

The image features a large, circular pattern of concentric rings of dark brown bricks, arranged in a spiral-like fashion that tapers towards the center. The bricks are set against a solid, reddish-brown background. The overall effect is a textured, architectural design that draws the eye towards the center.

Nehemiah

NEHEMIAH

© 2012 The Village Church. All rights reserved.
thevillagechurch.net

Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible
(The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 Crossway.
All rights reserved. Used by permission.

CONTENTS

06	INTRODUCTION	44	WEEK 6: CONSPIRACY, COMPLETION AND RECORD KEEPING <i>(Nehemiah 6:1-7:73)</i> Personal Study Group Study
14	WEEK 1: INTERCESSION <i>(Nehemiah 1:1-11)</i> Personal Study Group Study	50	WEEK 7: READING OF THE WORD AND RESPONSE <i>(Nehemiah 8:1-9:38)</i> Personal Study Group Study
20	WEEK 2: RETURN <i>(Nehemiah 2:1-20)</i> Personal Study Group Study	56	WEEK 8: NAMES AND OBLIGATIONS <i>(Nehemiah 10:1-39)</i> Personal Study Group Study
26	WEEK 3: SYSTEMATIC WORK <i>(Nehemiah 3:1-32)</i> Personal Study Group Study	62	WEEK 9: LEADERS, DEDICATION AND SERVICE <i>(Nehemiah 11:1-12:47)</i> Personal Study Group Study
32	WEEK 4: OPPOSITION <i>(Nehemiah 4:1-23)</i> Personal Study Group Study	68	WEEK 10: DISCIPLINARY ISSUES <i>(Nehemiah 13:1-31)</i> Personal Study Group Study
38	WEEK 5: OPPRESSION AND GENEROSITY <i>(Nehemiah 5:1-19)</i> Personal Study Group Study	74	LEADER GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Title: The title of Nehemiah derives from the central figure of the narrative.

Author: The author of Ezra probably wrote Nehemiah. The book contains personal records of Nehemiah, but he probably did not author the entire work. Some scholars believe that this same anonymous author also recorded 1-2 Chronicles. Though we do not formally know who authored the work, we can be confident that it was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Date: The events in this book occur over a period of around 20 years, from 445-423 B.C.

Theme: The theme of Nehemiah is the LORD's providential protection of His people and the expected response of obedience and faithfulness in prayer and praise.

BACKGROUND

To comprehend the context of Nehemiah, we must understand Old Testament redemptive history. While a proper background could start with the triune God's eternal love or in the account of divine creation, we will start with the calling of Abraham for the sake of time and space.

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:1–3).

The LORD calls Abraham to proclaim His name among all nations. As the father of a future nation, a holy assembly dedicated to the LORD, Abraham is blessed with these great promises to be inherited by grace through faith. The promises are to pass from generation to generation for all who truly worship the God of Abraham, eventually to be inherited by the true heir to whom they point.

This family of blessing grows as the promise passes from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob and to his 12 sons. When famine strikes the earth, God protects His people by sheltering them in the land of Egypt, a land previously prepared by God's wise providence. The people of Israel settle in the land and enjoy a period of peace and prosperity, but eventually outgrow their welcome and become enslaved by the Egyptians. But God is faithful.

As the nation cries out for deliverance, the LORD hears their cries. In faithful compassion, He ordains Moses to go and work wonder upon wonder to perplex and overthrow the wicked rule of Pharaoh. The people are ransomed from slavery and pass over dry land through a parted sea which subsequently swallows their enemies.

The LORD brings Israel to a mountain, on the cusp of the Promised Land, the edge of the inheritance. He tells them of His expectations and makes a covenant. They will be His people; He will be their God.

If His people keep the provisions of the covenant, they will be blessed; if not, curses await. The blessings are plentiful – joy, abundance and God’s presence with the people. The curses are severe – famine, plague and eventual exile. He warns them. Israel is called to put away her idols and turn again to the one true God.

Rather than trust, the people mumble, grumble, groan and moan in the midst of miraculous manna and water-shedding rock. They rebel against the righteous rule of the God of their fathers. They crave what they don’t have, ungrateful for what they do have. They fail to trust, fail to believe, fail to worship. It won’t be the last time. But God is faithful.

After 40 years of wandering, the people enter the land as the LORD drives out their enemies through Joshua and the judges. God rules in their midst, but the nation called to be distinct from all other nations wants to be like all the others. They reject the reign of the LORD in favor of a human king. They are given Saul, a man big, strong and beautiful, but lacking the wisdom and grace to lead this nation. He is rejected. But God is faithful.

