



11-5-17 Sermon Discussion Guide

"Celebrate Good Times, Come On!"



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

What do you do to celebrate when you achieve something great? Describe a time when you celebrated a great achievement with other people. What made the celebration so great?

Discussing the Text – Nehemiah 8

1. If you had to summarize this chapter, how would you summarize it? Do you notice any recurring themes in this chapter, especially as you consider everything that has happened so far?
2. What are the first things the Israelites do now they have finished their work?
3. What is the response of the Israelites as they listen to the reading of the Book of the Law?
4. How are do the Israelites listen to the reading of the Book of the Law?
5. How long do the Israelites celebrate the festival of booths/tabernacles? (Sukkot)

So what?

1. Why would the Israelites think it is so important to worship God and read Scripture one they finished their work?
2. Many of these Israelites had likely never heard the Scriptures read before. What that might that first experience have been like for them?
3. Describe the differences between reading Scripture in a corporate setting verses alone.
4. The festival described in this passage is called Sukkot, or the festival of booths. Why would God command Israelites to build tents in order to remember their past and be thankful? What's the benefit of living in a tent for a week to celebrate God's faithfulness?
5. What practices do you have that help you remember what God has done for you and how God has been faithful to you?
6. How can you embrace a spirit of "Sukkot" in your day to day life? How can you set aside time to recognize your roots and where God has taken you over the years?

Prayer

Share something you for which you are thankful and/or something for which you need support. Have the group pray for perseverance and discipline this week. Have the group thank God for how God has been faithful to them over the years.