

Small Group Curriculum for Nehemiah Journey - Phase 3

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Week One: Prayer

Opening Prayer

Generous Lord, as we enter into this season of seeking your desires for your church, we pray that You open our eyes to see what You want us to see, hear what You want us to hear, dream what you want us to dream, so that we can become the people that You have created us to be. For we pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.”

Key Scripture

“Ask, and it shall be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches find, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if you child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”
(Matthew 7: 7-11)

Introduction

In Paul E. Miller’s book, A Praying Life, he highlights the fact that all of Jesus’ teaching on prayer in the Gospels can be summarized with one word: ASK. Jesus encourages us to continually ask for at least two reasons. First when we are asking God, we are talking with God. We are sharing our lives with God. We are not able to distance ourselves from God when we are in a constant state of conversation. Second, Jesus wants us to know the generous heart of God, who always want to give good gifts to His children. God loves to give.

This week is all about asking Jesus to help us through the power of the Holy Spirit. We want to see what Jesus desires for His Church. We want the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the people and places that the Spirit wants us to reach with the Gospel of Jesus Christ through Word and deed.

Discussion Questions

1. If you could talk with Jesus, what is the one request that you would make of him for your church? What scripture verse or image is the foundation for this request?
2. In that same conversation with Jesus, what do you think he would ask of your church? What scripture verse or image would Jesus use to explain this request?
3. How are Jesus’ requests of your church similar or different to what you would ask of Jesus? What might account for those similarities and differences?
4. As we spend this next week praying for God to reveal God’s vision for your church, what are you expecting the Holy Spirit to do? What excites you? What concerns you?

Closing Prayer

Jesus, we are so thankful that You love us and You love Your Church. We know that Your dreams for us are greater than we have for ourselves. We ask that You show us what You want us to become, who You want us to reach, and how You want us to share Your Gospel. For we pray in Christ's name, Amen.

Week Two - Abundance

Opening Prayer

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, bring to mind those moments when You revealed Yourself in the mighty way through Your Church. Help us to see all of the gifts that exist within this Church, so that we may begin to see how we can follow Jesus more faithfully and grow in Your holiness. We pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Key Scripture

"I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; I will remember your wonders of old. I will meditate on all your work, and muse on your mighty deeds. Your way, O God, is holy. What god is so great as our God? You are the God who works wonders..."
(Psalm 77: 11-14a)

Introduction

One of the many gifts that God has given us individually and corporately is the gift of memory. We can remember the work that God has done for us in the past. We can recall those moments when the church was at her best, when God revealed Himself in a mighty way, and when God provided.

We cling to those moments, because they remind us of God's faithfulness as well as the giftedness that lies within the church. Those moments help us rediscover our talents and passions. They help us reconnect with all that the church has, and even if the church is not the same as it was a decade ago, we are still tremendously gifted by God.

In this session, we will focus on remembering the "wonders of old." We will share stories from the church's past. At the same time, we will consider the gifts that exist within the church. We will explore the talents and passions that exist within the church today, and we will praise God for these abundant gifts.

Discussion Questions

1. Let's begin by recalling the "deeds of the Lord." Think about your entire experience at this church. When did you see Jesus show up in this church? Who was involved? What did you do? How did it feel? What happened?
2. How has this church helped you grow as a follower of Jesus? What did you do? Who was involved? How did it feel? What difference has this growth made for you?
3. How has Jesus made our church unique? What are the essential characteristics or ways of life that cause our church to be different from other churches?

4. Don't be humble; this is important information: How has the Holy Spirit gifted you? What abilities, skills, and/or passions to you bring to the Church?

Closing Prayer

Lord, we praise You for all the ways that You have revealed Yourself through this church. We thank You for all the gifts that you have given us – the skills, the passions, and the abilities. We want to glorify You in all that we are and all that we do. Help us to see how our past, these gifts, and the needs of this mission field converge with the work that You are already doing in creating a vibrant and fruitful future for this church. We want to be a part of what You are doing for Your glory. For we pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Week Three: Opportunities

For the Leader: Gather information prior to this meeting regarding the material, physical, emotional, and spiritual poverty in your mission field. You can acquire this data through websites, such as <https://missioninsite.com>, or interview your local principals, police officers, city officials, and/or non-profit leaders. Prepare to share at this gathering.

Opening Prayer: Open our eyes, Lord. We want to see Jesus. Reveal to us the people within these church walls and beyond these church walls, who desperately need to meet Jesus. Show us who is in need of the healing that only Jesus can give. Give us the courage to see. Open our eyes, Lord. For we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Scripture: “[Jesus and his disciples] came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked, ‘Can you see anything?’ And the man looked up and said, ‘I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.’ Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.” (Mark 8: 22-25)

Introduction: The eighth chapter of the Gospel of Mark is filled with references to sight. The Pharisees want to physically see Jesus perform a sign from heaven, but they (and the disciples) are unable to spiritually see that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah. These conversations are followed by Jesus' healing of a man, who receives clearer physical and spiritual sight. They all need Jesus to given them physical and spiritual sight.

