



Celebrating God's Faithfulness | Pastor Derek Sanford | October 18, 2020

Encouragement: Share an example of a victory you have experienced; a bad habit you have overcome, or a goal you have met; a percentage increase in your giving. Make sure to include how God's faithfulness was revealed through that experience and how it made you feel to make progress. Invite a few volunteers to also share.

Scripture:

READ [Nehemiah 8: 9-12](#)

[**Leader Deep Dive:** This passage in Nehemiah describes a scene where the Israelites are returning to Jerusalem and are being restored after 70 years of exile and captivity to the Babylonians. The hope of Lamentations is bearing fruit! Ezra reads the law to teach and establish God's order, but the people find themselves convicted as they begin to understand how far they had moved away from God's will. Scholars (Asbury Bible Commentary, pg 636) have observed that "Ezra does not read the law in order to reform Israel into becoming the people of God. Rather, the reverse move obtains. It is the reformed people to whom the law is read." Ezra has to stop them from dwelling too long on their sin and remind them that the joy of the Lord is their strength – that they should rejoice in the holiness of the work that *the Lord* was already doing.]

Questions:

- Have you ever found yourself dwelling too long on mistakes and staying in a posture of mourning, and even shame?
- What can we learn from Ezra's teaching about what to focus on and how to move forward, both emotionally and practically? Why is this an important lesson for God's people to learn?
- How does the joy of the Lord strengthen us?
- How can we celebrate the victories of restoration that God brings in our lives, even while the work is still in process?

Prayer: Read [Psalm 33: 1-5 and 20-22](#). Encourage your life group to join in verbal exclamations of joy, praise and worship as you thank God together for specific examples of His faithfulness.

Next Steps: Take some time this week to stop and celebrate God's good plan for the church and for your life. Celebrate the small steps that you have taken in the Art of Living Well.



[Leader, if your group or a group member has really taken some tangible steps, consider celebrating in a tangible and authentic way- have a small party, ask each member to write a letter of encouragement to another member, celebrate debt reduction by eating a certain number of scoops of ice cream, use one of these "[spectaculars](#)" to visually show the progress of your group in one area- be creative!]

If your group or a member of your group is ready, [sign up](#) for Financial Peace University or a budget coach.

Optional Marriage Moment: Ultimate security is not your finances, but in God's faithfulness.

Kenneth Cole, a financial psychologist (really?) has studied and identified four *Money Languages*:

The DRIVER: equates money with success.

The ANALYTIC: equates money with security.

The AMIABLE: equates money with love and affection.

The EXPRESSIVE: equates money with acceptance and respect.

To move past arguments about money, seek to understand what money really means to each of you (your language). Work together to create a shared language of God's faithfulness in your finances.

Q: What is important to you and your future together?