God gives the people a new king with a poet’s heart and shepherd’s staff, a man after God’s own heart. Under David, the kingdom is united and secured. David proves faithful, but flawed. His son, Solomon, inherits a realm of relative peace and harmony and builds the temple, the place in which God’s presence dwells among His own.

After Solomon’s reign, the people are torn into two nations. The Northern Kingdom, often referred to as Israel, is ruled by wicked king after wicked king, and the people follow their leaders until they are swept away into Assyrian exile around 722 B.C. The Southern Kingdom, often referred to as Judah, fares somewhat better. They alternate between faithful and unfaithful kings and, thus, linger longer in the land of their fathers. But they too face exile for their disobedience through three periods of deportation. In 586 B.C. Jerusalem is ravaged, the temple destroyed and the nation carried off into this final Babylonian captivity.

The LORD judges the two kingdoms for their unfaithfulness, but He remains faithful and merciful and waits patiently to again pour out His grace upon His people.

The book of 2 Chronicles ends with this bright light of hope:

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia,

so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.’” 2 Chronicles 36:22–23

The book of Ezra picks up where Chronicles concludes. Ezra tells of the rebuilding of the temple – the place where God’s presence manifests among His people. The temple, completed in 516 B.C., a significant 70 years after the fall of Jerusalem (2 Chron. 36:21), will stand until the day a new temple takes its place, a temple made without human hands, a temple that is the body of Christ.

Originally joined as one book in various Hebrew manuscripts, Ezra passes the narrative torch to Nehemiah. Around 445 B.C. Nehemiah, the cupbearer of the king of Babylon, travels over 800 miles (500 as the crow flies) to return to the land of his forefathers and rebuild the wall for the security and peace of Jerusalem, the “city of peace.”

MESSAGE

Nehemiah functions as a sequel to the events described in Ezra. The book is an account of God's faithfulness to His promises and thus foreshadows the gospel reality of a merciful and gracious God who provides for His people even in the midst of their infidelity.

The book opens with a group of exiles from Babylon who return to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall around the city. Though the people are hard pressed by opposition, the Lord strengthens His people for His work, and they are able to rebuild the wall. From there, the narrative describes the recommitment of the people to the provisions of God's covenant.

There are a variety of complementary ways to read Nehemiah. The title character himself provides helpful snapshots into the affections and integrity of a leader, and the book overviews an important development in the history of God's redemptive plan. These are helpful ways to read the book and provide beneficial insight for our edification, but they are not ultimate.

Nehemiah is ultimately about the promises, providence, provision and protection of the LORD, as well as the prayers of His people. As we read the book, we see the faithfulness of our God and His steadfast love toward His own, a love that eventually and fully manifests in the giving of His Son to be the better temple and to establish the better city prepared for those who love Him and joyfully submit to His good rule.

As you read Nehemiah and work through this study, take special note of a few theological themes:

1. The returning from exile as a "second" Exodus experience.
2. The temple and city of Jerusalem for the people.
3. The Scripture as central to the community's identity and worship.
4. The prayer and praise as the natural responses of the people of the LORD.
5. The providence and protection of the LORD.

TIMELINE

*While some dates are certain, others are approximated based upon contextual evidence.
All dates are B.C.*

722-721	Northern Kingdom exiled Isaiah prophesies Micah prophesies Jeremiah prophesies
605	First deportation of the Southern Kingdom
597	Second deportation of the Southern Kingdom
586	Third and final deportation of the Southern Kingdom (<i>Solomon's temple destroyed</i>) Ezekiel prophesies
538	Cyrus issues a decree for the rebuilding of the temple First return from exile
520	Haggai prophesies
520-515	Zechariah prophesies
516	The rebuilding of the temple is completed
483-465	The events of Esther's narrative unfold
458	Second return of the people led by Ezra Malachi prophesies
444	Third return of the people led by Nehemiah
426	Nehemiah's second return and final reforms of the people
331	The Persians are supplanted by the Greeks under Alexander's rule
164	Maccabean rebellion
63	Palestine submits to Roman rule

USING THE STUDY

This study is divided into 10 weeks. Each week includes a personal study and a group study. Though the material can be completed individually, doing so will greatly dilute the benefit to be gleaned from it. God intends for His people to be edified, exhorted and sanctified within the context of gospel-centered community.

Each week we encourage you to read the appropriate biblical text and work through the questions from the personal study in preparation for the group study. Do so slowly and prayerfully. This is not a mere task to be checked off; it is an opportunity to engage the living God who delights in meeting with His people through His Word. Begin and end each study by worshiping the Lord for who He is and what He has done.

