?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 5



NEHEMIAH 5:12-19

SIN CONFESSED

SAY WHAT?

Observation: What do I see?

SO WHAT?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

NOW WHAT?

Application: How does it apply to me?

THEN WHAT?

Implementation: What do I do?

Today, we learn two important aspects of true revival. Did you notice them? First, we see that whenever sin is exposed, it must be confessed and repented of. Nehemiah addressed the issues, and the people responded by confessing and repenting of their sin. They admitted that they were wrong and were willing to make it right. However, it did not stop there. They decided to make their decisions public. They made an oath to God in public so the whole assembly would know what had happened. Second, we see that true revival must be led by those who are willing to give up any desire for personal glory or gain. Nehemiah's commitment to the task was remarkable and he was unwilling to benefit personally from being their leader. He used the opportunity God gave him to help others. As governor, he could have made a good salary or allowance, but he was unwilling to accept it. True revival demands that those who are leading walk humbly before God. What issue has God revealed to you? Are you humbly dealing with it? Are you motivated by personal gain and recognition? Maybe it is time for you to check!

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 5

Of all the different forms opposition can take, which one do you think is the hardest to face? We have seen how Nehemiah has dealt with different kinds of opposition. In this small section of Scripture, we see that the opposition has changed its tactics. This kind of situation is difficult because it is personally directed at someone. This new form of opposition is manipulation. In order to counter manipulation, we must be able to recognize what it is. Manipulation is an attempt by people to control us for their personal advantage. It is the ability to get what I want by organizing information or playing on someone's emotions. The goal of Sanballat, Tobiah, and the rest of Nehemiah's enemies was to put him in a precarious position. Nehemiah reacted to their attempt to lure him with great discernment. He knew what they were trying to do and he didn't fall for it. Beyond that, he kept his priorities in line, tried not to antagonize them, and trusted God to take care of the situation. Because he was walking closely to God, he was able to see through their plot and respond with godly wisdom.

SAY WHAT?

How can you tell if someone is trying to manipulate you?

SO WHAT?

How can you identify what someone's goal really is?

NOW WHAT?

How can you protect yourself from manipulative people?

THEN WHAT?

In light of this passage, what personal commitment can you make?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 6

NEHEMIAH 6:5-9

GOSSIP

SAY WHAT?

Observation: What do I see?

SO WHAT?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

NOW WHAT?

Application: How does it apply to me?

THEN WHAT?

Implementation: What do I do?

In yesterday's passage, we saw how Nehemiah responded to manipulation. Today, we see another form of opposition that is often used. We see it in the phrase "Gesham says it is true." It is gossip. Gossip is the attempt to discredit and hurt through suggestion or rumor. It is often hard to track down because it usually comes in statements like, "I am not sure, but..." or "I might be wrong, but..." In this case, Nehemiah's enemies were trying to bring his motives into question. They accused Nehemiah of wanting to be king and even had a witness who claimed he knew the rumor was true—Gesham. How did Nehemiah respond to gossip? He met it head on. He made a public statement denying the truth of the allegation. He did not stop there. He sought God asking for strength to endure this opposition. He was a man whose concern was with what God thought of him and he did not get distracted by what others were saying. We often allow our insecurities to dictate our actions instead of godly wisdom. Handling gossip requires a direct approach, but don't be distracted. Allow God to give you strength for the task.

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 6

THREATS

NEHEMIAH 6:10-14

We have seen Nehemiah respond to manipulation and gossip. Today, we see that his enemies stepped up the attack by resorting to coercion. Coercion is when people force you to do something by making threats. Sometimes the threats are for physical violence, but more often they are attempting to do emotional harm. Examples of threats might be exposing a secret, ending friendships or relationships, spreading gossip, etc. In Nehemiah's case, they threatened physical harm. Shemaiah suggested that Nehemiah find protection in the Holy Place of the Temple, using the threats to attempt to discredit him and get him to sin. Only a priest was ever permitted to enter the Holy Place. If Nehemiah had allowed himself to be intimidated, he would have sinned and his testimony and reputation would have been ruined. Every effort they made was in vain because Nehemiah kept his focus on the task and left the problems to God. He would not allow himself to be sidetracked. When God uses us in the lives of people, opposition comes. One of the most thrilling experiences in life is watching God rescue us in helpless situations. Could you be facing one now?

SAY WHAT?

What kinds of threats have you recently faced?

SO WHAT?

How did you react to those threats?

NOW WHAT?

How can you practically apply what you have learned from Nehemiah's example in the future?

THEN WHAT?

In light of this passage, what personal commitment can you make?

EXTRA READING

NEHEMIAH 6

NEHEMIAH 6:15-19

SUPERNATURAL

SAY WHAT?

Observation: What do I see?

SO WHAT?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

NOW WHAT?

Application: How does it apply to me?

