

## Introduction to the *Re: Return to Something New* Sermon Series

We don't need to be convinced that the world is broken and hurting. But Christ has given His people – the Church – hope that the world will not stay that way. Through His life, death and resurrection, He has secured the future. And one day, He will come to rebuild, restore, and renew the world. In the meantime, though, He has gifted and commissioned His people – the Church – to proclaim that future with their words and their actions. He has given us a mission to show the world what the future will be like and invite them into a relationship with the Savior who will usher in that new, and eternal, era. In the month of November, we will take a close look at what it means for Christ to rebuild, restore, and renew the world, and how we as His followers can join Him in His work.

Each week, we'll look at a passage from the Bible related to the topic of the weekend sermon. Rather than discuss particular points of the sermon, the hope is to be filled with God's Word and apply it to our lives. Our goal in reading the Bible is not only to know more about God, but also to have a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ and do what He teaches in His Word.

### *How to Use This Discussion Guide*

- Use the summary statement for each week to quickly understand the text's theme. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion or bring it back if your group begins to get off topic.
- Use the prayer prompt at the end of each guide to help you close in prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That's okay! You don't have to ask all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
2. **Prepare for your group time by reading the passages and the notes in a study Bible.** A good study Bible can give you some insights into the passages and how they connect to the whole book or the whole story of the Bible.
3. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God's Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
4. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or continually refer to what the teaching pastor said during his message. This is helpful in small doses, but the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word. Encourage the group to continue to return to the Scripture. One way to do that is by saying, "That's a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we're studying?"
5. **Encourage participation, but don't let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. But don't allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time. Some people are just unaware of themselves and how much they speak, so gently encourage them to listen and make space for others to talk.
6. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** It is easy to generalize when we talk about the Bible and how to apply it. So ask your group members specific questions – for example, "What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?"

We pray that you will hear God speak through His Word and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him. The Word of God – the Bible – lets us know the God who loves us and saves us. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more immersed in His story.

## **Main Bible Passage: Isaiah 1:11-20; Isaiah 61:1-4**

**Sermon Date: November 2-3, 2019**

**Theme:** Christ calls us to acknowledge injustice in the world and fight against it with the hope of the gospel.

- **When you hear the word “justice,” what comes to mind?**
- **If you asked the average person whether we live in a just or an unjust world, what do you think they would say?**
- **How does the Bible answer that question?**

Leader’s Note: Most of the time we think about justice in terms of retribution: someone commits a crime and must be punished for that crime lest society deteriorate toward lawlessness. Retribution, however, is only part of justice. Biblically speaking, justice has to do with peace, wholeness, and righteousness. The world God created was wholly good and just, however, Scripture is also clear that God’s good world has been corrupted by sin such that it is longing for the day when peace and righteousness will be restored through the return of Christ (Rom. 8:20-25). Until that day comes, Christ calls us to acknowledge the injustice that our neighbors face, help bear their burdens, and tell them about the gospel--the only means of attaining true justice and peace.

**Have a volunteer read Isaiah 1:11-20.**

- **How do most people in our city would answer the following question, “Why is there injustice in the world?”**
- **How does the Bible answer that question (v. 18)?**  
Leader’s Note: There are many different answers to this question in our culture. People claim that injustice is the result of drugs, poverty, or power structures. Such answers, however, fail to get to heart of the issue. Injustice is not the result of poverty or poor education, injustice is present in the world because of sin. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, they invited sin into God’s good world and consequently people have suffered injustice.
- **Why wasn’t the Lord impressed with the sacrifices and offerings of His people (vv. 12-13; v. 15)?**
- **What do verses 16-17 tell us about the manner of the people’s sin? How does God command His people to respond to His rebuke?**
- **What do we learn about God’s heart for the victims of injustice from these verses? What does this tell us about what our attitude toward injustice should be?**  
Leader’s Note: The Lord told Isaiah to tell the people that He “cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly” (v. 13). God’s people were attempting to cover up their sins by offering lots of sacrifices and burnt offerings to the Lord. These acts of piety do not change the fact that Israel is guilty of great injustice such that their “hands are full of blood.” The Israelites had not only sinned against God but also against their neighbors (vv. 16-17) and consequently true repentance called for them to “seek justice” and correct oppression.
- **According to verse 18, what is our only hope of seeing justice restored to the world?**

(over)



# groups

Have a volunteer read Isaiah 61:1-4.