After working through the material, come prepared each week to discuss what the Lord has revealed to you of Himself and your own heart. We also encourage you to spend time praying for your group leader and other group members, asking the Spirit to grant you unity, sympathy, brotherly love, tenderness and humility toward one another (1 Pet. 2:8).

HOME GROUP LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

In preparation for each study, take a few moments to read through the instructions below.

Before the Group Meeting

1. Spend time engaging the personal study with prayer.
2. As you prepare for the group study, read over the questions and think through how you might answer them personally. We have provided a Leader Guide in the back of the book to help facilitate discussion.
3. Think through ways you can help your group apply what is being taught instead of simply knowing what's been taught. Write down two or three ideas that might be helpful.
4. Ask the Lord to move powerfully in the personal studies of each member and also in your time of gathering together.

At the Group Meeting

1. Begin with prayer. Confess your need for the Spirit's illuminating help.
2. Attempt to summarize the week's lesson in a few quick thoughts. Spend some time asking your group about the personal study and what they found interesting, convicting or encouraging.
3. Assign readers for the sections of Nehemiah and supplemental passages that week.
4. Walk your group through the questions. Use the Leader Guide to help facilitate the discussion. Don't feel obligated to cover every single question. At times, there will be healthy digression. At other times, you will need to keep the group on track. Be sensitive to the flow of conversation and keep it moving in a healthy direction.
5. Share your thoughts on how you and your group can apply the lesson. Help the group formulate ideas for reading, studying and meditating on the Scriptures.
6. End in a time of prayer. Ask God to strengthen you to obedience, increasing your depth of life, experience and enjoyment of Him.

SESSION 1

INTERCESSION

NEHEMIAH 1 / PERSONAL STUDY

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Father, incline my heart to Your testimonies. Open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things in Your Word. Unite my heart to fear Your name and satisfy me with Your steadfast love. I ask this by Your Spirit and through Your Son.

INTRODUCTION

Moses, descending from Mount Sinai with the tablets of the Law, takes in a terrible sight: the chosen people of God in revelry and worship around a golden calf of their own making. His response? The words of Deuteronomy 9 tell us the story:

Then I lay prostrate before the LORD as before, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke him to anger...And I prayed to the LORD, 'O Lord GOD, do not destroy your people and your heritage, whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do not regard the stubbornness of this people, or their wickedness or their sin...For they are your people and your heritage, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm.' Deuteronomy 9:18, 26-29

Standing in the breach for his people, Moses pleads with God to fulfill His promise to bring his people to the land of their inheritance. And the Lord hears his plea.

A thousand years later, in the wake of another great disobedience, another righteous leader prostrates himself on behalf of this broken and disobedient people, offering a plea for their restoration. His name is Nehemiah. Dwelling in exile as the cupbearer to the Persian King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah learns of an inheritance in ruins, and his heart breaks with the news. His response is as astonishing as it is instructive.

READ NEHEMIAH 1 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What is the purpose of the opening verses? What important details are we given?
2. Who brings news to Nehemiah about the state of Jerusalem? What news do these men give to Nehemiah?
3. How does Nehemiah respond to the news (1:4)?
4. What does Nehemiah's grief over the state of Jerusalem reveal about his character? His affection for the Lord? His affection for his people?
5. In his great distress, Nehemiah approaches God with an orderly appeal. What do you notice about the structure and content of the prayer (1:5-11)? Next to each heading below, note the corresponding verse:

Adoration

Opening Petition

Confession (corporate)

Confession (personal)

Petition (corporate)

Petition (personal)

6. When you are deeply sad or frustrated over a difficult situation, how do you begin your prayers to the Lord? How is the opening to Nehemiah's prayer an example to you?

7. What petition does Nehemiah repeat like a bookend to his prayer (1:6, 11)? What do you think this repetition should communicate to us? To God?

8. After calling God "the great and awesome God who keeps covenant...with those who love him," Nehemiah reminds God of His covenant promise. What, specifically, does Nehemiah want God to do for His chosen people (1:9b)?

9. What does Nehemiah want God to do on his own behalf, with regard to the Persian king he serves (1:11b)?

10. In the first 11 verses of this book, what have Nehemiah's actions and words illustrated about his character? List some character traits below. Which ones do you wish described you more?

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray through the beautiful prayer in Nehemiah 1. What elements of Nehemiah's prayer do you need to employ more faithfully? To close your time, write a prayer that models his.

SESSION 1

INTERCESSION

NEHEMIAH 1 / GROUP STUDY

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What thoughts do you have based upon this week's personal study?
2. What stood out to you? What challenged you? What prompted questions?

