

Three building projects

Hearing the Word of God

Obedying the Word of God

Malachi has the last word

Discussion questions:

1. Ezra had devoted himself to studying God's Word and following what it teaches (Ezra 7:1-10). How did Ezra's commitment to God's Word shape his life and ministry? Why is it so important that we do more than just know the content of the Bible but actually obey what the Bible teaches?
2. Randy noted that throughout The Story, God calls his people to 1) refocus on God; 2) recenter on his plan for their lives; 3) remember who God is; and 4) rebuild our relationship with him. Tell about what you have learned in the past twenty weeks about one of these four themes.
3. God worked through King Artaxerxes to send the exiles back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and reestablish worship (Ezra 7:11-28). How have you seen God use surprising people and circumstances to accomplish his will in this world?
4. Nehemiah was a man of prayer (Nehemiah 1, 4, 6). What situations led Nehemiah to pray and what do we learn from his example?
5. Nehemiah not only prayed hard but worked hard. How do you see this balance in Nehemiah's life? What is the danger of praying hard but not working hard? What are some possible consequences of working hard but forgetting to pray?
6. As the people were seeking to rebuild their relationship with God, they got very serious about reading the Bible. They even had a team of people available to help everyone understand the meaning of God's Word. In what ways can we help the next generation learn to know, love, and follow the teaching of the Bible (in our homes and churches)?
7. Malachi was the last prophet of the Old Testament. He challenged the people to give God their first and best, not their last and leftovers (Malachi 1:6-10; 3:6-12). What are some ways we give God our leftovers rather than our first and best?
8. When the people of God heard the Word of God read and had it explained to them, they moved into action. In this case, they reestablished the feast of tabernacles. Tell of a time you read the Bible and were quickly moved to action because of what God taught you.

Homework: Nehemiah reminded the people of Israel of the importance of celebrating and feasting together. Plan a meal with some Christian friends for the express purpose of rejoicing in God's goodness. Read a portion of this chapter of The Story (Nehemiah 8:1-12) and let the conversation around the dinner table focus on how God has been good and why he is worthy of our worship and praise.

For next week, please read Chapter 22 of The Story (Matthew 1-2; Luke 1-2; John 1)