- **What is the mission of the coming Messiah according to this passage? What might we learn about our mission?**
- **What good news is the prophet bringing to the poor, broken-hearted, and enslaved?**  
Leader's Note: According to Isaiah, Jesus came to preach good news to the poor. Second, He came to proclaim freedom to the captives—those imprisoned by sin. Third, recovery of sight to the blind took place through the Messiah. The healing of physical blindness brings a new perspective on life. The healing of spiritual blindness brings new life altogether. Fourth, the Messiah arrived to set free the oppressed. Fifth, the Messiah came to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (see Lev. 25:10-17). This tradition symbolized the new start in life people can experience as a result of the Messiah's mission.
- **How can we follow Jesus' example of bringing good news to the poor and setting free the enslaved? What might we have to sacrifice to do so?**
- **What are the people in the communities around us oppressed by? How might we help them find freedom in Christ?**
- **What are some practical ways we can fight injustice in our city? How might doing so provide us with opportunities to share the gospel?**

Close in prayer, thanking God for sending Jesus to set us free from sin and death. Pray that God would burden your group members' hearts to proclaim the hope of the gospel to their lost friends and family members.

## **Main Topic: Re-Build**

## **Main Bible Passage: Nehemiah 11; Matthew 10:29-31**

## **Sermon Date: November 9-10, 2019**

**Theme:** We have a responsibility to build the kingdom of God.

- **What are some of the greatest responsibilities that you have in your life right now? What does it require of you to see that those responsibilities are met?**
- **What is the most you ever had to sacrifice to fulfill a responsibility?**  
Leader's Note: No matter who you are, if you are old enough to understand words, you have responsibilities in life. The older we get, our responsibilities toward ourselves and others likewise increase. Toddlers have almost no responsibility except to obey their parents, share their toys, and to keep from biting their friends and siblings. That same toddler, when he is grown, has the responsibility to take care of himself, help others, and eventually take care of the parents who raised him.  
As Christians, we have additional responsibilities beyond self-support and service to family, friends, and community. We have an obligation to serve the Lord first, and to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the nations. Today we will take a look at the responsibilities of the Israelites in Nehemiah's day, and see what those responsibilities cost them.

**Have a volunteer read Nehemiah 11:1-2.**

- **Why was it so important for the people to move back into Jerusalem? What do you think some of the difficulties of moving back to Jerusalem would be?**
- **Why do you think that “the people praised all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem”?**  
Leader's Note: God chose Jerusalem as the city where His temple would be built, and He chose it as the city where Israel would come to worship Him through sacrifice. The Lord said, “Since the day I brought My people Israel out of the land of Egypt, I have not chosen a city to build a temple in among any of the tribes of Israel, so that My name would be there... But I have chosen Jerusalem so that My name will be there, and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel” (2 Chron. 6:5-6). The glory of God dwelt in Jerusalem, and the worship of His name was at stake in the rebuilding of the city.

The challenges of moving back were numerous. Firstly, the city was dangerously under-populated and not defensible from enemies because the walls were broken down. Secondly, this was an agrarian world, and those who packed up and went to Jerusalem most likely left their farms and livelihood behind to begin anew. Finally, moving is a tough task no matter the cause, and so the people who packed up and went to Jerusalem had to be in for the challenge of meeting new neighbors, settling in a new land, and making a new livelihood.

**Have another volunteer read Nehemiah 11:3-6**

- **Have you ever heard of any of the people in this list before? Why do you think that they were included in inspired Scripture if they were never mentioned again?**
- **What hope can we glean from this list of basically unknown people? What does this list teach us about the God we serve?**  
Leader's Note: When the Holy Spirit inspired this chapter of Nehemiah, He knew that we would know nothing else about the people mentioned. We don't know how many children they had, if they

were happy, what they did for a living, what they looked like, or how long they lived. All we know is that they returned from exile.

Naturally, we have to wonder why God would include such seemingly irrelevant, and probably boring, information. The reason is quite hopeful for us today when we think about it. While these men, their families, and their deeds are lost to history, they are not lost to God. God remembers those who faithfully serve Him. This list is a reminder to us that, while the world may forget us, our God does not. If we love God, our names as well as our deeds are remembered by Him.

- **Read Matthew 10:29-31. What insight does this passage give you regarding lists of names in Scripture like Nehemiah 11?**
- **Why is it difficult for many people to believe that God cares about every person and the details of every life?**

Leader's Note: God not only knows us by name; He has numbered even the hairs of our heads and the days of our lives. He is sovereign over the universe and also in His purposes for His people. That He knows us by name and is actively involved in the details of His purposes assures us that we can trust Him to care for us.

