New Song Learning Communities, Sept. 24-27, 2026

WHY LEARNING COMMUNITIES? ***Circle Two Opportunity…***

To become better and better disciples of Christ TOGETHER so we can face ***anything*** through…

1. Deeper learning of Biblical truth and 2. Stronger "iron sharpening iron" relationships

Ephesians 4:12–16 (ESV)

HISTORY COVERED – first and second groups of exiles return to Jerusalem; Esther becomes queen of Persia

BIBLE RECAP COVERED – Ezekiel 23-42; Sept. 17-23, Days 260-266, circa 537-473 B.C.

Ezra 1 The Proclamation of Cyrus
Ezra 2 The Exiles Return,
Ezra 3 Rebuilding the Altar, Rebuilding the Temple
Ezra 4 Adversaries Oppose Rebuilding, Letter to Artaxerxes, King Orders Work to Cease
Ezra 5 Rebuilding Begins Anew, Tattenai's Letter to King Darius
Ezra 6 Decree of Darius, Temple Finished and Dedicated, Passover Celebrated
Psalm 137 How Shall We Sing the Lord's Song?
Haggai 1 Command to Rebuild Temple, People Obey the Lord
Haggai 2 Coming Glory of the Temple, Blessings for a Defiled People, Zerubbabel Chosen as a Signet
Zech 1 Call to Return to the Lord, Vision of a Horseman, Vision of Horns & Craftsmen
Zech 2 Vision of a Man with a Measuring Line
Zech 3 Vision of Joshua the High Priest
Zech 4 Vision of a Golden Lampstand
Zech 5 Vision of a Flying Scroll, A Vision of a Woman in a Basket
Zech 6 A Vision of Four Chariots, The Crown and the Temple
Zech 7 A Call for Justice and Mercy
Zech 8 The Coming Peace and Prosperity of Zion
Zech 9 Judgment on Israel's Enemies, Coming King of Zion, Lord Will Save His People
Zech 10 The Restoration for Judah and Israel
Zech 11 The Flock Doomed to Slaughter
Zech 12 Lord Will Give Salvation, Him Whom They Have Pierced
Zech 13 Idolatry Cut Off, The Shepherd Struck
Zech 14 The Coming Day of the Lord
Esther 1 The King's Banquets, Queen Vashti's Refusal
Esther 2 Esther Chosen Queen, Mordecai Discovers a Plot
Esther 3 Haman Plots Against the Jews
Esther 4 Esther Agrees to Help the Jews
Esther 5 Esther Prepares Banquet, Haman Plans to Hang Mordecai

➔ *Do you have thoughts, insights or questions about this week's readings?*



✝ God has been pursuing you all your life

✝ When you turn to Christ, His invitation is His yoke
The yoke may appear to be restrictive, but it actually brings Jesus' abundant life!



✝ *When things don't make sense, look for* ***WHAT*** *God is doing,* ***NOT the WHY!***
the "WHY" ***may*** *come later, but the focusing on God's* ***WHAT*** *will keep us in the yoke*

What comes to mind when you hear "focus on the what not the why?"

Who are some of the Bible people who we've studied who highlight this?

On My Knees Truth: *When we are in the fire and Jesus is with us, it feels like hell but it is actually Heaven because* ***where ever Jesus is present, it is Heaven****. hell, by definition, is the absence of God.* ***THOUGHTS???***

REVIEW

➔ Always been about relationship and partnership
God's faithfulness is ***RELATIONSHIP FIRST***. God is not faithful "out there", but WITH us.

➔ Always been about sending Messiah to reconcile and restore – God's unchanging plan from Gen. 3

➔ Always been a fight, difficulties but God is in the middle of it with the remnant, the few. God IS always faithful, but only the remnant (OT)… the "few" (Jesus) who experience it

John 10:10 (ESV) The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

➔ Always been about choosing God and rejecting all other gods; living in God's yoke SLO;
What are the other core issues throughout the Old Testament?

➔ Ezra and Nehemiah – appears God is about restoring Israel's glory
… but, again, ***with God things are usually not as they appear***

Finding God's story in the Jews return to Jerusalem

1. Historical account of the Ezra and Nehemiah "scenes".

✓ God promised the exiles would return after 70 years
Jeremiah 25:11–12 (ESV) (pew Bible page 652/Bible Recap page 1271) **Jeremiah 29:10–14 (ESV)**

✓ exiles return initiated by pagan king, Cyrus, 539 B.C.
Ezra 1:1–4 (ESV) (pew Bible page 388/ Bible Recap page 1480)

✓ Rebuilding: 1st group returns with Zerubbabel, faces opposition, completes temple, 516 B.C.
led by Zerubabbel – "born in exile", descendent of Aaron/ About 42,000

➔ Problem: God's Shekinah glory does not descend on new temple = His Presence is not manifest with them
Ezra 3:12–13 (ESV) **Ezra 6:14 (ESV)**

✓ Spiritual restoration: 2nd group under Ezra, a scribe and priest, 458 B.C.
Ezra 7:1, 5b–7, 10 (ESV)

✓ Walls rebuilt, Spiritual renewal: 3rd group, Nehemiah, 445-432 B.C.
Nehemiah 1:1–11 (ESV) (pew Bible page 398/ Bible Recap page 1527)
Nehemiah 2:1–8 (ESV) **Nehemiah 8:9–10 (ESV)**

NOTE: Ezra & Nehemiah end on a downer as Nehemiah sees that the work of all 3 undone –their expectations for God's glory to return, Jerusalem to rise again, walls not fully rebuilt - felt like a failure, prayed God would see he tried. Meant to ***point us to God***... to wonder and watch to see how God ***will BE FAITHFUL*** to fulfill His covenant promises

2. Realities of the exiles return to Jerusalem.

✓ not all exiles returned – vast majority did not

✓ not all who returned followed God – they assumed it was about them; extrapolated what it would mean

✓ not all who followed God were devoted
they thought it was about the land, their special standing when it was all about God and His purposes

✓ BUT GOD... was always faithful and in charge – but ONLY the remnant experienced God's faithfulness

3. Applications.

✝ God is ALWAYS faithful, even when we are not
2 Timothy 2:11–13 (ESV) 11The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; 12if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; 13if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.

✝ AGAIN! *When things don't make sense, look for **WHAT** God is doing, **NOT the WHY!***
*the "WHY" **may** come later, but the focusing on God's **WHAT** will keep us in the yoke*

✝ "His-Story" is a long, convoluted, messy journey – as is ours

✝ "His-Story" reveals that the human race has no answers for mankind

✝ "His-Story" reveals we are incapable of understanding God's ways

✝ "His-Story" points us to living SLO moment by moment.

SO THE ISSUE: How do we stay in Jesus' yoke moment by moment to be the remnant, the few?

Chronological Guide: p 116-119, 122-123, Ezra boxes, p 120, 125-127, 133-134

Takeaways: