

Rebuilding with God: Renewal Through Celebration

Nehemiah 6:15-16, 8:1-18 || Pastor Paul Hahn || 7 November 2021

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: Talk about one of the best parties you've ever been to. What made it so fun / unique / memorable?

Worship: Psalm 100 (*Remain a few moments in worship with this passage. What is God's invitation?*)

Sermon Summary for Nehemiah 6:15-16, 8:1-18 (*Read the passage aloud before reading the sermon summary.*)

We aren't very good at partying with God. When things are good, we too easily forget to focus our praise on Him... and when we're weary and weighed down by burdens, we find little cause for doing so. But God's renewal repeatedly involves us celebrating with Him. And Jesus shows us how. He always celebrated with the strangest assortment of people: often those whom society would never want to include. Christ also told stories of how the Kingdom of God was like a wedding feast or a great banquet celebration where people of all backgrounds were invited. We need to learn this – to embody what it means to celebrate God's goodness and love ([v10](#)) – even in the middle of our journeys, in the middle of brokenness and sin – because celebration is God's gift to us and the key to the world's renewal in His Kingdom. Because we exist to celebrate the Gospel of Jesus.

Kingdom renewal continues as we celebrate God's work // Rebuilding Jerusalem's walls wasn't simply a human effort. God was at work through them, and that was a reason for great celebration ([Neh 6:15-16](#)). We too need to celebrate God's work on our behalf – for us, in us, and through us. Which begins with stopping to recognize what God has accomplished for us already in Christ. We won't want more renewal without these pauses. And so, Easter should be the greatest of holidays for Christians: a day to celebrate grandly with abundant joy.

Kingdom renewal continues as we celebrate God's Word // A short time after the wall was completed, God's people gathered because they were hungry to hear God's word read to them ([8:1](#)). And that was good. But they didn't receive it how God intended. Not yet. They were distressed by the reality of their sins, rather than encouraged by what they heard. We are called to respond to God's word by believing its promises, trembling at its warnings, humbling ourselves under its judgments. But throughout, our overriding response to Scripture is to celebrate and rejoice. Our sins are forgiven and we have life in Jesus's name. There is no greater cause for joy than this! And so we should approach the Bible, asking God's Spirit to speak to us, to fill us with the fruit of joy, and that this joy would be our strength.

Kingdom renewal continues as we celebrate on God's schedule // Some of us are more schedule-oriented than others. But all of us are subject to God's timing. The days of our lives are numbered according to His wisdom and sovereign plan. In the Old Testament, God designed a complex schedule for His people. But because of and through Christ, this has been radically simplified. The only requirement God has for us is to celebrate Christ on a weekly basis when His people gather as a church ([Heb 10:23-25](#)). The church's job is to make each Sundays a day of resurrection and gladness and celebration of joy in the Lord. And our job is to be there and to engage.

Kingdom renewal continues as we celebrate with God's food // Nehemiah and Ezra had to urge the people to eat, to drink, and to celebrate. Church leaders still have to do this, pleading for believers to eat the bread and drink the wine. Communion is God's rich food and sweet drink to gladden our hearts and minds. Communion ties everything together, allowing us to not only think about and ponder the Gospel, but to taste and see it – blessing and humility bound together in our Savior Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions (*You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussions.*)

Kingdom Renewal Continues as we Celebrate God's Work

- Why is it important to remember and celebrate daily – not only what God is doing in our lives, but also what God has done for us?
- Let's celebrate: What good work has the Lord done in your life since you became a follower of Christ?
 - What good work has the Lord been doing in your life recently?

Kingdom Renewal Continues as we Celebrate God's Word

- Why is it easier to focus and reflect on what is wrong, rather than celebrating God and His provision?
- What does celebration typically look like for you?
 - How can we keep God's word as the focus of our celebration?
 - As a community group or as a church, what could we do to celebrate like the Israelites – a party that keeps the focus on the Lord and His word?

Kingdom Renewal Continues as we Celebrate on God's Schedule

- What daily hindrances get in the way of remembering and celebrating what God has done for us?
 - What are practical ways we could reverse this trend? (start small, then grow from there)
- How would you describe your current schedule?
 - Do you have time allotted to celebrating who God is and what He has done? If yes, what does that look like? If not, commit with your fellow CG members to make time to do it this week.

Kingdom Renewal Continues as we Celebrate with God's Food

- Imagine a party where the focus is to eat and drink in the Lord's goodness.
 - What would that party look like? Describe the sounds and smells and tastes.
 - Plan a celebration of God's work in your group. What will this party look like?

Prayer

Spend time in prayer celebrating the work of God in your life and in your group.

For this week's prayer guide click [HERE](#).

Engage & Experience: Generous Service

Pray for our Global Outreach partner, Francis Castañeda

In 2021, PCC established a new partnership with a church planter in Lima, Peru. We got connected to Francis through the Redeemer City to City church planting network. Francis' heart is to see the people of Lima come to encounter the true and living God. In addition to leading his church, iCafe, he also runs a non-profit called Instituto Allegro - a music ministry to equip the next generation of musicians and worship leaders. To learn more about Francis and hear some of his story, check out the interview that we did with him earlier this year. It's available on our Instagram page.

Please pray for Francis as he leads these ministry efforts. Consider adopting Francis as your CG's global outreach partner! Francis loves hearing from us. Our partners need our prayers and a relationship with us more than they need our financial support. An example of this could be setting up a Zoom meeting to connect with Francis and pray for him. Another idea could be to check in with Francis by sending him emails throughout the year. Please email Alex McKee (alexmckee@pacificcrossroads.org) to brainstorm ways your CG can partner with Francis!