



“Successful Failure”

“The rest of the people—priests, Levites, gatekeepers, musicians, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand—all these now join their fellow Israelites the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the Lord our Lord.”

Nehemiah 10:28-29

Getting on the Same Page

This Sunday (Oct 22nd), we continue our series in Nehemiah. The Israelites confess their sinful history together. It’s a history soaked in their failure. And yet, as chapter 9 repeats over and over, God has been merciful and forgiving toward them.

So the Israelites make a binding agreement with God to follow everything in His law. We see a powerful communal confession and commitment. Then the people cast lots to re-populate Jerusalem. Then they have a joyful ceremony as they celebrate the completion of wall. Just one problem: while their walls were fortified, their hearts were not. They weren’t gonna be able to live up to God’s commands. Like every previous generation, they would put themselves before God and fail Him...again.

It’s easy to read the Old Testament and get depressed. By the time we finish it, we are left with no hope. We are never gonna get it right. And that’s the point.

Hundreds of years later, Jesus came to earth. And before he died on the cross, he told his disciples that HE was ushering in a new covenant...by HIS own sacrifice. Jesus did something we could never do: He kept God’s law perfectly. And he was punished as though he was a lawbreaker. And he did all of it for us. As Christians, we should never sin on purpose. But hard as we may try, we will continue to

fail to live up to God's standards. But our weakness and failure can actually draw us closer to God, bc we realize just how much we need Jesus. Jesus isn't someone we have to live up to, but moreso into. The closer we draw to Jesus, the more we will want to obey him. Love is the greatest motivation and empowerment to obey.

Read Nehemiah 10:1-12:43. Or, just read chapter 10. What stands out to you?

Getting Started: Pick 1-2 of these 3 to get the conversation going:

- Discuss a time in your life when you failed at something, but looking back you would say it was good for you.
- Discuss some rules/laws today that you would consider to be good. Why do you feel that way?
- Discuss a time in your life when you were motivated to obey because of love, as opposed to simply following rules.

Respond/Discuss

- Agree or disagree? Behind God's law is a loving, gracious law-giver who wants and knows what's best for us. -Why do you feel that way?
- Respond: God's law reveals a massive problem: We can't keep it. Often times, we don't even want to.
- Make an argument that our failure drives us further away from God.
- Now make an argument that our failure can actually drive us closer to God.
- Respond (Gospel): Jesus actually became righteous for us. This means 2 things: 1)We could never live up to God's standards. 2)In Christ, we don't have to.
- Respond: My love for Jesus grows as I focus more intently on his love for me than my love for him.
- Respond: Even though none of us can live up to God's standards, as Christians, it's really important that we still try.

Apply: Read/Pray the following passages together. Take in who Jesus is and what he did for you:

- "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." **Matthew 11:28-30**
- All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. **2 Corinthians 5:18-21**

