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Nehemiah 3:6-13

Ever Changing, Never Changing Part 9

“Examining Our Gates: Truth & Trials”

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In the second of his series on the Gates of Jerusalem, Pastor Gary looks at the gates of Truth and Trials.

We live in a time when “truth” is relative and subjective. Not so with God. He defines and declares what truth is and calls us to live our lives based on his absolute truth regardless of how our culture interprets it. We don’t change the truth to keep up with our culture; we keep up with the truth to change the culture! Also in today’s study, we will look at our trials and difficulties through the lens of an eternal perspective. Much of life is split between the valleys and the mountaintops. In this message, Pastor Gary will help us learn more about what we can learn during those times in the valleys.

The Old Gate

1. [Nehemiah 3:6-8](#) - *“The Jeshanah Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. Next to them, repairs were made by men from Gibeon and Mizpah - Melatiah of Gibeon and Jadon of Meronoth - places under the authority of the governor of Trans-Euphrates. Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next section; and Hananiah, one of the perfume-makers, made repairs next to that. They restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.”*
2. For something to be old, in one sense, means that it is no longer important and it needs to be discarded or replaced, however, on the other hand, old means

that something is durable and reliable over time, and, therefore, it has become valuable.

3. The Old Gate was a gate of honor, and it's believed that this was the oldest gate in Jerusalem.
4. The purpose of the Old Gate in Nehemiah's day was for the elders of the city to have a meeting place.
 - a. The elders were older, wiser men, who were hand-selected for their wisdom and leadership, as well as their relationship with God.
 - b. It was at the Old Gate that they dispensed wisdom, settled disputed matters, and issue judgments.
5. The parallel for us today is the Old Gate means the old way of truth.

Truth Is Enduring

6. Pastor Gary said, "If it is true, it isn't new, and if it is new, it isn't true."
7. Truth is enduring, reliable, and valuable.
8. **Jeremiah 6:16a** - *"This is what the Lord says: 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.' "*
9. **Isaiah 40:8** - *"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."*

Truth Is Unchanging

10. **Psalms 119:89** - *"Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens."*

Truth Is Liberating

11. **John 8:31-32** - *"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' "*

Truth Is Defined By God

12. **Isaiah 45:19** - *"I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness; I have not said to Jacob's descendants, 'Seek me in vain.' I, the Lord, speak the truth; I **declare what is right.**"* (Emphasis added)
13. We are not the definers of what is true and what isn't true.
14. Truth doesn't go out of date or out of touch, nor does it become antiquated!
15. Truth is reliable for all people, for all time.

Truth

16. We must recognize that truth is being assaulted today, just as it was in Nehemiah's day.
17. Isaiah prophesied against the Israelites because they discarded the truth.
 - a. **Isaiah 59:14-15** - *"So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey."*
18. If we live a life that shuns evil, people will prey on us by attacking us and declaring that we are weird, antiquated, and out of touch, simply because we follow a truth that never changes.
19. In our day, truth has stumbled, honesty cannot be found, and it's nowhere to be found.
20. Pastor Gary said, "There is a loud silence of the absence of truth."
21. According to two national surveys by the Barna Group, a majority of Americans no longer believe in absolute, moral truth.¹
 - a. "Do you believe that there are moral absolutes that are unchanging, or that moral truth is relative to the circumstances...?"
 - i. Adults
 1. 64% versus 22% believe truth is always relative to the person or their situation.

¹ <http://bit.ly/1T7I9Ty>

ii. Teenagers

1. 83% responded that moral truth depends on the circumstances.
 2. Only 6% indicated that moral truth is absolute.
22. It's hard to believe that our culture has come to believe that there is really no clear understanding of what is right and what is wrong!
23. Pastor Gary summarized the responses of adults and teens by saying: "There's no such thing as right and wrong. [It's] what you make it. The rules are what you determine. What is right and what is wrong is what you decide. You [can] live your life according to your own standards. [Because people] have abandoned the standard of absolute moral truth in our culture."
24. Pastor Gary said, "Progressive is a buzzword for social progressiveness. It's the idea that we must alter our standards and values to adapt to an ever-changing moral landscape. As the culture trends, we must, as the church, continue to stand for truth, to declare truth, to live truth, in a very relative and subjective world."
25. We shouldn't change truth to keep up with the culture; we should keep up with truth so we can change the culture.
26. We must continue to live by, stand for, and share with others absolute, biblical truth in a time when "truth" is becoming increasingly subjective and relative.

