

Introduction

- <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/preaching/sermon-illustrations/when-internet-comes-to-remote-amazon-tribes/> - Once the world came in, it began to reshape the people.
- Spiritual drift happens when we allow the world to influence us more than we allow God's Word to shape us. None of us intend to drift from our faith, but it happens as we slowly give in to the influence of the world one compromise at a time. Before you know it, you find yourself far away from the God who loves you.
- [Nehemiah 8-12](#) were the spiritual high-points of Ezra-Nehemiah. The people experienced revival and made a renewed commitment to walk in holiness. They praised God for how He had been faithful to them.
- But, in [Nehemiah 13](#), the spiritual high has faded. The people drift away from the commitments they made to the Lord, and Nehemiah, the book that tells the final chapter of Old Testament history, ends depressingly. In fact, the Jews compromise almost everything they had committed to in [Nehemiah 10](#). The wall was still standing, but their commitments were crumbling.
- [Nehemiah 13](#) is not a happy ending. It's a tragic ending that reminds us of our need for a Savior who can give us new life.
- [Nehemiah 13](#) is like a mirror. It helps us to see ourselves and how we are prone to drift away from our God. From this passage, I want to show you three ways that we tend to drift from the Lord so you can more

easily recognize when you begin to drift. As we examine these three ways that we tend to drift, we'll also talk about how we can stop the drift.

You drift when you let the world in.

- One of the commitments the people made was to care for the temple and support the work of the Levites. In [Nehemiah 12:44-47](#), contributions were brought to the temple to support the work of the Levites. All seems well.
- In 13:1-3, as the people read the Book of the Law, they were reminded that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God. Why? Because when God's people traveled to the Promised Land, the Moabites and Ammonites refused to show them hospitality. The Moab king hired Balaam to bring a curse on Israel. Because of their persistent hostility toward God and his covenant people, they were excluded from full participation in Israel's covenant assembly.
- This was not racial exclusion. If an individual Moabite turned to Israel's God in faith, that person could be welcomed into the covenant community. Ruth is the clearest example.
- Nehemiah tells us this because Tobiah was an Ammonite. [Nehemiah 13:4-6](#) are unthinkable. Eliashib the high priest was in charge of the storerooms where contributions were stored for the Levites and priests. He allowed Tobiah, the enemy of Israel who taunted the Jews, to move into the storeroom of the temple.
- Why? He was a relative of Eliashib. We don't know the details of the family connection, but [Nehemiah 6:18](#) tells us that Tobiah had developed significant marriage connections among the Jews. Tobiah was the son-in-law of Shecaniah, and Tobiah's son had married the daughter of Meshullam. Later, we also learn that one of Eliashib's grandsons had married a daughter of Sanballat.

- Men who opposed God's work gained influence among God's people. After Nehemiah left, Tobiah found a way to infiltrate. Even more tragic, the enemy of God's people was allowed in by Israel's spiritual leader!
- This did not happen under Nehemiah's watch. He was in Persia serving King Artaxerxes. But when Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem, he's angry. He throws Tobiah's stuff out of the storeroom and ordered the rooms purified (vs. 8-9).
- This is a tragic picture of spiritual drift, but it's a reminder of how easily we invite the influence of the world into our lives.
- **You need to see how easily worldly influence creeps in through relationships.** People that you should be influence for the Gospel, but who are instead influence the way you think. People who are telling you what you should value, what you should live for, and what you should accept. Good question to ask yourself: Are you being more influenced by the world or are you being an influence for the Gospel in the world?
- **You need to be aware of the world's plan for discipleship.** There's a battle for your allegiance. The enemy wants to you to develop within you a worldview that's opposed to God. He does it through relationships. He does it through technology/media. Increasingly, we're being disciplined by people we don't actually know. What we see on social media or read on an internet site, or the latest YouTube influencer, the media/music you consume, the politicians you believe, etc. The world is not neutral.
- Who receives most of your attention? Whose approval matters to you most? Who shapes the way you think about success, money, or marriage?
- You might say, "I'm not being influenced," but everything you place before you is teaching you what to celebrate, what to desire, what to fear, and what to consider normal. It's not a matter of if you're being influenced, it's the question of what's influencing you the most?

- Worldly influences changes the way you think, and when you start to think like the world, you'll start compromising your faith.

You drift when you make seemingly small compromises.

- [Nehemiah 13](#) is a chapter of compromises. Their spiritual leader compromised by allowing Tobiah to have a room in the temple. The rest of the people compromised as well.
- vs. 10 - 14 -The people compromised by not providing for the Levites. The Levites had gone back to their own fields to take care of themselves because the Jews were not taking care of them. The people compromised their commitment to support the temple. The worship of God suffered.
- vs. 15-22 - The people compromised the Sabbath. They worked the fields. They worked and conducted business. Nehemiah rebuked them and posted men at the gates so that no goods could enter Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. vs. 17 - Israel again falling into the same sinful patterns of their ancestors. vs. 21 - Nehemiah not afraid to enforce the boundary. The compromise seemed reasonable to the people, but their desire for profit caused them to disobey the Lord.
- vs. 23-28 - The people compromised their families. Some married women from different nations. It made Nehemiah so angry that he cursed them, beat them, and pulled out their hair. Probably not the best way to respond, but Nehemiah was furious. Nehemiah reminded them of King Solomon, and how Solomon was a great king loved by God, yet chose to dishonor the Lord by marrying foreign women.
- We don't know the reasons why they made these compromises, but it's likely that they viewed each compromise as small or not a big deal. However, spiritual drift happens when we make small compromises that seem to us in the moment like they're no big deal.