THEN WHAT?

Implementation: What do I do?

According to verse 16, why did the enemies of Nehemiah become afraid? Was it because the people had completed the wall? Was it because Nehemiah had put together a bigger and stronger army? No, it was because they knew that what Nehemiah and the others had accomplished, could have only been done with the help of God. They did not see strength or skill in Nehemiah or the others, but in God. They knew that only God could enable men to completely rebuild the wall in 52 days. Do people see God accomplishing things in your life? What is seen in your life that can only be explained by the supernatural? When friends and family spend time with you, do they know that God is working? We often operate only in the human strength God has given to everyone and rob others of the opportunity to see God at work. We live our lives at such an uncommitted level that we do the same things the world does. No one sees God in us because we are no different than someone without Him. Our churches are filled with Christians who fail to live a supernatural life. There ought to be evidence in our lives that points others to God. Is there any in yours?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 6

The book of Proverbs was designed to help us in "attaining wisdom and discipline; in understanding words of insight; in acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; in giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young." As you read through this chapter, write down the verses that are most significant to you in your present circumstances.

VERSE | WHAT TRUTH IT COMMUNICATES | HOW IT IMPACTS MY LIFE

NEHEMIAH 7:5-38

INSIGNIFICANT

SAY WHAT?

What other reasons might God have for recording this section of Scripture?

SO WHAT?

What interesting information did you find in this section?

NOW WHAT?

What applications to your life can you draw from this passage?

THEN WHAT?

In light of this passage, what personal commitment can you make?

We know that the Bible is inspired by God. That means that human authors were carried along by God so that they wrote exactly what He wanted them to write. Although they used their own styles, their own experiences, and their own minds, what they wrote was exactly what God wanted them to write. Each word chosen was the word God wanted them to write. Every form of punctuation was exactly as God wanted. Knowing all that, we are confident that everything in the Bible was placed there by God. He wrote the Bible for us. With this truth in mind, why do you suppose God wanted this section of Scripture in the Bible? In fact, we usually skip over sections like these when we read. Maybe some of you did just that today. While we cannot be positive as to why God wanted us to know this information, we can make a guess at the significance. It may be that God wants us to see that real people were involved—that is was not a story. God may want us to know how important history is. Maybe our heritage is more important than we might think. Why do you think God put these details in this book for us to read? What possible reasons can you come up with?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 7

What does true revival look like? How can you tell if it is really taking place in a group? In the chapter we are beginning today, we will see the true signs of spiritual revival. It would have been natural for the people to simply look at the completed wall and assume that it meant all was well between God and them. However, the wall did not reveal where they were in their relationship with God. True revival begins with a renewed commitment to the Word of God. Nehemiah knew that while completing the wall was significant, it was the people's commitment to Scripture that really revealed where they stood before God. What does that kind of commitment to the Word look like? Using their example, we see that first it means we read it. They also respected it. When the book of Scripture was opened they stood, attentively listening. They also understood it. The Levites explained the law as it was read. In verse 6, the people responded to it. When this assembly heard the Word of God, it gripped their hearts. Do you have these characteristics in your life? Do you read it, respect it, understand it, and respond to it? If not, revival is not taking place in your heart.

SAY WHAT?

Observation: What do I see?

SO WHAT?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

NOW WHAT?

Application: How does it apply to me?

THEN WHAT?

Implementation: What do I do?

EXTRA READING

NEHEMIAH 8

NEHEMIAH 8:1-12

TRANSFORMATION

SAY WHAT?

What characteristics will indicate that you have developed true repentance over your sinfulness?

SO WHAT?

What characteristics will indicate that you have true joy?

NOW WHAT?

What characteristics will demonstrate that you have a true concern for others?

THEN WHAT?

In light of this passage, what personal commitment can you make?

Yesterday we looked at the first characteristic of true revival—a renewed commitment to the Scriptures. Today, we see the second characteristic of revival. True revival requires transformation of lives, not buildings or programs. We often measure spiritual progress by what we can see. If our churches have great programs or big, beautiful buildings, we tend to conclude that we are doing well. But true revival will show itself in what is happening in the lives of people. There are three characteristics of true transformation. The first is repentance of sin. When the Israelites heard the Law, they realized that they were guilty of disobedience. The second characteristic is brokenness over sin and the joy repentance brings. After repenting, they experienced real joy. They bowed down and worshiped and praised the Lord. The final characteristic of a transformed life is concern for others. They shared in the celebration with those who were without. Instead of envy, there was love and concern. Do you see these characteristics in your life? True revival is clearly demonstrated by transformed lives. Has your life been transformed?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 8

When does true revival end? When is it over? When is there no longer a need for it? The answer is found in today's reading—never! The final characteristic of true revival found in this passage is that it involves continuing reform. Issues continue to be revealed and are continually made right. It is a constant process of growth. The first area we see this in is leadership. Heads of families and the religious leaders came and discovered more areas in which they had failed. They made the corrections immediately. When the leadership admitted failure and corrected it, the people followed the example. They all celebrated the feast of booths together. The more they studied the Word, the more it revealed corrections that needed to be made. True revival never stops. If it does, people become satisfied and a new wave of carnality is just around the corner. We often look at our lives and conclude that things are going well and sin is a minor issue that can be ignored. When was the last time you felt the conviction of God concerning a specific issue in your life? It may be that true revival has not yet come to your heart! Don't let it stop with you!

