

25 DAYS OF NEHEMIAH

THIS JANUARY (DURING OUR SUBTRACTION SERIES), WE'RE TEACHING FROM THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH & WE'D LIKE YOU TO READ IT WITH US.

WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS THE DIVINELY INSPIRED WORD OF GOD, FULL OF TIMELESS TRUTHS ABOUT WHO HE IS, WHO WE ARE, WHAT LIFE IS ABOUT, AND HOW BEST TO LIVE IT. AT THE SAME TIME—SCRIPTURE WAS WRITTEN FOR US, NOT TO US. WHICH MEANS: TO UNDERSTAND IT ACCURATELY, WE MUST INVESTIGATE THE AUTHORS' ANCIENT CONTEXT BEFORE APPLYING IT TO OURS.

B A C K G R O U N D

AFTER THE JEWS SPENT SEVERAL DECADES IN EXILE, THE PERSIAN KING ALLOWED THEM TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMELAND AND REBUILD THEIR SACRED TEMPLE. FIFTY THOUSAND JEWS MADE THE TREK. BUT ONCE THEY SETTLED, THEY BEGAN BEING HARASSED BY THE LOCALS, WHO TURNED THE PERSIAN AUTHORITIES AGAINST THEM.

BY THE TIME THE NEXT GROUP JOINS THEM (SIXTY YEARS LATER), THE FIRST WAVE HAD DEPRIORITIZED AND COMPROMISED THEIR FAITH. GOD USES A SCRIBE NAMED EZRA TO CALL THEM TO REPENT, AND THEY DID. BUT THEY NEEDED MORE THAN A PERSONAL SPIRITUAL RENEWAL, THEY NEEDED A COLLECTIVE CIVIC OVERHAUL. THE JEWS IN JERUSALEM NEEDED A LEADER TO HELP THEM REBUILD AND RESTRUCTURE THEIR CITY.

GOD CHOSE NEHEMIAH, THE CUPBEARER TO THE KING OF PERSIA. HIS JOB WAS TO TASTE THE KING'S FOOD AND WINE TO ENSURE IT HADN'T BEEN POISONED, BUT HIS REAL ROLE WAS AS A CLOSE CONFIDANT AND ADVISOR TO THE KING. THIS GUY WASN'T PROPHET OR PRIEST, HE WAS A LAY LEADER; ONE GOD WOULD USE TO REINVIGORATE HIS COMMUNITY AND COMPLETELY ALTER THE COURSE OF JEWISH HISTORY.

WE WANT TO SUGGEST UTILIZING AN ANCIENT METHOD CALLED **LECTIO DIVINA** (LATIN FOR 'HOLY' OR 'SACRED READING'). IT'S THE PROCESS OF, NOT JUST READING THROUGH SCRIPTURE, BUT PRAYING THROUGH IT. AND IT INVOLVES FOUR MOVEMENTS REPRESENTED BY THE ACRONYM: **P.R.A.Y.**

PAUSE

SETTLE YOUR SOUL BEFORE YOU READ. SIT QUIETLY. TAKE A FEW DEEP BREATHS. RELAX YOUR BODY. IT MAY HELP TO REPEAT A SHORT, SIMPLE PRAYER TO YOURSELF, LIKE—"GOD, STILL MY SOUL." OR "LORD, LET SEE THROUGH YOUR EYES, NOT MY OWN."

READ + REFLECT

READ THE SECTION A FEW TIMES. USE YOUR IMAGINATION TO SEE YOURSELF IN THE STORY. WHAT WOULD IT LOOK, SOUND, FEEL, AND SMELL LIKE? WHAT WORDS OR PHRASES JUMP OUT AT YOU? HOW THIS SECTION CONNECT TO THE ONE BEFORE & THE STORY AS A WHOLE?

ASK

HOW DOES GOD WANT YOU TO ACT ON WHAT YOU JUST READ? ASK HIM. THEN LISTEN. YOU CAN TALK TO GOD OUT LOUD, IN A JOURNAL ENTRY, OR MEDITATIVE WALK OUTSIDE. INVITE GOD TO GIVE YOU INSIGHT INTO WHO HE IS, WHO YOU ARE, AND HOW TO LIVE.

YIELD

EXPECT WHAT YOU READ TO CHALLENGE YOU TO CHANGE HOW YOU THINK, TALK AND ACT. MAKE AN ACTION PLAN TO APPLY WHAT GOD HAS SHOWN YOU TO YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE. THEN, FOLLOW THROUGH. THINK OF IT AS TAKING ON THE 'CHALLENGE OF THE DAY'.

WEEK 1

JAN. 7-13

- ☐ 1: 1-11
- ☐ 2: 1-10
- ☐ 2: 11-20
- ☐ 3: 1-16
- ☐ 3: 17-32
- ☐ 4: 1-14
- ☐ 4: 15-23

WEEK 2

JAN. 14-20

- ☐ 5: 1-12A
- ☐ 5: 12B-19
- ☐ 6: 1-9
- ☐ 6: 10-19
- ☐ 7: 1-60
- ☐ 7: 61-73A
- ☐ 7: 73B- 8: 18

WEEK 3

JAN. 21-27

- ☐ 9: 1- 37
- ☐ 9: 38- 10: 27
- ☐ 10: 28-39
- ☐ 11: 1-20
- ☐ 11: 21-36
- ☐ 12: 1-26
- ☐ 12: 27-43

WEEK 4

JAN. 28-31

- ☐ 12: 44-47
- ☐ 13: 1-5
- ☐ 13: 6-9
- ☐ 13: 10-31