

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides
(Feb 27th to March 5th)

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. What is one characteristic that you received from your parents that you want to keep and one that you want to change?

Bible Study Questions

1. If you have been reading in Ezra and Nehemiah, what have you been learning? What do you notice about God? Who do you identify with? What questions do you have?
2. Pastor Michael asked the question as to if the people of Israel were worthy to live behind the walls of Jerusalem. What would you expect from a people who were worthy to receive the blessings that God had given Israel?
3. Read Ezra 9:1-6, 10:1
 - How did Ezra respond to the sin of his people?
 - Have you ever grieved over the sin of the church? If so, what have you grieved over?
4. Read Nehemiah 13
 - What all do the Jews do wrong? How does Nehemiah deal with it?
 - Nehemiah took an approach of enforcing the rules. What was good about that approach? How is that approach ultimately doomed to fail?
5. Read Matthew 15:17-20. Why is the condition of the heart so important? What is the answer to transforming the condition of our hearts?
6. Transformation can only happen through the work of the Holy Spirit. How are you positioning yourself to experience his work?

Feb 27th
Who Is Worthy?

The Jews have now returned to Jerusalem, the temple has been rebuilt, and the city walls are being built around them. God has given them a 2nd chance to fulfill their calling as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. But there is a big question now. Will they live in such a way that is worthy of living behind those walls?

Problem:

- **Recurring acts of unfaithfulness:** In Ezra 9, the Bible teacher Ezra arrives in Jerusalem to find that the people have been intermarrying with neighboring pagan nations. In Nehemiah 5, Nehemiah confronts abuses of the rich against the poor who had been using the building of the wall as an opportunity to get rich by taking land and forcing people into slavery. Then in Nehemiah 13, Nehemiah deals with the neglect of the temple, neglect of the Levites, ignoring of the Sabbath, and intermarrying once again.
- **A lack of desire to serve God:** At the root of these sins is a lack of desire to follow God. The people were just not serious about fulfilling the mission that God had given them. Because their heart's desired things of the world, their choices moved in that direction.

Solutions:

- **Ezra: communal confession and repentance:** Ezra weeps before God and leads the nation in communal repentance. This temporarily fixes the problem.
- **Nehemiah: strictly enforcing the rules:** In every instance, Nehemiah confronts the abusers, sometimes violently, and forces them to obey. In his absence, they fall away because no one is there to provide rule enforcement.
- **God: gives us the righteousness of Jesus:** The Bible teaches that none of us are worthy. We are fallen beings who will naturally go the way of the world. His answer was to send his Son, Jesus, who lived a perfect life. For those who believe in Jesus, he gives them Jesus perfection (Romans 3:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21). When we stand before God, all He sees is the perfection of Jesus and we are deemed worthy.
- **God: gives us the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts:** The only way that we can live worthy lives is by having a transformed heart. As we surrender to the Holy Spirit, God does that work of changing us (Romans 12:2)

Conclusion: In Ephesians 4:1, Paul tells us to live lives that are worthy of our calling. We have been blessed by God, but we must decide how we are going to respond. We can go the way of Israel, or we can allow God to do the work of changing our hearts so that our lives can match the perfect that Jesus has given us.