- What happens when you make small compromises?
 - You become less sensitive to the Spirit's voice and resistant to conviction.
 - You become more self-absorbed.
 - Your heart becomes hardened.
 - You have a loss of spiritual appetite.
 - Excuses become easier.
 - Every compromise makes the next compromise easier.
- **How do you prevent compromise?**
 - **Identify vulnerable areas.** Lord's prayer: "Let us not into the place of temptation." Where are you spiritually weakest? When are you spiritually weakest? Those are areas to make sure you always have your guard up. Wise to have someone you can call or text when feeling tempted. If you refuse to acknowledge your weakness, you won't guard against it. (Single pastor - tried to never be home alone.)
 - **Pay attention to where you say, "It's not a big deal."** That kind of statement makes disobedience feel acceptable. Compromise is always a big deal because it leads you further down a path of disobedience. Also, be careful of phrases like, "I'm not hurting anyone." "I deserve this." "This is the last time." Or, "No one will never know."
 - **Remember what compromise costs.** It costs fellowship with God. It costs relationships. It costs your witness. But think: what will it cost others if they follow your example? If you stay on the path of compromise, where will it take you in five years? What will it cost you relationally? Physically? Spiritually?
 - **Ask for help.** Compromise grows in secrecy. You become more vulnerable for attack when you don't share your struggle with another

believer who can help you. Ask the Spirit of God to help you to desire obedience instead of compromise. Ask the Spirit of God to put someone in your life who can hold you accountable and help you walk in holiness.

You drift when you fail to disciple the next generation.

- Come back to vs. 23-28 and look at what happened. As a result of Jews intermarrying with foreign women, their children could not speak the language of Judah.
- They didn't know the language of God's people. Because of their intermarrying, they were losing the next generation. The next generation was being brought up in a different language, a different culture, a different religion.
- They were moving far away from [Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#). Instead of learning to love God with all their heart, mind, and soul, the next generation was learning at the feet of idols.
- The parents compromised their convictions, and their children began to lose their spiritual identity.
- Your children are being disciplined. If you don't have the children, you still have a responsibility to help disciple the next generation.
- Two questions that we need to ask ourselves:
 - **What will my children be like if they follow in my footsteps?** If your life is giving to compromise, that's what you are passing on to your children. You are teaching them not to persist in the faith but to look for loopholes in their faith - how to disobey, how to seek selfish desires instead of pursuing holiness. Will they believe from your example:

- That the church matters.
- How to pray.
- How to read the Bible.
- How to confess sin.
- How to give.
- How to live generously.
- How to share the Gospel.
- How to honor God in their marriages.
- Your children do not need to see perfect faith. They need to see consistent faith that always turns back to Jesus when you fail.
- **What will my church be like in 20 years if the next generation follows our example?** The spiritual growth of the next generation is not just the job of parents. It's our job as a church regardless of the season of life you're in. What impact will our church have on the next generation of believers? What does the next generation see in us right now? What are they learning about the faith from us? What are they learning about the greatness of God? How to worship? How to make disciples?
- What if you prayed for our children and teenagers by name? What if you wrote a note of encouragement to a teenager on a regular basis? What if you mentored a younger believer? What if you served in children or student ministry?
- The next generation will learn what it means to follow Jesus by how we live out our faith in front of them.
- In this passage, Nehemiah repeatedly prays "remember me" ([Nehemiah 13:14](#), [22](#), [31](#)). Nehemiah had remained faithful.

Nehemiah asked God to remember His covenant love towards him. Nehemiah had been faithful before the Lord unlike his people.

- But, as faithful as Nehemiah had been, he could not remove the problem. He could not remove the sin from Israel. He could not stop the influence of the world. He could not keep the people from compromising.
- Hundreds of years later, when Jesus hung on the cross, a thief who hung on the cross next to Him said to Jesus, “Remember me...,” and he had not been faithful. He could not say to Jesus in his dying moments, “I’ve lived for you.” All he had was the hope that the One who was on the cross next to Him really was who He claimed to be: the King who could save him. The thief held on to the hope that Jesus could save him even though the thief had nothing to offer.
- And, Jesus was the promised King who had come to live, die, and ultimately rise again for sinful people who over and over again compromise. Our hope is not in what we have done, but in a Savior who has done what we could not do: live a sinless life in our place.
- Our Savior remembers us, represents us, and continually intercedes for us. If you have drifted in your faith, come back to Jesus. Come back to the One who loves you and forgives those who turn to Him in faith, the One who wants you to abide in Him.
- If you are not a follower of Jesus, place your faith in Him today believing that He died and rose again for you.