**Have a final volunteer read Nehemiah 11:22-24.**

- **Why do you think that the sons of Asaph were specifically mentioned in this section?**
- **Why do you think the writer mentions that there was “a command of the king regarding them, and an ordinance regulating the singers’ daily tasks”?**

Leader's Note: In 1 Chronicles 25, we learn that King David “set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, who were to prophesy accompanied by lyres, harps, and cymbals” (1 Chronicles 25:1). The writer mentions this command of the king for at least two reasons. Firstly, we see God’s faithfulness in restoring worship through song to the people of Israel. Secondly, this shows us the importance of worship through song.

The longest book of the Bible is the Book of Psalms, which is a book of songs. The Lord wants us to sing His praises; in the restoration of Jerusalem, the Lord made sure to have singers present to make music like they did in the days of King David.

The rebuilding of Jerusalem happened because God is faithful to His people and to His promises, and because God wishes for His glory to spread throughout the earth. God has always been faithful to us, and He sent us Jesus Christ to demonstrate His great and faithful love for us. Today, instead of rebuilding Jerusalem, our responsibility is to build the kingdom of Christ throughout the world and to teach all people to sing the praises of the risen Messiah.

- **What is our responsibility, as a small group, to help build up the kingdom of God in our community?**
- **The people who moved to Jerusalem took great risks to rebuild the city and they were praised for it. How might we as a group support those who have moved off to plant churches or do other missions for the sake of the kingdom of God?**
- **How might we be an encouragement to those who lead us in worship through song?**

In a time of group prayer, ask the Father to help us be a people whose focus is on building the kingdom of God by sharing the gospel of Christ. Pray that we will be bold to share, and that we will be joyous in our worship of the Lord, both through our works and through song.

## **Main Topic: RE-store**

## **Main Bible Passage: Hosea 14:1-9**

## **Sermon Date: November 16-17, 2019**

**Theme:** Healing and restoration will come when we repent and trust in the Lord. This healing continues after we are saved, and allows us to help others find redemption as well.

- **What are some things that tend to trip you up in life? How do you avoid things that cause you to stumble?**
- **What's the most sincere apology you've ever made or received?**
- **Who has best modeled wisdom and forgiveness to you? What impact has this made on you?**

Leader's Note: The Book of Hosea is a love story between God and His people. Sadly, though one partner is incredibly faithful, the other is not. God's people had rejected His love and, instead, turned to their own forms of godliness and strength to live out their lives.

In this chapter, Hosea's condemnation of Israel was finished, and encouragement to repent and receive grace was extended. Recalling some of the themes that had been used earlier in the book, Hosea and then the Lord Himself called for the nation to return to God. The people were then given a beautiful picture of what life would be like under the Lord's gracious care.

### **Have a volunteer read Hosea 14:1-3.**

Leader's Note: Hosea made one last effort to persuade the people to choose the one true God and worship Him the right way. Over and over again, Hosea had reminded them that they were sinners and needed to see themselves in that light. He made clear to them how they were to repent, and reiterated that the other options they pursued were empty.

- **How did Hosea say Israel could avoid judgment? What do you appreciate about Hosea's appeal to the people?**
- **What would be the sign of Israel's repentance?**
- **To what "other gods" do you see people around you turning to find hope?**

Leader's Note: Hosea gave a strong invitation to return to God. He told Israel that repentance would begin with one critical step: recognizing their sinful condition. If the people responded appropriately they would not only confess with their mouths, but their actions would also follow. We're reminded of James's important statement in the New Testament: "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:17). While people today may not look to graven images for salvation (though some certainly still do), many are consumed by materialism, giving glory to lesser things

### **Ask another volunteer to read Hosea 14:4-9.**

Leader's Note: The Lord Himself spoke and made clear that He was willing and able to act on His people's behalf. He heard their pleas for forgiveness, turned from His anger, and healed the wounds of His repentant people.

- **How would you restate God's promise in your own words?**



# groups

- **Which of the metaphors given by the Lord impacts you the most? How can you say these verses are descriptive of what God has done in your own life?**
- **How have you seen the ways of the Lord cause people to stumble? Explain.**  
Leader's Note: Like dew, the Lord would appear mysteriously and regularly to provide for Israel's basic needs. So it is when He fills us with His Holy Spirit. Though Israel had stumbled and was dead in sin, God would bring healing that created a new plant with new vigor. Roots would give God's people a strong foundation to become a refuge. The church should be exactly that—a refuge for the hurting. Like grain fields that die and then grow again in the new year, so Israel had died and been revived through the Lord's healing. The pine tree is another powerful metaphor symbolizing divinity, kingship, and fertility.  
The Bible teaches that the Lord's ways are like a mirror to reveal our flaws. Sadly, many people put themselves increasingly in harm's way to avoid coming face to face with their sin. In doing so, they continue to stumble.
- **What would change in your life if you truly returned to the Lord and abided in Him? Where do you need to act in this regard?**
- **What are some things for which you need to seek forgiveness from the Lord?**
- **What sources of salvation do people in our community depend upon instead of God?**
- **How can you use what you've learned today to share Christ with someone?**