SAY WHAT?

Observation: What do I see?

SO WHAT?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

NOW WHAT?

Application: How does it apply to me?

THEN WHAT?

Implementation: What do I do?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 8

NEHEMIAH 9:1-19

BROKENNESS

SAY WHAT?

Make a list of things that God has done for you in the past few years.

SO WHAT?

How would your life be different if God had not been so gracious to you?

NOW WHAT?

In light of His graciousness to you, how should you respond to the sin in your life?

THEN WHAT?

In light of this passage, what personal commitment can you make?

Why is our sin such a big deal? Why should we be broken when we realize that we have failed God? Part of the answer is found in today's reading. Did you notice it? In chapter 8, we looked at the characteristics of true revival. In chapter 9, their attitudes of repentance continue. As they were confronted with sin, they continually made it right before God. Why were the Israelites so moved at their sinful condition that they spent one quarter of the day in confession and worship? Look at the prayer recorded here. Their prayer began by recounting what God had done for them. He chose Abraham and his seed. God could have chosen anyone, but He chose them. He saw their suffering in Egypt and He delivered them. He provided for them in miraculous ways as they wandered in the desert. When they looked back at how great God had been to them for generations and how they had lived in disobedience, their sorrow was immense. Why are we not broken over sin in this way? Could it be that we have lost sight of all God has done for us? We need to be reminded on a regular basis. If we are, brokenness will follow.

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 9

TRUE CONFESSION

NEHEMIAH 9:20-38

What does true confession involve? How can we tell if we or someone else is truly repentant? There is an example found here in these verses that can help us. First, the Israelites acknowledged their sin. They did not blame it on someone else. They did not make excuses or try to minimize sin. They honestly admitted sin and took total responsibility for it. Notice verse 33. Underline it in your Bible. "In all that has happened to us, You have been just and You acted faithfully, while we did wrong." We often attempt to shift the blame and if that fails, we try to rationalize sin into a non-sin category. Instead, we ought to take full responsibility. Second, the Israelites acknowledged the circumstances they were in as consequences of their behavior. Why were they slaves? Because of their sin. They humbly accepted the consequences brought upon their lives because of their sin. Sin does cost us something, there is a price to pay. Few seem to take responsibility for their actions and want God to simply ignore their sin. We need to accept the responsibility and consequences of our sin. That is true confession.

SAY WHAT?

 Observation: What do I see?
SO WHAT?

 Interpretation: What does it mean?
NOW WHAT?

 Application: How does it apply to me?
THEN WHAT?

 Implementation: What do I do?

EXTRA READING

NEHEMIAH 9

PROVERBS 12

The book of Proverbs was designed to help us in "attaining wisdom and discipline; in understanding words of insight; in acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; in giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young." As you read through this chapter, write down the verses that are most significant to you in your present circumstances.

VERSE | WHAT TRUTH IT COMMUNICATES | HOW IT IMPACTS MY LIFE

In chapter 9, we discovered from Nehemiah how we ought to respond to our sin. Today, we see what Nehemiah did after the Israelites had confessed their sin to God. There is a third step which is just as important as the previous two. Did you notice it? They followed their confession with a commitment. They were determined to do something about the sin patterns in their lives. To simply tell God you are sorry and walk away with no intention of changing is not enough. Sin must be forsaken and then replaced with correct behavior. There is a tendency in our churches to confess sin but then do nothing to help ensure that the behavior changes and sin is not repeated. Not only did the people forsake their sin, but they made a public written declaration of what they were going to do from this point forward. They determined to replace their disobedience with obedience. They identified what they had done wrong and what they needed to do to make it right. It is important and necessary for us to confess our sin and take responsibility for it. We must then change our behavior and identify what needs to be corrected. Replace the wrong with right.

SAY WHAT?

What specific issue are you struggling with?

SO WHAT?

What steps can you take to replace it with right behavior?

NOW WHAT?

In light of this passage, how can you safeguard your life to prevent yourself from becoming involved in sin again?

THEN WHAT?

In light of this passage, what personal commitment can you make?

EXTRA READING

NEHEMIAH 10

NEHEMIAH 13:1-14

COMPROMISE

SAY WHAT?

Observation: What do I see?

SO WHAT?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

NOW WHAT?

