




HILLSIDE STUDENTS



Nehemiah | Week 4

CONNECT

   Set out snacks! Add new students to the groups app! Take Attendance!

   Play **Change Places If!** Form a big circle. The leader will start by saying “change places if…” with a prompt for the group (ex: change places if you’ve swam in the ocean). Anybody in your group who has done that will switch places with another person in the group. The goal is to find a place back in the circle. If you don’t find a place back in the circle in time, stand in the middle and try to steal a place next round!

WATCH

  **Set up Discussion:** Have you ever felt like you were in exile? Cut off from God’s goodness, or maybe from His presence all together? Maybe you haven’t been kicked out of your homeland or forced into slavery like the Israelites, but its easy to come home from camp on a ‘camp high’ and look back in the middle of the school year, wondering where that ‘feeling’ went. What do we do when we feel like we are drifting from God?

 **Pre-Video Question:** Have your group answer one or both questions below!

- If you were a trashcan, where would you be? Why? (ex: school cafeteria trashcan, dumpster, trash on a plane, etc.)
- What’s something totally random that you’re really good at?

Split up into smaller groups and navigate the discussion below:

- **Read Luke 15:11-24.** What does the story tell us about how God sees us even when we drift? What does it tell us about ourselves (as the prodigal son)?
- How does remembering that God is always with you, and always working things out, change the way you live today?
- **Read Philippians 1:6.** Compare the prodigal son and the Israelites in Nehemiah. How do we see their remembrance of God’s faithfulness affect the way they live?
- When we understand God’s character, what does our response look like?
- **Read 1 John 1:9.** What does it mean to confess our sins to God? Why is confession an act of obedience?
- **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.** How does confession draw us closer to God? How does it help us to rely on Him instead of ourselves?
- **Challenge:** Take a moment to read through Psalm 25:4-11 or this prayer of confession and spend a few minutes in individual prayer.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen

READ + DISCUSS

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When we are in Christ, we have the assurance of knowing that our feelings are not indicative of our status as sons and daughters of the Most High. We sometimes feel that we are drifting away from God, or that He has turned His face from us. But because God is faithful even when we are not, we experience return, redemption, and love in our Father, just like the prodigal son did.

Because of this overwhelming love and grace, we as God's children respond by listening to our Father. Confession is an act of obedience that flows out of gratitude for God's divine assurance and sovereignty. It calls us to remember our dependence on God to live a good, Spirit-filled life that glorifies Him.

Leaders, confession can sometimes be a topic that we want to shy away from. We naturally want to hide our sins away in the dark, "but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). With the wisdom and discernment the Spirit brings, guide your students into the light and freedom of Christ, and be assured that He who started this good work in you will surely complete it.

Luke 15:11-24 ¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So, he divided his property between them. ¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So, they began to celebrate."

Philippians 1:6 "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 ²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it."