

Kingdom Building

1: In Tune with God's Heart

Intro: This series follows the story of Nehemiah, whose heart was broken for the ruined city of his people. He was instrumental in rebuilding it, whilst honouring God and facing opposition. This series explores what we can learn from Nehemiah for our church and our lives today. Nehemiah can be found in the Old Testament, immediately after Ezra, of which it was originally part. Nehemiah takes place when the Israelites (God's chosen people) were in exile. Jerusalem had been torn down, and many of the people taken into exile years before. You can read about this in the books of 1 and 2 Kings in the Bible.

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Each share: One event or occurrence which happened during the summer that made you laugh.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

In silence, put a large piece of paper in the middle of the group. Give each group member a pen. Whenever people want to, they can write down something they love or are thankful for about God. There is no limit to how much or little each person can write, but no more than one or two words for each aspect of God they love or are thankful for.

WORD

To start, you could watch the video introduction to Ezra-Nehemiah we saw a clip of one Sunday...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkETkRv9tG8>

Growth Group Notes

Sep - Dec 2018



(Note: You can find many similar good videos about Bible books and themes at thebibleproject.com – highly recommended!)

- Was there anything in the video that you found helpful or unhelpful?

Read Nehemiah 1:1-11

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*).

- Nehemiah weeps over the walls of Jerusalem being broken down. Why do you think he weeps over this?
- Nehemiah brings his sadness to God in prayer and fasting. When have you brought sadness to God? What happened?
- Nehemiah's heart seems to echo God's heart for Jerusalem (Psalm 87:2 – Zion and Jerusalem are interchangeable here). How do you think Nehemiah developed this heart?
- When has your heart been in tune with God's heart? How did you know?
- Nehemiah knows the story of the Bible very well (vv. 8-9). He reminds God of his promises during his prayer. How well do you know the story of the Bible? How could you grow this knowledge?
- In what ways can you help your heart to be more in tune with God's heart?
-

WHAT NEXT?

- Share things you want to give thanks for or to ask God for, then pray for one another.

When printing PDF set: Page Sizing=Multiple, Pages per sheet=2, Orientation=Portrait

Kingdom Building

2: Prayer Week

This week, please have a Prayer Week. There's a separate set of notes on the church website at the top of the Growth Group Notes Page.

Please pray in particular for Christ Church – the particular challenges of the year ahead, the church leaders and our children and young people. You may like to use Nehemiah 2:11-20 as a focus for reflection, if you want to think more about the story of this series.



3: Building Together

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Share: What is the most special building you have visited, and why?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Darken the room and light a candle. Say, "Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.' In a few minutes of silence let us allow our hearts to be reminded of God's light in our lives."

WORD

Read Nehemiah 3:1-12

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- The people in this list seem to have a vast host of skills, but for this time they were building. What do you think the significance of this is?
- This whole chapter is a list of people who are taking responsibility for rebuilding part of Jerusalem's walls. We only read 12 verses to save

Kingdom Building

time. Why do you think Nehemiah felt it was important to record all of these names?

- How is this story similar to church today?
- What skills do you bring to the Christ Church family? Do you use what you are best at, or what is needed at the time (both are equally important)?
- Jerusalem's walls are in need of repair. Nehemiah gathers a team to help; what is in need of repair in your own life? Who might be able to help?
- The Bible describes the church as a body working together (see 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12). How do you think we could improve this at Christ Church?

WHAT NEXT?

- In 2s/3s: In silence, say sorry for things you've done wrong to God (repent), then each pray for one another a simple prayer such as: 'Lord God, please bring repair and restoration to xxx with your Holy Spirit. Amen.'
- Pray for a Far Out Project the church supports
- Is your Growth Group attending the Tearfund Quiz on 17th November? Get a team together!



4: Outcry for the Poor

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Share with one another an amusing anecdote from your childhood.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Bring some playdough to the group. Give some to each person and ask them to use it to mould what they believe God feels about them.

WORD

Read Nehemiah 5:1-13

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- The men and women in this story raised a great outcry. Do you think that happens today? If so, what causes a great outcry?
- Nehemiah says he was 'very angry' when he heard how the poor were being exploited. How do you think this relates to week one, when we thought about being in tune with God's heart?
- The nobles and officials seem to change their way of working very quickly after Nehemiah speaks to them (vv. 7, 11 and 12). Why do you think this is?

