

TAKE A LEARNING WALK IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD & CITY

So I arrived in Jerusalem. Three days later, I slipped out during the night, taking only a few others with me. I had not told anyone about the plans God had put in my heart for Jerusalem. We took no pack animals with us except the donkey I was riding... I went out... to inspect the broken walls and burned gates.

Nehemiah 2:11-13

I WENT OUT TO INSPECT...

After lamenting over the brokenness that had beset the city he loved, and boldly asking the king to send him to repair it, Nehemiah takes time to inspect the situation before he begins the work of rebuilding. This practice, which has been helpful to scores of people in all kinds of contexts, is designed to help you do the same.

HOW TO TAKE A LEARNING WALK IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD & CITY

This practice works best with others. So gather a friend or two, or more before you begin. If you have a larger group of people, break up into groups of 2 or 3. (If at all possible, invite a resident of the part of the city you are exploring to walk with you, to share stories about the places you pass, to introduce you to folks you encounter along the way whom you can listen to and learn from, etc.)

IDEA

Take a little notebook, or use the notes app on your phone to capture your observations. You can also snap photos of things you notice and then use them later to share about your experience.

2. As you walk...

- What do you notice about the front yards or entries to each of the houses or apartments?
- Does this neighborhood or part of the city feel like a cared for place?
- How many houses, apartments, or buildings for sale do you see? What signs of transience do you observe?
- What do you notice about the parks? Are they inviting places? Who is there?
- Do you notice churches or religious buildings? What does their appearance communicate?
- What kinds of commercial buildings are there? Who occupies them?
- Describe the people you see along the way or tending to their homes, yards or businesses.
- Are there places in this neighborhood or part of the city that you would not go into? Why?
- Where are the places of life, hope, beauty, or community in this neighborhood?
- What evidence of struggle, despair, neglect, and alienation do you see?
- In what ways do you see evidence of God's presence in this area?

3. Along the way, engage in these three actions.

- Find an approachable person to talk with. Ask them a question or two:
 - What do you love about the neighborhood or this part of the city?
 - What needs to be developed or addressed?
- Visit a local coffee shop, restaurant or pub and get something to eat or drink. What do you see, hear and notice during this experience?
- Find a relic or symbol during your experience in the community and bring it back with you (It could be something you find, something from your time at a local establishment, etc.). You will share how this represents what you experienced during this practice when you debrief afterwards.

4. Debrief with those you walked with.

- What did I notice in myself as I walked this part of the neighborhood or city – thoughts, questions, strong feelings, or reactions, etc.?
- What did I learn from listening to others along the way - what is important to them, what questions are they asking, what are they longing for, what are they celebrating?
- Where did I notice signs of God already at work in the neighborhood or this part of the city
- What might it look like to be a good neighbor in the place I walked, to join Jesus in his restorative mission there?
- What relic or symbol did I bring back, and how does it represent my experience in the neighborhood or the part of the city we walked?