Spend some time thanking God for doing whatever it takes to get our attention and draw us back to Himself. Pray that God will use our group to show others the path of restoration that only comes through Him. Praise God for the opportunities we have all around us, and ask Him for the courage to make His name known in our community.

## **Main Topic: RE-new**

## **Main Bible Passage: Psalm 80:1-19**

## **Sermon Date: November 23-24, 2019**

**Theme:** Spiritual renewal often comes in times of hardship, when we better recognize our need for God.

- **What are some times you have experienced spiritual renewal in your life?**
- **Under what circumstances would you say you've most often experienced a time of renewal (during times when things seem good, when going through hardship, or something else)?**  
Leader's Note For many of us, spiritual renewal often comes out of a time of trials. Though we don't desire these hardships, it is often in these moments that we more clearly recognize our dependence on God and our weakness. For Israel, they had just experienced devastating loss at the hands of their enemies. Yet, it was in these moments that they sought restoration from God, confident in His good purposes for them.

**Have a volunteer read Psalm 80:1-7.**

- **In moments of despair, why is it important to remember what is true about God?**
- **How difficult do you find this to do? If you find this difficult, what things make it hard?**
- **How did the psalmist express that God was the One the people needed, even as he acknowledged that the people's predicament was in part due to their own sinfulness?**  
Leader's Note: In times of great hardship, it is easy to turn inward. This is especially true in our culture that encourages people to always look out for number one. In times of great hardship, we are tempted to believe that we can only count on ourselves. However, these are the moments it is most important that we remember what is true about God. If we are His people, He will be faithful to us no matter what. This is always true, no matter what our current circumstances might tempt us to believe.
- **What might have caused God to be angry with His people and their prayers?**
- **How can we be sure that our prayers are pleasing before God?**  
Leader's Note: God's anger toward Israel was due to their unfaithfulness before Him. The psalmist knew this but also recognized that the answer to this problem was not to move further away from God but to return to Him, seeking that He might restore them to Himself. Our prayers are pleasing before God as we pray in accordance with His will and in submission to His authority in our lives.

**Have a volunteer read Psalm 80:8-15.**

- **How did the psalmist compare Israel's past state with their current plight using the illustration of a vine?**
- **When have you experienced looking back at seasons of spiritual abundance in your life compared to a present feeling of spiritual drought?**
- **How did this clear the way for Israel to recognize their great need for God?**  
Leader's Note: The psalmist recounted the events of Israel's past, where God had delivered them to the promised Land and they had experienced the fruits of God's blessings over them. However, due to their unfaithfulness, God had allowed enemies to come in and have victory over them. They were experiencing a shell of their former state.





# groups

It was through the clarity of agonizing defeat that God brought awareness of the people's great need for Him. Like those in Israel, we are often blinded to our neediness in times of ease. This often sets us up for spiritual failure as we begin to depend on ourselves over God our Sustainer. It is through these times of failure that we are often drawn back to the Father and our dependence on Him. There is great grace in these moments of spiritual clarity.

**Have a volunteer read Psalm 80:16-19.**

- **How did the psalmist experience renewed spiritual perspective in these verses?**
- **Where do you most feel in need of renewal currently? How will you seek the Lord in this?**  
Leader's Note: Keenly aware of their devastation, the people turned to the Lord, the only One with power to restore them. The psalmist pleaded with God to restore the people, proclaiming a renewed faithfulness to Him. In reality, it is always God who is perfectly faithful to us, even as we are unfaithful to Him. It is by His grace that we are renewed, not by our own obedience.
- **How has God brought full renewal to His people through Jesus Christ? How did Jesus also come at our place of greatest despair (see Romans 5:8)?**
- **How should the restoring grace we have received through Christ shape the way we interact with others, particularly in times of relational strife?**
- **Is it comforting or frustrating that renewal comes only from God? Why?**
- **Who can you share the message of God's renewing grace through Jesus with this week?**

Pray and thank God that He uses even the most difficult situations in life to show us our great need for Him. Thank Him that He is always faithful to us, even in our failure before Him.