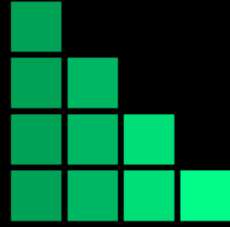


NEW LIFE ONE STUDIES



Series: “Nehemiah: Rise & Build”

Week 2 Study Guide

Message: “Afraid...but...”

SCRIPTURE

Main Text:	Cross References:
<i>Nehemiah 2:1-9</i>	<i>Romans 12:1–2</i> <i>Proverbs 3:5–6</i> <i>Isaiah 6:1–8</i>

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

*(This section focuses on understanding what the text means —
before jumping to what it means for us.)*

Read Nehemiah 2:1–4

Main Idea: Nehemiah knows what God is calling him toward, but stepping into that calling brings real fear.

Commentary:

Four months have passed between Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1. In chapter 1, Nehemiah heard about Jerusalem’s ruins and responded with weeping, fasting, confession, and prayer. Now, after months of

seeking God, the burden has become an opportunity to act. Notice where Nehemiah still is: in the king's presence, serving as cupbearer. ***Before Nehemiah knew what God would ask him to do, God had already placed him in a position where he could eventually do it.*** The calling did not begin when Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem; God had been preparing and positioning him long before that moment.

Then the opportunity arrives—and so does fear. Nehemiah says, “I was very much afraid.” His fear makes sense. He is standing before Artaxerxes, the king of the Persian Empire, and he is about to ask permission to leave his position, travel to Jerusalem, and rebuild a city that had previously been ordered to stop rebuilding. This is not a casual conversation. Nehemiah understands the risk.

Yet the most important words may be the ones that follow: “but I said to the king...” Fear is present, but fear does not get the final word. Nehemiah doesn't wait until he feels courageous. He moves forward while still afraid. Then, when the king asks what he wants, Nehemiah prays before he answers. The man standing in front of him may be an earthly king with enormous power, but Nehemiah remembers that there is a greater King whose authority ultimately determines the outcome.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is significant about Nehemiah “knowing” what God has called him to? How do we discern God's will? (*See: Romans 12:1–2 — Proverbs 3:5–6*)
2. What details in this passage help explain why Nehemiah was “very much afraid”? (*Hint: read ahead to verses 7-8*)
3. What do you notice about the timing of Nehemiah's opportunity? Why might the four months between chapters 1 and 2 be significant?

4. Why is it significant that Nehemiah prays after the king asks what he wants, rather than immediately giving his answer?
5. Nehemiah says, “I was very much afraid,” but he still speaks. What does this reveal about biblical faith and fear?

Takeaway:

Faith means fear does not get to make the decision.

Read Nehemiah 2:5–8

Main Idea: Nehemiah steps forward in obedience while trusting God to provide what the mission requires.

Commentary:

Nehemiah's request is much bigger than simply asking for permission to visit Jerusalem. He asks the king to **send him**, to authorize his journey through Persian territory, and to provide timber from the royal forest for the rebuilding project. His request is both bold and carefully considered. Nehemiah has apparently thought through what the mission will require before stepping into the moment.

The king's response is striking because of the history behind it. Artaxerxes's empire had previously ordered the rebuilding of Jerusalem to stop (see: Ezra 4:17–23). Yet now this Persian king gives Nehemiah permission to go. Even more, the king grants his requests for letters and building materials. Nehemiah sees the significance immediately: **“because the gracious hand of my God was on me.”** He doesn't interpret this as luck, political skill, or coincidence. He recognizes God's providence working through the decision of a pagan king.

This also connects directly to Nehemiah's prayer in chapter 1. He had asked God to give him success and “**grant [him] favor in the sight of this man.**” Now Nehemiah is standing before that man, and God is answering the prayer. The confidence Nehemiah gains is not, “I can handle this.” It is, “God is already handling this.”

Discussion Questions:

1. What does Nehemiah's request reveal about how seriously he had considered the mission?
2. **Why** does the fact that Artaxerxes represented the same empire who had previously stopped the rebuilding make this moment even more significant?
3. Nehemiah says, “the gracious hand of my God was on me.” What specific evidence does he have that God's hand was at work?
4. How does Nehemiah's prayer in chapter 1 (“give your servant success”) connect with what happens here in chapter 2?
5. What does this passage teach us about the difference between confidence in ourselves and confidence in God?

Takeaway:

Our confidence isn't that we can handle whatever God calls us to; our confidence is that God can handle what He calls us to.

Read Nehemiah 2:9

Main Idea: God provides beyond what Nehemiah asks.

Commentary:

Nehemiah leaves with the king's letters—and with something he never asked for: army officers and cavalry. He requested permission,

safe passage, and timber; the king provides protection as well. The provision is greater than the request. This becomes another visible reminder that **the mission belongs to God and that God is capable of providing what His servant needs.**

There is also a beautiful progression from chapter 1 to chapter 2. In chapter 1, Nehemiah hears about Jerusalem's brokenness and brings it before God. In chapter 2, God opens the door for Nehemiah to personally enter that brokenness. Nehemiah isn't simply praying that someone will rebuild Jerusalem. He has become willing to be part of God's answer. The burden that drove him to his knees now moves him toward obedience.

Discussion Questions:

1. What did the king provide for Nehemiah that he had not even asked for? What does this reveal about God's provision?

Takeaway:

When God gives us an assignment, we can trust Him to provide (*in abundance!*) what we need to obey it.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

Nehemiah's story forces us to ask what happens when something we have been praying about becomes something God asks us to do.

Nehemiah could have prayed for Jerusalem to be restored without ever stepping into it himself. Instead, he became available. He didn't have the entire plan. He wasn't fearless. He couldn't control the king's response or guarantee the success of the rebuilding project. But he could surrender to God. He could pray. He could speak. He could take the next step.

Reflection Questions:

1. What has God been putting on your heart? Is there a burden, person, relationship, ministry, or area of brokenness that you keep bringing before Him?
 2. Could your burden be connected to an invitation from God to participate in the answer? What might that look like?
 3. What are you afraid might happen if you take the step you believe God is asking you to take?
 4. Where are you trying to guarantee an outcome before you're willing to obey?
 5. Nehemiah's posture was essentially, "I'm Your servant." What would genuine surrender to God look like for you right now?
-

LIVING IT OUT

Nehemiah didn't know everything that would happen after he said yes. He simply took the next step. *This week, identify one area where you sense God may be asking you to move from prayer to action.*

Action Steps:

1. Name the burden.

What has God been consistently putting on your heart?

2. Name the fear.

What are you afraid will happen if you step forward?

3. Surrender the outcome.

Pray: “God, the outcome belongs to You. My responsibility is obedience.”

4. Take the next step.

You don't need the entire plan. Ask God: “What is the next faithful thing You are asking me to do?”

5. Remember the hand of God.

Look for evidence of God's provision and guidance as you move forward.

For LifeGroups:

ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER

Share

What is one thing God may be putting on your heart right now?

What fear or uncertainty is connected to it?

Where do you need to surrender the outcome to God?

What might your next faithful step be?

How can this group pray for you as you take that step?

Pray Together

Ask God to:

Give us wisdom to recognize His direction.

Give us courage when fear shows up.

Help us surrender outcomes we cannot control.

Give us faith to take the next step.

Remind us that His gracious hand is with us.

Give you the posture of Isaiah and Nehemiah: “Here I am. I’m Your servant. Send me.”