

# BLUEPRINTS

FOR A REBUILDING YEAR

## WEEK 5 - GROUP STUDY

All too often, we spend time doing things for God instead of with God. Nehemiah and Ezra help the nation of Israel return to the basics of growing their relationship with God.

### CONNECT

- **What has been the most memorable concert or sporting event you have attended? Why?**

### CONSIDER

- **Watch Video - Session 5: Back To Basics ([mynorthside.com/Blueprints](http://mynorthside.com/Blueprints))**
- **What encouraged or challenged you from the sermon, devotions, or video this week?**

### CHRIST

**Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 as a group.**

- The primary goal of the spiritual life is transformation. It's the identity-shaping process of being formed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. As John Ortberg writes, "I don't just do the things Jesus would have done; I find myself wanting to do them. They appeal to me. They make sense. I don't just go around trying to do the right things; I become the right sort of person."<sup>1</sup> **If someone asked you, "How is your spiritual life going," how would you respond? By what standards would you define it? Would you be tempted to say something impressive? Would you hesitate to reveal any realities?**
- God transforms us; we can't transform ourselves. This is an important truth to understand about spiritual habits. God uses them to help us listen, learn, and live like Jesus. The habits don't make us spiritual; they lead us into a deeper relationship with the One who does. That's why it's not about trying harder, but training wisely. **What is the difference between spiritual trying versus training? How does allowing God to transform us shape our identity?**

**Read Nehemiah 8:1-12 and 9:1-3 as a group.**

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<sup>1</sup> John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted* (Zondervan, 2002), 21.

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- The nation of Israel gathers together (8:2-3) to listen to God's Word. This would have included men, women, children, and those in the surrounding areas (Deuteronomy 31:12). To put it in perspective, this would have been a generation of people that most likely had never heard God's Word before. **Why is this diverse audience so important to getting back to the basics? What do you notice about people's reactions to hearing God's Word for the first time?**
- Ezra and Nehemiah begin a harder task of rebuilding the spiritual lives of the Israelites. To help get back to the basics of a relationship with God, they start with Scripture, and the essential habits of worship, serving, and prayer/confession develop in response. **Before discussing these habits, how have each impacted your relationship with God? Why?**
- As the people gathered, they attentively listened to God's Word (v.3). **Read Psalm 119:97-104 as a group. How has the Bible influenced your life choices, desires, actions, etc.? How do you need to be more intentional about actively listening to God's Word?**
- In response to hearing the Word of God, the people begin to worship and give thanks (v.6). **Read 1 Chronicles 16:23-31 as a group. What words or phrases stand out to you from this song of worship? How has worship brought comfort, encouragement, and joy to your life? Beyond singing songs at church, how can you be more intentional about worship?**
- Nehemiah reminds them to celebrate in response to the mercy of God with choice food and sweet drinks. He also reminds them to serve others by giving to those unprepared. **Read 1 Peter 4:10 as a group. Share a story about a time serving or being served had an impact on your relationship with God. What have you been learning through this study about serving others?**
- The more the Israelites learned about the ways of God, the more they understood their own failings. This led to their response of prayer and confession (9:1-3). Dallas Willard writes that prayer is "talking with God about what we are doing together."<sup>2</sup> **How does that quote impact your view of prayer? What obstacles do you often face when it comes to developing the habit of prayer? How can you be more intentional about prayer?**
- Confession might be the habit that creates the most tension within us. **Read 1 John 1:9 and James 5:16 as a group. Why is confession such an important spiritual habit? How can you be more intentional about creating the habit of confession?**

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<sup>2</sup> John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted* (Zondervan, 2002), 106.



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- The Rest of Nehemiah 9 tells the history of the nation of Israel: follow God, turn away from God, return to God, receive God's mercy, and then repeat. This is a hopeful story of a faithful God growing a broken people. **What is your one next step you need to take this week to develop any of the above spiritual habits? As a group, how can we develop these habits together?**

### CALLING

- **Listening Attentively:** God's word was the catalyst to all of the life change experienced in Nehemiah 8-9. The leaders were following God's word in teaching the people. The people were responding by living out what was being taught. How are you listening attentively to God's Word?
- **Blueprints Daily Devotions:** Spend 15 minutes each day with the daily devotions from this study guide. Devotions can be found through Northside's App, by texting JOINGOD to 81411, or at [www.mynorthside.com/Blueprints](http://www.mynorthside.com/Blueprints).
- **Memorize:** *And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.* - **Nehemiah 8:3b**
- **Further Study:** Read Nehemiah 12:27-47 & 13 in preparation for Session 6.