Kingdom Building

- What different motives do people have today for opposing changing their ways of working to help the poor?
- It was the way things were done. The system itself perpetuated poverty. Nehemiah demanded loans and interest be cancelled, and land returned. Is there any scope for changing the system we have today, which seems to perpetuate poverty?
- How could you change the way you live to help tackle poverty?

WHAT NEXT?

- Pray for those around the world who are struggling to eat. Pray for Tearfund, one of our Church partners, who help tackle poverty in the poorest places on earth.
- Pray for each other as you usually do.
- Is your Growth Group attending the Tearfund Quiz on 17th November? Get a team together!



5: Confession and Praise

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Listen to a 'Confession' from Simon Mayo's confession podcast. You may like to listen to one of the ones from 23rd March 2018. Or each share a funny story from your own life.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

PSALM JAM: Ask everyone to have Psalm 51 in front of them. Have one person read Psalm 51 out loud to the group. Then, invite everyone, whenever they would like, and however many times they would like, to read or speak out a verse or phrase from the Psalm to the group. Give a few minutes for this. A verse or phrase may be repeated many times – that's OK. You will create your own psalm as a group in this way. At the end, close your time of praise with a short prayer.

WORD

Read Nehemiah 8:18 - 9:6

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

Kingdom Building

- The Israelites fasted and wore sackcloth. Why was this?
- The Israelites confessed their sins. What is your understanding of what this means?
- When was the last time you confessed your sins to God?
- Why do you think the Israelites thought confessing their sins was important?
- Immediately after the Israelites confess their sins, they praise God. Why do you think this is?
- Why do you praise God?
- Why do you think some people choose not to praise God?

WHAT NEXT?

- Pray for people you know who are not yet Christians – that they would come to know Christ and use their God-given gifts for him.
- Continue to pray for our church - in particular for those with responsibility as leaders, that we would be sensitive to God's guidance.
- Pray for a Far Out project our church supports.



6: All Welcome

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Share: Name someone in your life, but not in your growth group, who reminds you of Jesus. Why is this?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Listen to Marty Haugen's All Are Welcome

<https://youtu.be/GInVLP0qFEo>

You might like to have the lyrics in front of you, and if you'd like to join in from verse 2 you can do so.

WORD

Read Nehemiah 13:1-3 and Galatians 3:23 - 29

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Take each passage one at a time. How does it make you feel? What questions does it make you want to ask?
- These two passage seem to contradict. How does this make you feel about what they say, and about the Bible?

Kingdom Building

- It is through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that Christians believe all people can be reconciled to God. Do you think the people of Israel would have acted differently if this had already happened?
- Do you think anyone is not welcome in God's Church?
- Who do you think we might subconsciously exclude from Christ Church? What could we do about this?
- What does it mean to be 'Abraham's seed' (Galatians 3:29)?
- How does it feel to know you are a child of God (Galatians 3:26)?

WHAT NEXT?

- In 2s or 3s, share any decisions or difficult situations you are faced with in the coming days or weeks. Pray for one another in turn that God would fill you with his Holy Spirit and guide you.
- Pray that all would be made welcome at Christ Church.
- Pray for a Far Out group we support as a church.



7: Christmas

INTRODUCTION

This week is optional. If you'd like to spend time as a group thinking about the Christmas story in the usual Growth Group format, this will help you. If you would prefer to celebrate Christmas in another way, please do!

Christmas is a time we often forget to make room for Jesus in our lives. This week will help us think about how to do that.

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Share some favourite Christmas cracker jokes!

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Set up a Nativity set to help you reflect. Leave Jesus out and briefly share what the world might be like if Jesus hadn't been born. Add Jesus in and each say short prayers of thanks for the difference Jesus makes.

WORD

Watch a video story of the Nativity. You could try this one...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ToFcucORsuA>

Read Matthew 1:18-2:12 and Luke 2:1-20

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?

Kingdom Building

- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- How did Joseph make space for Jesus in his life?
- How would he have felt about this?
- How did the Magi make space for Jesus in their lives? What sacrifice did they make?
- How did the shepherds make space for Jesus in their lives?
- How did Mary make space for Jesus in her life?
- Contrast these characters with Herod. He did not want to give any space for Jesus. Why do you think this was?
- How can you make more space for Jesus in your life?
- What prevents you from making space for Jesus?

WHAT NEXT?

- Pray for one another over Christmas
- Pray for a Far Out project the church supports.