

Nehemiah 9

MAIN POINT: Our praise for God's forgiveness is strengthened when we acknowledge the beauty of Christ against our brokenness—and name some of the ways we fall short.

Introduction:

Ask the group members to share some childhood memories by asking them to respond to these questions:

- **In your growing up years, what mischief did you get caught doing and had to confess to your parents or other authority figure?**
- **How did you feel before and after your confession?**
- **To what extent do you agree—or disagree—with the saying, “Confession is good for the soul”?**

Remembrance

Ask a volunteer to read aloud the prayer of the Levites in Nehemiah 9:5b-15. Then, ask the group to respond to these questions:

- **This prayer starts with a review of God's grace and power throughout the history of the Jewish people. What purpose does this kind of remembering serve?**
- **What three big events did this prayer mention?**
- **What made those events stand out as worthy of mentioning here?**
- **What are some of the mighty acts of redemption that God has done in Christian history? [Have your group brainstorm a list of 3-6 items.]**
- **What are three big things God has done for Emmaus Road?**
- **What are some of the significant milestones that God has done in or for our Life Group?**

Confession

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 9:16-21, and then ask the group to respond to these questions:

- **The prayer of the Levites suddenly changes from praise to confession. What strikes you about this change?**
- **Pastor Andy said that our praise for God's mercy and forgiveness is strengthened when we confess our shortcomings and sins. What is your opinion/response to that?**
- **What has been your experience on this issue?**
- **Pastor Andy observed that seasons of joy and seasons of mourning are connected in the calendar of the Christian year. For example:**
 - **Advent = Joy and anticipation**
 - **Lent = 40 day season marked with self-denial, prayer, fasting as we recognize our sinfulness before God.**
 - **Easter = 50 day season in celebration of resurrection, new life, and victory in Christ.**
- **In your opinion, is this cycle helpful for Christians to follow? Or is it unhealthy? Or simply unnecessary? Why do you answer the way you do?**

Ask a volunteer to read aloud verses 26-33 and then ask the group to respond to these discussion questions:

- **Why do you think this prayer confesses the sins of the ancestors? What does this say about one group's responsibility for the actions of another?**
- **How do we see this dynamic at work today in the tensions between Jews, Muslims, and Christians in the Middle East?**
- **What are some other examples from history of the sins of the fathers needing confession?**
- **What drawbacks, hindrances, or resistance might there be to confessing our ancestors' sins?**
- **What does verse 33 tell you about how the Israelites felt about the way God treated them?**
- **Would you have felt the same way if you were in their place? Why or why not?**

Prayer: Reflect on some of the ways your brokenness is connected to the sin of others. Write a corporate prayer of confession that includes these four elements: (1) Praise for God's redemptive actions; (2) Confession of some ways that we have fallen short; (3) Request for forgiveness and renewal; (4) Concluding praise for God's mercy, forgiveness, and love.