



ENTER God's presence

I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.

- Psalm 63:2-4

Lord God, we have seen your power and your glory revealed through your Word in your son Jesus Christ. Remind us again as we read your Word to us today, of all that you have done for us. Draw us into a deeper relationship with you, teach us again your ways, and grow in us hearts that long to give you praise and glory in all things. Amen.



SHARE life together

1. **How have you seen Jesus at work in your life this week, in your highs and your lows?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **Have you ever found yourself lost or off course? How did it happen?**
4. **Who are the people in your life who help keep you on track?**

It's called a "rip" – short for rip current. Surfers/beachgoers know to beware of these strong, focussed currents of water moving directly away from the shore. They pull you away from solid footing, away from safety & into dangerous water...often while you don't fully notice what's happening. Sin is a perpetual "rip" humans have to guard & fight against. Part of the fabric of our lives is an inborn tendency to pull back from God & toward our own wants, wishes, & desires...away from solid footing, away from safety & into dangerous territory...sometimes so reflexively we don't even notice that we are entering a rip zone. That's where we need each other to hold us accountable, to point out the danger, to guard us from being pulled out and away from God through the powerful rip and grip of sin. Today Nehemiah calls God's people to swim between the flags of God's Word; between God's promises to his people and his call to a faithful daily living of his holy purposes here and now. Today, as we dive into the ocean of our daily lives with confidence; his Word written in our hearts, his Spirit watching over us and working within us, and with brothers and sisters beside us for support and safety. For every word true for God's people then, is true for us today.

Week beginning
Sunday 29th August 2021

Worship series:
Road to Recovery



VEDGE for the week
But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them...

Nehemiah 9:17b



REMEMBER this week

There is no undercurrent of life that can drag you away from fullness of life when you swim between the flags of God's faithfulness and grace



LISTEN attentively

Read Nehemiah 9:1-20, 28, 38

- 5. What stands out for you in this text? What questions does it raise for you?**
- 6. The Israelites looked back and identified how God had been present with them in the past. Where can you see God has been present or active in your life so far?**
- 7. Why do you think that despite God's interventions and warnings, people get so easily sucked into sin and rebellion against God?**

Here again, the people of Israel recognise or rediscover God's faithfulness despite their repeated unfaithfulness. They see that time and time again, God responded to their disobedience with grace and mercy even though he may have also applied some discipline at times as well.

It is interesting because as most regular beach going Australians will know, we swim between the flags because when we do that we are guaranteed the safety and protection of the local surf life savers. To those who do not understand the safety associated with the flags, they can be seen as a restriction or a fun limiting regulation that only serve to keep us from exploring the more 'exciting' or 'exotic' parts of the beach.

- 8. How have you been inclined to see God's laws and instruction? As 'fun limiting' regulations or as boundaries set for your safety and protection?**
- 9. Does our society view us (Christians) as people of grace and freedom or people bound by laws and traditions? Why do you think that is?**

Here in chapter 9 of the book of Nehemiah, the people of Israel finally realise and rediscover the freedom and purpose they have in their identity as God's chosen people. They again come to recognise the significance of God's promises and his faithfulness to them. They are excited to recommit themselves to living according to God's laws and decrees because they remember and encounter through the reading of scripture, God's faithfulness to them. In this kind of situation following God's laws was not a burden but a response of praise and worship for all that God had done and the faithfulness he had shown.

- 10. We often talk about grace and forgiveness only after the death and resurrection of Jesus. How is God's grace and mercy towards his people evident in the recounted history of God and his people in Nehemiah 9?**



GROW deeper

Read Nehemiah 13

So the people recommitted themselves to living within the laws of God and only a few months later here they are again disregarding many of the laws they had recommitted to. Each of us can identify a similar pattern in our own lives. It is just like the rip which keeps pulling us away from the safety of the shore and away from the protection of the lifeguards. Sin pulls us away from God and into the dangerous territory of life outside of the boundaries which God set for it.

Just like swimming at the beach, just like the Israelites reading back through their history with God, it is important for us to take a moment to look back. Unless we pause and look back at the beach, we can quickly find that we have drifted outside of the flags. Sometimes we also need our Christian brothers and sisters to draw our attention to the dangerous currents of sin that might have worked their way into our lives. Sometimes we might even be so caught up in the current that we are getting pulled under and we need others to signal for help on our behalf.

- 11. How have your Christian friends helped alert you to dangerous currents in your life?**
- 12. Have you ever been able to help someone else address a problem of sin in their own life? In what way?**



LIVE purposefully

READ Ephesians 4:14-16

The truth is we have always been prone to being swept away by false teaching, sin, and anything that might distract us from the purpose God has for us as his people. He has given us each other to build each other up. Sometimes this might be by speaking out against sin but always in a way that communicates God's love and grace. Too often Christians have been heard in the media condemning those who act contrary to God's law without a word of grace or forgiveness ever being spoken. No matter what sin we might be confronted with we should always remember that Jesus gave his disciples a new commandment to love one another (John 13:34), not to judge or condemn each other but to love and serve each other. One of the biggest dangers in helping someone caught in a rip is getting stuck in it yourself. We should never forget that we are all prone to sin in its various forms and it is ultimately only the redeeming work of Jesus that gives any of us any hope of escaping that persistent pull.

13. What 'currents' of sin do you repeatedly find yourself stuck in?

14. How could you better utilise the gift of the church to help you stay in the safety of 'the flags' of God's word?

15. Are there any situations you are aware of where God might be asking you to 'speak the truth in love' to someone else?



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for his faithfulness to his people despite our failings.
- Pray for the church around the world, particularly for Christians and others in Afghanistan who might still be trying to flee that country. Ask God to protect and keep them at this time.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you keep living life in the safety of God's law and his love.
- Pray that we might all support and encourage one another through whatever time remains of the current covid-19 situation.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], God is eternally committed to loving you. Amen.