

Nehemiah 10 Student Supper notes

Summary

God's people respond to God's word with serious, specific recommitment to God's law

Structure

- 9v38: Introduction to recommitment
- 10v1-27: Representative signatories
- 10v28-29: Summary of recommitment
- 10v30-39: Specific recommitments...
 - v30: On marriage
 - v31: On Sabbath days and years
 - v32-39: On temple maintenance

Extra text notes

(I would recommend watching the video first - some of the details of the text are referred to there, and this is really intended to give a bit more depth on a couple of points for you as leaders. Lots of this may well not come up in your study but just in case!)

- 9v38: the language translated "binding agreement" has echoes of covenant language elsewhere in the Old Testament
- v28: "all who separated themselves" could be a way of referring to the Israelites in general, or it could be specifically people from other nations who have joined Israel.
- V30: An example of this command is Exodus 34:15-16.
- V31: On the seventh year, see Leviticus 25:1-7.
- V32: Exodus 30:11-16 commands a half-shekel temple tax every census. Here they commit to a smaller amount, but more frequently (every year).
- V34: the wood possibly represents a greater sacrifice of time than money.
- V36: The firstborn sons would have been redeemed by a substitute animal sacrifice (see eg Exodus 34:19-20)
- V38b: The Levites commit to tithe what they receive in tithes! (See Numbers 18:26)

Application to us from the three specific areas

- Marriage: the heart of God's commands on marriage to his people in the Old Testament is not to bind themselves in marriage to someone who doesn't worship him (eg Exodus 34:15-16). That remains the same in the New Testament (eg 1 Corinthians 7:39, see also 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).
The commands are about marriage, not about dating, but they do raise questions about the wisdom and purpose of dating someone God says you shouldn't marry.

This is an area which calls for gentleness, compassion and sensitivity as we seek to help people follow God's word. It can sometimes be helpful to explore some of the reasons God gives for why marriage to a non-Christian is not helpful for a Christian.

And as with all discipleship, the fundamental questions are "will I believe that God is God, and so has a right to speak with authority about my life; and will I trust that God is good, and so what he commands is always the best thing for me?"

It's also very important to remember the New Testament teaching to Christians who are married to someone who is not a Christian, eg 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 and 1 Peter 3:1-7.

- Sabbath: the core of these commitments is to honour God in work, rest, business and finance, even when it feels inconvenient or like we're losing out compared to others. There's lots to consider about what that looks like for us – including weekly patterns of work and rest, but definitely not limited to that!
- Temple: Jesus is the true temple (John 2:19-21), and in him the church becomes God's temple (1 Peter 2:4-5). So the most obvious parallel for us of "not neglecting the house of God" is serving Jesus by serving his church.
From these specific temple commitments, the most direct line to us might perhaps be financial commitments to serve the church – although there are lots of other themes, such as enabling worship, to explore!

Suggested questions

Question 1 is the most important!

Question 2 could take the conversation towards any of questions 3-5. See where it goes! I'd mildly lean towards discussing the temple stuff as there are more verses on it.

Question 3: see notes above. If v30 does come up, these are just a couple of suggested questions you could use - depending on your group, you might prefer to take the conversation differently.

1. What do we see about the attitude of God's people in this chapter?
 - a. What might it look like in practice for us to do repentance with this attitude?
2. What strikes you about the details of what they recommit to do?
3. *(on v30)* Why might marriage to someone who worships another god be unhelpful for a follower of Yahweh?
How do you feel about God telling his people to only marry within God's people?
4. *(on v31)* What might be some parallels for us – ways we can honour the Lord in our working practices and resting habits?
5. *(on v32-39)* Why are these practical commitments to the temple so important?
 - a. What might be the equivalent for us of v39b: "we will not neglect the house of our God"?
 - i. Are there any particular ways you want to recommit to serving church family?