

MILESTONES

WEEK 9 DISCUSSION GUIDE

"SOMETHING NEW"

READ

This week we continued to look at Israel's milestone moments as we concluded our Milestone series. We reflected on the time after Jerusalem's destruction and exile when exiles were given permission to rebuild the temple and worship their God.

Ezra 3:3

Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the Lord...

Even though the exiles that returned were afraid, they had history in this land and enemies, they started rebuilding and did not let fear stand in their way. Courage is not the absence of fear; to have courage is to move forward in the presence of fear.

Ezra 3:11-12

... And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy.

When the foundation was complete there are mixed responses from the people. Some cry for what was lost as the new temple was not as grand as the former temple, others rejoice for what is new. Our love for the past can sometimes get in the way of engaging in the present.

On March 12, 516 BCE almost 70 years after the destruction of Jerusalem the temple is rebuilt and traditional Israelite worship is reinstated. A priest named Ezra comes back to Jerusalem in 458 BCE with a few thousand more people and starts teaching from the law.

13 years after Ezra a guy named Nehemiah who was an Israelite but worked for the current Persian King Artaxerxes asks how the returned exiles are doing in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 1:3-4

They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

Things have been getting better, but they are still not good. Ezra is down there; the temple is somewhat rebuilt but they have no protection. No army and no defenses.

This breaks Nehemiah's heart and propels him to action. He gets permission to go back to Jerusalem, and also gets Artaxerxes to provide protection and resources. In Jerusalem he recruits and organizes people and in 52 days the walls are rebuilt.

Nehemiah's heart was broken and he moved into action to make a difference. What breaks your heart is a key to discovering your purpose.

DISCUSS

If you could travel back in time and experience an event or season of your life again what would it be?

After the foundation of the new temple was laid some cried because of what was lost while others rejoiced for what was new.

Which group do you identify with most, those who looked back and were sad at what was lost or those who rejoiced with what was new? Why do you think this is?

Have you ever let a longing for the past prevent you from moving forward or finding joy in the present? What did that look like?

Have you seen God do something new in your life recently? Share this with your group.

In Scott's message he shared that "what breaks your heart is a key to discovering your purpose"

What breaks your heart in this world?

What is one step you can take to respond to a need in this area?

PRAY FOR YOUR GROUP

Pray for each person in your group, for God's guidance in what their next step would be. Pray for courage to take that step.

PRAY FOR FCC

Pray that we would not be held back by fear, that instead we would have courage to boldly step forward into what God has for each of us.

PRAY FOR OUR GLOBAL PARTNERS

World hunger or food insecurity is an issue that exists today. Please pray for those who go to bed hungry because of conditions in our world. Pray that more will come alongside organizations who truly serve those without proper nourishment. FCC has the CRC (Community Resource Center) to come alongside those who are food insecure or housing insecure. Pray more will share their resources and gifts with the CRC and with those in our neighborhood and therefore share the love of Jesus in a practical way.