



11-26-17 Sermon Discussion Guide

"Still Not Getting it Right"



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 makes a movie or book ending good or memorable? What makes a movie or book ending bad or forgettable?

Discussing the Text – Nehemiah 13

1. Read through this whole chapter. In your opinion, does the book of Nehemiah end positively or negatively? Explain your answer.
2. Summarize what is happening in this chapter. What is Nehemiah doing, what are the Israelites doing? Why is everybody acting the way they are?
3. In verse 6, Nehemiah says that he's returned to Suza. What kinds of things happen in Jerusalem while he is away?
4. In verse 15, Nehemiah discusses the Israelites treading winepresses on the Sabbath. What's the issue here?
5. Four times in this chapter, Nehemiah prays that God would remember him or others. Why do you think he's doing this? (Verses 14, 22, 29, 31)
6. What is Nehemiah so angry about in verses 23-27?

So what?

1. Why do you think the book of Nehemiah would the way that it did? Why not just end it after the Israelites finished building the wall in chapter 6?
2. Why do you think the Israelites so easily fell back into old patterns of sin after they had experienced such a powerful success in the rebuilding of the wall?
3. Consider a time when it seemed like for every step forward, you took one or two back in another area of your life. How did you experience God's grace during that time? What helped you overcome that struggle? If you are still struggling, how can the group help you with it?
4. How do you know which behaviors described and celebrated in the Bible we should emulate and which we should ignore? For example, Nehemiah beats the people who married foreign women in verse 22. How do we know not to do this today?

Prayer

Share something you for which you are thankful and/or something for which you need support. Have the group pray to God for forgiveness for a sin they struggle with.