

**Icebreaker:**

In the first part of Nehemiah 9, the people are praising God for what God has done. Do you have a favorite hymn or praise song which speaks of God's goodness?

**Review Nehemiah 9 and discuss:**

1. The people remember God throughout chapter 9. What practical things can we put into our lives to remember God?
2. The people confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors (9:3). Do you frequently engage in the practice of confession? If yes, how? If no, why not?
3. Nehemiah 9:25 says that the Israelites delighted themselves in God's great goodness. The Westminster Catechism says that the chief end of humanity is to "glorify God and enjoy him forever." What do you think it means to delight or enjoy God? Is this something you are in the practice of doing?
4. Near the end of chapter 9 (9:32-37), the people relate the sins of their ancestors to themselves. Do you see any ways the sins of your ancestors have affected you?
5. How would you define prayer? Philip Yancey says that one aspect of prayer is that it is developing a "habit of attention." What does that mean to you?
6. Remember a time (and share with your group) when you felt that God was present with you even when you didn't deserve it.

**Optional closing activity:**

If you were to write a prayer similar to verses 5-37 with your Home Group, what would it include? Brainstorm aloud such a prayer and then have someone pray that prayer to close your group session.

**Prayer:**

As you pray for one another, please pray for the following needs in our church family:

**prayer requests**

- > Prayers of healing for Pete Hudson, Randy Laffoon, Bob Tibbetts, Phil Isenbarger, and Tracy Conner.
- > Prayers of comfort for Jenny and Phil Isenbarger and family in the death of Phil's father.

Even though the book of Nehemiah happened so long ago, it can teach us about life and faith today. The book often focuses on prayer and worship. Here in chapter 9, we see the people remembering God's goodness in their history, practicing confession together, praising God, and asking God to help them. We can learn much from their passionate prayer in chapter 9.

1. The people here repeat stories of God's goodness. Some things we might do is write down things we are grateful for, or remember old stories of what God has done for us. We can put up photos in our houses of good times when God blessed us. Print and post Bible verses at your desk, on a mirror, or on your refrigerator.
2. While confession is important here in Nehemiah, in James 5:16, and in some Catholic churches, we don't always practice it in our own lives. We can confess privately to God each morning or you can look up a Prayer of Examen and practice confession at the end of the day. We can confess our struggles to friends or family we trust deeply, or to a pastor or counselor who can listen well.
3. Delighting yourself in God can start with prayer, praise or worship music or hymns. It can go on to include living with joy, recounting good stories to others, or just being thankful to God and to others. We can remember alone or together how good God is, and be excited for God's goodness.
4. It may not be that the sins of your ancestors have been passed on to you. It may be that you see some of their choices have affected you negatively (or positively in many cases as well). Try to share appropriately and confidentially how familial sin may have affected you.
5. Prayer can be a conversation with God, both talking and listening. It can mean paying attention to what God is saying and doing around you, all day. By interacting with God all through the day, you are "praying without ceasing" (see 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).
6. This could be during or after a tragedy, after a mistake you made, or when you were far from God and God showed himself to you. Be bold and share a story to encourage your group.

Optional activity: if you choose to do this, take pen and paper and write down some things people want to include around remembering God's goodness, confessing mistakes, and asking God to walk with you. Ask a volunteer to include these ideas in a verbal prayer from your notes.