

Not Alone: God's Relentless Pursuit

Group Discussion Guide | July 12

Series overview and leader instructions

We just finished “Not Alone” - our 11-week journey through the Old Testament, tracing God's desire to dwell with His people and His faithful work to bring redemption. Through every season—deliverance, provision, rebellion, exile, and restoration—we see one unified story of grace, pointing to Jesus and the promise of God dwelling with His people forever.

The sermons in this series took a fly-over, covering multiple chapters—and sometimes multiple *books*—in a single sermon. You may have found that some people in your group were unfamiliar with these stories and would still benefit from some additional context.

We recommend incorporating videos from The Bible Project books of the Bible overview videos as needed. As the leader, you can decide whether to watch the videos as a group or send them out in your group chat or via email for people to watch on their own, or some combination of the two.

Here is the overview video of Ezra and Nehemiah: <https://bibleproject.com/videos/ezra-nehemiah/>

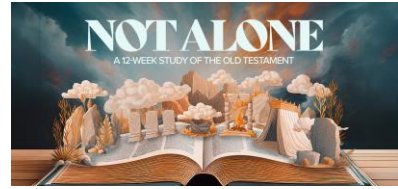
As always, use the group discussion guide below in the way that works best for *your* group. Prayerfully review the material and note the questions you sense the Spirit leading you to focus on. Linger on questions that yield fruitful discussion. Break into pairs or smaller groups for conversation or keep the discussion in the larger group. You know your group! Use this guide as a template but make it your own.

Opening reflection questions (15 minutes).

Begin your time together by inviting people to share their answers to the following:

We've come to the end of the Not Alone sermon series. We've studied and learned about how:

- God rescues His people (Exodus)



- God provides for His people (Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy)
- God fights for His people (Joshua)
- God hears His people (Judges)
- God calls His people (1&2 Samuel)
- God reigns over His people (1&2 Kings)
- God dwells with His people (Psalms)
- God trains His people (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job)
- God speaks to His people (the books of prophecy)
- God strengthens His people (Daniel and Esther)
- God rebuilds His people (Ezra and Nehemiah)

That's a lot of ground to cover. Let's take a moment to reflect on what we've learned.

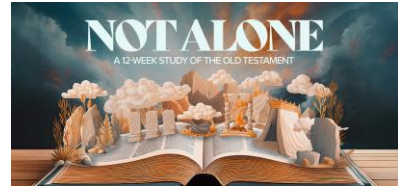
- What is one way your understanding of the Old Testament has grown during this sermon series?
- Is there a particular character, story, moment, or book that especially impacted you? Explain.
- What do you think of the LIFE acrostic (Literal, Incarnational, Formational, and Eternal)? How will your experience with this approach during our Not Alone sermon series impact your Bible reading in the future?

Discuss the sermon and books of Ezra and Nehemiah (40 minutes).

- What stood out to you from Emerson's sermon?

The exiles returned in three waves, and in each there was a return, a rebuilding, and a reforming.

- Reflecting on your own life now, what are you most in need of in your walk with God? Do you need to return to Him? Is there something you want to rebuild? Or are there ways you need to repent and reform?
- How can our life group support you as you return, rebuild, or reform?
- Nehemiah recognized the need to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Are there places in your life you need to build walls? Specific boundaries or safeguards you need to put into place to help you lay the right foundation for your life with God? (An example might be screen time limits, accountability software, or committing to check in with a friend about a sin pattern)



- Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah weren't focused primarily on their personal renewal, but on the return, rebuilding, and reforming of God's people. What are you currently doing or what might God be inviting you to do to contribute to a culture of spiritual renewal in the places and people around you?

As we come to the end of our flyover of the Old Testament, it's natural for us to look back over the story of God's people. And that's exactly what we see the Israelites do in Ezra 9. Ezra has gathered together the people and read God's law to them (Ezra 8). In Ezra 9, we see their response. In it, the Levites remind them of their own story—of God's story. This chapter functions as a SparkNotes summary of the Old Testament (CliffsNotes for you Gen Xers), so it seems an appropriate way to draw this study to a close. As we listen, pay attention to what you notice.

Read Ezra 9. You may choose to answer the following questions in pairs or triads.

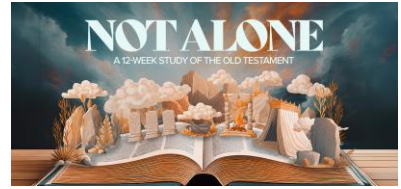
- What stood out to you about the way the people told their own story?
- What tension do you sense in the ending? What do we know about how the story ends that they did not?
- What about your *own* story of your life with God? If you were to recap it for someone, what big events would you point to?
- What parts of your story are unresolved? How does your eternal hope in Jesus ease the distress you feel now?

Closing prayer (10 minutes).

Invite people to share their prayer requests. Encourage them to specifically pray for the ways they can return, rebuild, or reform their lives and the role God is inviting them to play in the returning, rebuilding, and reforming of others.

Let everyone know you will be closing your time in prayer with words from Ezra 9.

Closing prayer: Heavenly Father, "blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you" (Ezra 9:5b-6). May we trust that your word truly does bring us life—may it form us, point us to Jesus, and keep us focused on the hope of eternity. Amen.



Reminder: Summer Camp Celebration is this Sunday (July 19). There will be no life group guide provided for the following week. Your group may take the week off or enjoy a summer celebration of your own!