Application: How does it apply to me?

THEN WHAT?

Implementation: What do I do?

As you have probably noticed, we skipped chapters 11 & 12 of Nehemiah in our reading. It would be good for you to go back and read them. However, we wanted to slow down and take two days to complete this book. Nehemiah saw God do some amazing things in Jerusalem. They were not only in the physical realm, but also in the spiritual realm. God had done a great work. In time, Nehemiah returned home and things in Jerusalem began to slide backwards. Chapter 13 describes for us what he found and how he dealt with it. We can learn from this chapter what the warning signs are. First, in verses 1-9 we see that the people became tolerant. They did not stand firmly against wickedness as they once did. Second, we see that they became irresponsible. They had stopped providing for the Levites who had to go back to work in the fields. The Israelites had neglected to follow through on the commitments they had made. How are you doing in these two areas? Are there areas in which you are tolerant of sin? Have you neglected to follow up on commitments? It does not take long for revival to die after these things happen. Don't let it happen to you!

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 11-12

Today, we see the final two steps of the decline back into carnality in Jerusalem. Did you notice them when you read these verses? The third area, found in verses 15-22, is that the Jews became apathetic. Nehemiah saw that the Sabbath was being violated. They knew it was wrong, and had previously made a commitment to obey the law, but disregarded what they knew to be right. They could have easily rationalized wrong behavior. The fourth step, in verses 23-31, was that they were simply selfish. They did what they wanted to do with no concern for God's expectations or desires. It was about what "they" wanted. It does not take long for someone who is tolerant to become irresponsible. It does not take long for someone who is irresponsible to become apathetic. It does not take long for someone who is apathetic to become selfish. Before long, the revival fire is completely out. As you evaluate your life, do you see any of these characteristics? Look for the warning signs. When we see them, we need to respond with decisive action the way Nehemiah did. You will not slide into carnality if you do.

SAY WHAT?

Observation: What do I see?

SO WHAT?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

NOW WHAT?

Application: How does it apply to me?

THEN WHAT?

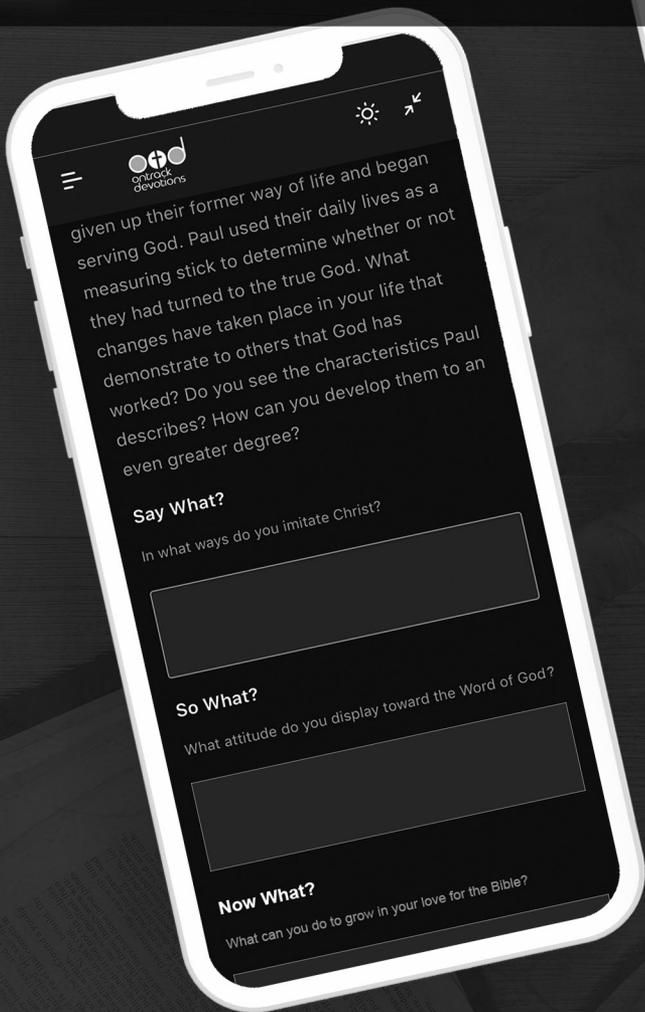
Implementation: What do I do?

EXTRA READING
NEHEMIAH 13



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BUT IF YOU RETURN TO
ME AND KEEP MY
COMMANDMENTS AND
DO THEM, THOUGH
THOSE OF YOU WHO
HAVE BEEN SCATTERED
WERE IN THE MOST
REMOTE PART OF THE
HEAVENS, I WILL GATHER
THEM FROM THERE AND
BRING THEM TO THE
PLACE WHERE I HAVE
CHOSEN TO HAVE MY
NAME DWELL.'

NEHEMIAH 1:9 (NASB)

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