

Reflection Guide Nehemiah 10

Big Idea: Let's be honest: Re-dedications get a bad wrap in the church today. There are many reasons for it, and it comes in many different forms, but this re-dedication or covenant renewal of God's people has a rich history through the Bible. God's people are cut to the heart by God's word and in a response of repentance, the people earnestly re-dedicate themselves to the Lord. When repentance breaks out in the lives of God's people, it will always be accompanied by a renewed desire and delight to obey God's Word.

Neh 9:38 *"Because of all this we make a firm covenant in writing; on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, and our priests."*

Because of what? Because of Your faithfulness, your mercy, your patience, righteousness...because of Your Grace God's people have been cut to the heart by the reading of God's Word...they have seen their sin. They have seen God's holiness and faithfulness. They have responded in confession and repentance.

**Take a moment to reflect on your own personal history of God's faithfulness.
Share one aspect with your Community.**

How does recounting this make you feel? (thankful, convicted of your own lack of faithfulness?)

**Describe your previous re-dedication attempts.
What was the motivation behind them?**

Let's see how our past re-commitments compare to Israel's in Nehemiah 10.

Grace Driven Renewal Doesn't Result in Vague Commitments

When Grace broke loose in the lives of God's people there was no part of life held back. What they detailed out will require faith and sacrifice in every part of their life and this was a commitment of their entire lives to the glory of God.

The specific commitments of the people cover every area of their lives:

- 1) Their homes/families/relationships (v.30) *We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.*
- 2) Their time commitments/schedules (v 31) *And if the peoples of the land bring in goods or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on a holy day.*
- 3) Their businesses (v 31) *And we will forego the crops of the seventh year and...*
- 4) Their neighbors/profits (v 31) *the exaction of every debt.*
- 5) Their religious life (v 32-39) *We also take on ourselves the obligation to give yearly a third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God: ³³ for the showbread, the regular grain offering, the regular burnt offering, the Sabbaths, the new moons, the appointed feasts, the holy things, and the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God.*

In which areas do we find it easy to make specific and detailed commitments?

Which of these areas is the hardest for to submit to God in this way? Why?

(fear of failure/ apathy/ no real concern for others)

Where in your life are you displaying ownership rather than stewardship?

(loving others, forgiving others, money, relationship with God, job)

**What happens when we are faithful in these areas?
What do they declare about God to a watching, unbelieving world?**

1) We are declaring with our lives that God is our supreme authority. Our reason, logic, experience, counsel are all valid, but they are all subject to God's Word. Our obedience to His Word reflects His supremacy, worth...

2. When they commit to not marry their children off to foreign spouses; God's people are declaring that He is a holy God and the purity of His people and the purity of His message is not to be compromised. God has told His people that in no uncertain terms, they were to have no other gods before Him. When people would get married in those days, they would make their commitment before people and their families gods...exchange them and give them a prominent place. By not marrying pagan spouses, God's people are living a testimony to the holiness and distinct nature of God over and against all false gods.

3. By not buying goods on the Sabbath...by working 6 days and setting aside 1 day just as God had commanded...God's people are silently testifying to the fact that God is Supreme...even over their careers and income and He is worthy to be trusted with this. God is faithful to care for them! And so their primary allegiance was to God...not their business or economic interests...domestic concerns or social obligations.

4) God's Ownership

If the land actually belonged to the people or if they were simply accountable to themselves for their relationships, time, possessions, then they could do with them whatever they wanted...but God had been clear that in no uncertain terms the land and everything in it belonged solely to Him. (Lev. 25:23) The farmer was nothing but a trusted tenant. They were God's stewards, accountable to Him for how they managed His land and how they managed what God had given them.

5) God's Love

What did it say about God's love when the people were instructed to forgive the debts of their neighbors? When the fields were left fallow it was natural for the fruit to fall and reseed...it belonged to the poor. This displayed that He is the God of the poor and the prosperous...He cares for the widows, orphans, fatherless and alien in the land.

6) God gives great faith!

What did it say about the people's devotion to God when they refused to marry spouses of other nations because of idolatry? How would they care for their own family if they simply stopped working one day a week or leave their fields unharvested in the seventh year? What did it say about their faith when they gave the first fruits of everything to God? They had to trust God with the entirety of their life!

**Which of the above truths about God do you need to be assured of right now?
What do you hope will change as you believe it?
How can we pray for you this week about that?**

(Hey Leaders... consider how you can respond best as a Community. Depending on your numbers you may want to break up into smaller groups.)

Lets take some time right now to pour out our hearts before God together. Some of us need to confess our sins. Some of us need to renounce their sins and their unbelief. Some of us need to

ask God's help to repent and obey in specific areas. To help up prepare our hearts and to help us pray specifically, lets hear again Wesley's prayer of rededication.

O most holy God, we humbly beg You, accept the poor prodigals prostrating themselves at Your door. All of us were once, or are even now, far from You because of our sins. We are all by nature worthy of death, and we made ourselves a thousand times worse by our wicked practices. But out of Your infinite grace You have promised mercy to us in Christ, if we will only turn to You with all our heart. Therefore, since we have heard the call of the gospel, we now come, throw down our weapons, and submit ourselves to Your mercy.

And because You require, as the condition of our peace with You, that we should put away our idols, we here and now from the bottom of our hearts renounce them all. We firmly covenant with You not to allow ourselves to continue in any known sin. We will, instead, conscientiously use all the means that we know You have prescribed, for the death and utter destruction of everything that corrupts us. We humbly affirm before Your glorious Majesty that it is the firm resolution of our hearts to forsake all that is dear unto us in this world, rather than to turn from You to the ways of sin. We will guard ourselves against all temptations, whether from prosperity or poverty, pleasure or pain, so that they may never draw our hearts away from You.

And since You have, out of Your boundless mercy, offered graciously, to be our God through Christ, we call heaven and earth to record this day, that we do here solemnly acknowledge You as the Lord our God.

And now, speaking not only as one in this sacred assembly, but speaking for myself alone, I do take You, O Eternal God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to be my God. Be my portion. I do give up myself, body and soul, to be Your servant, promising and vowing to serve You in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

I renounce my own worthiness and do here acknowledge You as the Lord my righteousness. I renounce my own wisdom and do here take You for my only Guide. I renounce my own will and take Your will for my law. And since Your word has told me that I must suffer with You if I am to reign with You, I do here covenant with You to accept my lot, as it falls, with You and by Your grace to risk everything for You. It is my purpose that neither life nor death shall part You and me. Now, Almighty God, Searcher of Hearts, You know that I make this covenant with You this day, without any known deception or reservation. I humbly beg You that if You see any flaw or falsehood in my resolve, reveal it to me and help me to put it right.

I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you, exalted for you, or brought low for you; let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing: I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.

And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.