

FROM EXILES TO RESIDENTS

REBUILD & REPAIR: ENGAGING THE WORLD WITH NEHEMIAH · NEHEMIAH 7:1-73; 11:1-12:47; 13:1-31; LUKE 15:11B-32; EPHESIANS 2:12-13 · AUGUST 6, 2023 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:13)

From Exiles to Wanderers to Slaves to Residents to Exiles

- Adam and Eve created to belong but ending up as exiles from the Garden
- Abraham and Sarah wandering toward the promised land
- The descent from Joseph’s day into enslavement in Egypt
- The exodus with Moses and the beginnings of a new place with Joshua
- The descent during the monarchy and the eventual exile of God’s people

From Exiles to Residents who Rebuild and Repair

- Three movements of returning
- The list of returning exiles (7:1-73)
- The list of those who settle in Jerusalem (11:1-12:26)
- The celebration and dedication of the wall of Jerusalem (12:27-47)

Residents with Exile Hearts

- Distorted sacred spaces (13:4-9)
- Distorted offerings (13:10-14)
- Distorted sabbath (13:15-22)
- Distorted relationships (13:23-27)
- Distorted priesthood (13:28-31)
- The exile heart

Making It Real for Us

- The exile of Jesus on our behalf
- Coming home to God through Jesus Christ
- Living in Christ to rebuild and repair the world

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever had to do something even though your heart was not really in it? What happened? Was there anything that helped with a change of heart?
2. This weekend at Eastbrook we conclude our sermon series, “Rebuild and Repair: Engaging the World with Nehemiah,” by looking at the movement from being exiles to residents. Take some time to pray, asking God to speak to you through His word.
3. Nehemiah, chapter 7, lists those who returned from exile and chapter 11 and the first part of chapter 12 lists those who settled in Jerusalem. Why do you think listing these names might be significant to Nehemiah and the story of God’s people?
4. Have you ever felt insignificant in God’s story? What does it mean to you to know that God knows your name?
5. Read Nehemiah 12:27-47. What stands out to you about this great celebration of the dedication of the wall?
6. In many ways, Nehemiah would seem more successful if the book concluded with chapter 12, but it doesn’t stop there. Now read Nehemiah, chapter 13. What are some of the challenges Nehemiah encounters during this portion of the book?
7. The book of Nehemiah is often portrayed as a book on leadership, but while we can learn leadership lessons from Nehemiah, the end of the book does not resolve well. Why do you think that might be in light of the grand story of the Bible?
8. What is one thing God is speaking to you through this sermon series on Nehemiah? If you’re on your own, write that down, pray over it, and share it with someone this week. If you are with a small group, share your answers with one another before closing in prayer.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

- Memorize Nehemiah’s prayer: *“Remember me for this also, my God, and show mercy to me according to your great love”* (Nehemiah 13:22b).
- Take an extended time of prayer this week to let God search through your own “exile heart.” Ask God to reveal areas of your life that are not completely given over to God, that you may hold back from God, or that you are afraid to show to God. Ask God to speak to you about how face these things, perhaps writing thoughts down in a journal. Maybe you could share your reflections with a friend or mentor for perspective and guidance.
- Consider looking at one or both of these resources on the theme of exile:
 - *Exile: A Conversation with N. T. Wright*, edited by James M. Scott
 - *The Way of Exile* by the Bible Project: bibleproject.com/explore/video/the-way-of-the-exile/