



9-17-17 Sermon Discussion Guide "Nehemiah - Constructing Passion"



Context

Our Christian Education theme for year is "Game On!" We are encouraging people to be fully engaged participants in the ministry of First Presbyterian Church. Throughout this year, the second Sunday of each month will be our "Game On Sundays." We'll explore how we play this game as Christians and what we need in order to play it well. This fall, in the remaining weeks, we are going through the Old Testament book of Nehemiah. This book describes events that take place in the Persian Empire and in Jerusalem during the 5th century BC. The nation of Israel was under the rule of the Persians. Nehemiah was an Israelite servant of the king, Artaxerxes. This story is important for us today because it shows the incredible impact one person can have when God gives them a passionate calling. In these coming weeks we'll explore the calling of Nehemiah and how God used him to change history.

Checking In

Since the last time your group has met, how have each of you experienced God at work? What have you celebrated? What have you mourned?

Introduction

Think of a time when were very passionate about something. Has something about the world made you very angry before? What life circumstances that have moved you tears before? Were they tears of happiness or of sorrow? When have these strong feelings moved you to action?

Discussing the Text – Nehemiah 1:1-11

1. What news makes Nehemiah so emotional in verse 3? Why do you think it made him so upset? Was his reaction appropriate?
2. What does Nehemiah do immediately in response to this news? Check out verse 4.
3. What do you think Nehemiah was doing while he fasted in verse 4?
4. When Nehemiah prays in verse 5, how does he start his prayer?
5. Why do you think Nehemiah confesses the sins of his people in verses 6 and 7?
6. What does Nehemiah eventually ask for in his prayer?

So what?

1. Should injustice in the world cause us to mourn like it did for Nehemiah? Why or why not?
2. What is the significance of fasting? Should it be done while praying? How can the practice of fasting influence your prayer life?
3. What role does confession of sin play in our prayer life? How often should we do it? What's the value of confessing sin on behalf of others, or whole communities like what Nehemiah does?
4. When Nehemiah heard the news about his homeland, he was moved to mourning, fasting, and praying. Should we as Christians today be similarly moved by injustice or suffering? What does it mean if we are not so moved?
5. Is passion like Nehemiah's something that happens to us, or can we cultivate it? If we can work to create it, how do we go about doing that?

Prayer

Share something you for which you are thankful and/or something for which you need support. Have the group experiment with fasting while praying. Try fasting from food from evening to evening while praying for a specific person, cause, or situation. Invite the members to report back to the group about how their experience went.