The Valley Gate

27. [Nehemiah 3:13](#) - *"The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah. They rebuilt it and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. They also repaired five hundred yards of the wall as far as the Dung Gate."*
28. There are three main valleys that encompass Jerusalem: the Kidron Valley (on the eastern side), Tyropoeon Valley (on the western side), and the Hinnom Valley (on the southern side).
- a. The Valley Gate opens to the Tyropoeon Valley or Central Valley, which was a rugged ravine, which through the course of time, has been filled with debris such that today it is almost flat ground.
29. [2 Kings 21:4](#) - *"... 'In Jerusalem I will put my name.' "*

30. In Scripture, valleys represent the low points in our lives, and we refer to difficult times as those times when we are in a valley, as opposed to the good times when we are on the mountaintop.
31. **Psalm 23:4** – *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”*
32. Pastor Gary said: “Life, generally speaking, is a series of both mountaintops and valleys. It’s unrealistic to always think you will always be on the mountain, and, hopefully, you won’t always find [yourself] in the valley. People sometimes find themselves in long, protracted seasons of being in the valley, [which is] very discouraging and [very] hard.”
33. There are two important things to remember about valleys:
- a. Valleys are where battles are fought and won.
 - i. By and large, with the exception of the military strategy of gaining higher ground, battles are not fought on the slopes of a mountain.
 - ii. We will find that oftentimes in the valleys we will experience the most excruciating and difficult times of our lives, but valleys are also the place where the Lord will show himself strong.
 - iii. **1 Kings 20:28** – *“The man of God [unnamed] came up and told the king of Israel, ‘This is what the Lord says: “Because the Arameans think the Lord is a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys, I will deliver this vast army into your hands, and you will know that I am the Lord.” ’ ”*
 - iv. Pastor Gary said of this account in the Bible: “God wants everyone to know that he is the God of the mountains and the valleys. He is the one who will never leave us or forsake us, and he will show himself strong to [us] and he will help [us] have victory over whatever we [are in the midst of in the] valley.”
 - b. Valleys are where things grow.
 - i. Some of the most important things we will learn, and the greatest growth we will experience will come from being in the valleys of life.
 - ii. The hardships, trials, and difficulties we experience in the valley will, in time, bear fruit.
 - iii. **Galatians 6:9** – *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”*
 - iv. **2 Corinthians 1:9** – *“Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.”*
 - 1. The apostle Paul was saying that even though he felt like death on the inside, he was going to trust the Lord, because

in his valley experiences, he was learning to rely less on himself, and more on the Lord.

v. [Psalm 34:18](#) - *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."*

vi. [Romans 5:3-5](#) - *"... [we] rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who he has given us."*

34. We must continue to present the hope of Jesus to those experiencing the lows of the valley.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Nehemiah 3:6-8](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. What is your definition of truth?
4. Read and discuss [Isaiah 45:19](#), and emphasize that it is the Lord who defines *"what is right."*
5. Provide an overview and discuss the Barna Group surveys Pastor Gary mentioned. (See #21 through #23 above)
6. Share examples of absolute truths you believe?
7. Read and discuss [Jeremiah 6:16a](#), [Isaiah 40:8](#), [Psalm 119:89](#), and [John 8:31-32](#), and focus on the enduring, unchanging, liberating nature of truth.
8. Pastor Gary shared the account of the current Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, who lives in Loudoun County, and the fact that when he was a Virginia State Senator, he was in favor of a constitutional amendment to the Virginia Constitution defining marriage as being between one man and one woman, but when he became the Attorney of General of Virginia, he led the charge to undo the amendment!
 - a. Why do you think people change from being a person of principle to being a cultural chameleon?

9. What are some of the ways you see truth being assaulted in our culture?
10. How should we respond to people who denounce absolute moral truths?
11. How should we respond to the culture in general concerning absolute moral truth and biblical truth?
12. Share examples of times when you compromised or were tempted to compromise truth.
13. Have there been times when you've compromised truth in order to "go along, to get along"?
14. How have you suffered consequences for believing and living a life that is centered on biblical truth?
15. What would Jesus do?
16. Read and discuss [Galatians 6:9](#), [2 Corinthians 1:9](#), [Psalm 34:18](#), and [Romans 5:3-5](#).
17. What are some of the ways the Lord has ministered to you when you were in the valleys of life?
18. Are you easily discouraged or do you find that you have a greater and growing trust in the Lord as you mature in your faith?
19. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).