We like to think that we would be better than the Pharisees, the disciples, and the blind man. We would be able to see Jesus for who he is, but we have our own blinders. We make the assumption that people know the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We fail to see where the hope of Jesus needs to be offered. While this hope can be offered through canned foods and clothes, we are also called to share our faith in Jesus with our words and in relationship with others.

Discussion Questions:

1. The group leader will share findings from the community leaders. What information did you expect to hear? What information surprised you?
2. Where and how is the Gospel of Jesus Christ currently being shared effectively within and beyond your church walls? What is the fruit of that effort?
3. Where do you see physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual poverty within and beyond your church walls? How could the church share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in those places?

Closing Prayer: Jesus, we thank You for opening our eyes to the opportunities that surround us as we seek to make disciples and share Your Gospel. We know that You have given this church every gift that we need to do this work. Holy Spirit, we ask that You show us those places where our gifts and passion intersect with the Gospel needs of this community. Help us to be a part of what You are doing. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Week Four: Discernment

Opening Prayer: Come, Lord Jesus! We welcome into our hearts and lives! We thank You for Your Church! Come, Holy Spirit! We want to see where You are working in this world! We want to be a part of what You are doing! Come, God, Our Father! Encourage us to step out in faith and glorify You! For we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture: "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia.." (Acts 13: 2-4)

Introduction: When we think about the Holy Spirit, we often gravitate to the moment in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit descended with power, giving birth to the church as people suddenly were able to understand each other, each in their own language. We tend to forget the fact the Holy Spirit continued to guide the apostles as they spread the Gospel of Jesus. As we continue to read the Book of Acts, we find the Holy Spirit speaking, guiding, and even stopping the apostles in their mission.

The Holy Spirit has not stopped doing this work in the life of the church. We have forgotten how to actively listen, watch and pay attention to the Spirit's leading. Today we are focusing on the Holy Spirit's leading. We explore where the Spirit is already moving, how God has already provided, and how Jesus is calling us as a church to share Him with others.

Discussion Questions:

1. As you consider your church, how do you see the Holy Spirit moving, encouraging, providing, or challenging?

2. As you consider your mission field or community, where do you sense the Holy Spirit leading you to share the Gospel of Jesus in word and deed?
3. As you consider the abundance that God has given you and your church as well as the opportunities to share the Gospel within and beyond your church walls, where do you think that the Holy Spirit might be leading you? What is the Holy Spirit revealing to you?
4. Give each participant a notecard. Ask them to pray and write down the vision that the Holy Spirit has given to them during this process. Write down any scripture that has guided or informed this vision. Tell them to bring the card next week, and be prepared to share with the group what has been revealed to them.

Closing Prayer: Lord, we want to do what You've called us to do. We want to share Christ in ways that change us and, in turn, change the world. We want to grow in holiness, so that You will be glorified and all will come to know the grace that You give. Give us Your vision for Your church and the courage to follow. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Week Five: Revelation

Opening Prayer: Come, Lord Jesus! Show us what You want for Your church. Help us to dream Your dreams and see Your visions. Keep our minds and hearts open to what You want us to be and what You call us to do. We pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Key Scripture: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them; He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.' And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.'" (Revelation 21: 1-5)

Introduction: The Book of Revelation is filled with a vibrant vision given to us from God. Christ will come again. Death, crying, and pain will be no more. Oh, how we long for that day!

In this "in between" time," the Holy Spirit encourages us to use the gifts that we have been given to meet the opportunities that surround us to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our small corner of God's Kingdom. The church was never intended to be a footprint, taking up space within our communities. We are made to make a deep impression for Christ.

Today we are going to share the visions that the Holy Spirit has given each of us and start imagining God's dreams for us. Some of these visions may sound similar to yours, and others may be visions that you never considered or expected. Some may

make you uncomfortable. Listen carefully to one another without interruption and consider the vision that Jesus is offering to your church.

Discussion Questions:

1. Ask each member to share what they wrote on the notecard as well as the way that they came to that revelation. How did the Holy Spirit make this vision clear to them?
2. After these visions are shared with the group, explore how you feel about what you have heard. Are these visions exciting? Threatening? Seemingly impossible?
3. If one or two of these visions became reality, what might your church look like? How might your witness to Jesus Christ change? Be strengthened? Grow in holiness? What could be your greatest challenge and/or your deepest prayer?

Closing Prayer: Lord, we praise You for the gift of vision and for the dreams that You have for Your church. We ask that You make the way clear for us as we seek to follow You in all that we are and all that we do. We pray that Your Holy Spirit will come and inspire us to reach and love Your people faithfully. We eagerly await Your direction, for we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

For the Leader: Ask your group members for their vision notecards. Let them know that you will be giving the cards to the leadership team, which will read through the cards and look for the common thread of vision that God has given them. The results of this vision work will be shared on your Celebration Worship Sunday.