READ NEHEMIAH 1 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

3. When you receive bad news about someone or something you care deeply about, is your first response like Nehemiah's? Why or why not?
4. Why does Nehemiah fast as part of seeking the will of the Lord? What does fasting teach us?
5. Nehemiah's prayer indicates a right understanding of the character of God and a working knowledge of the promises of God. Though he lives in exile among people of pagan beliefs, Nehemiah knows and clings to the character and promises of Elohim (a Hebrew word for "God"). How is he an example for us?
6. Nehemiah confesses the sins of his people, the sins of his family and his own sin. What are they (1:7)?

Do you practice corporate confession when you pray? Following the pattern of Nehemiah's prayer, to whom might you ask forgiveness?

7. Why is it important to keep personal confession as part of a prayer offered on behalf of others?
8. Nehemiah asks God to remember His promises to His people. Since God does not need to be reminded of His promises, why does Nehemiah remind Him?
9. In the book of Nehemiah, the steadfast love of the Lord God will be shown to His covenant people despite their past, present and future disobedience. How have you witnessed the steadfast love of the Lord in your own life?

GUIDE TO PRAYER

- *Thank the Father for His faithfulness to His promises. Thank Him for the steadfast love He has shown you.*
- *Ask the Lord to forgive the disobedience of His chosen people, of your family and of you.*
- *Ask the Lord to remind you of your deliverance from the bondage of sin for His name's sake. Ask Him to give you a heart that cries out for the restoration of all things. Ask Him for favor with those who do not believe. Plead as Nehemiah pled, as the Church pleads through the ages, "Lord, hear our prayer."*

SESSION 2

RETURN

NEHEMIAH 2 / PERSONAL STUDY

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Father, incline my heart to Your testimonies. Open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things in Your Word. Unite my heart to fear Your name and satisfy me with Your steadfast love. I ask this by Your Spirit and through Your Son.

INTRODUCTION

Four months pass since Nehemiah hears of his people's ruined inheritance and makes his appeal to the Lord. Though his life as the king's cupbearer proceeds as normal, his burden for the "city of his father's graves" increases.

As the royal cupbearer, a person of rank and influence, Nehemiah acts as a bodyguard and adviser to the king. It is his job to taste the king's food to be certain that it is safe to eat. He is also expected to maintain a pleasant countenance at all times in the presence of the king. To show sadness or any other negative emotion risks suspicion of displeasure and disloyalty from the king, a dangerous thing. For months, Nehemiah keeps up the appearance of contentment, but finally his composure breaks. Knowing that the moment he has prayed for is upon him, he boldly makes his request of the king.

READ NEHEMIAH 2 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What can we learn about Nehemiah from the fact that he rose to the role of cupbearer in the court of a foreign king?
2. How do you think Nehemiah spent the four months between learning of Jerusalem's ruin and making his request of the king? How does the text support your thinking?
3. What is Nehemiah's response when the king notices his sadness (2:2b)?

Is his answer direct or evasive (2:3)? How might you have been tempted to answer?

4. What does Nehemiah ask of the king? Summarize his requests and objectives below:

Verse	Request	Objective
2:5		
2:6		
2:7		

5. To what does Nehemiah attribute the success of his petitions (2:8b)?

Think of a time when you risked rejection or failure to pursue the will of the Lord. How did the good hand of God grant you favor?

6. With a well-provisioned, well-armed group of fellow travelers, Nehemiah makes the 800-mile journey to Jerusalem. Assuming a conservative travel rate of 10 miles a day, approximately how many months did the trip take?

7. Summarize Nehemiah's activities and observations in 2:11-16.

8. How would you explain the timing and purpose of Nehemiah's inspection (2:12)?

9. Upon completing his inspection, what challenge does Nehemiah give to the people? How do the people respond (2:17-18)?

10. How do the regional governing officials react (2:19)? Does Nehemiah's response to them address their questions or their motives? Explain.

11. By the end of this chapter, we have been introduced to three opponents to Nehemiah's vision:
 - Sanballat the Horonite governed Samaria, to the north of Judah.
 - Tobiah the Ammonite governed Ammon, to the east of Judah.
 - Geshem the Arab governed the area south of Judah.

In chapter 4 a fourth opponent will be introduced: the Ashdodites, who dwelt to the west of Judah. What does Nehemiah want us to understand about the nature and degree of the opposition he faces?

12. In chapter 2 we see Nehemiah's boldness. Are you bold like Nehemiah? What relationship or situation needs you to be bolder?

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, You are the King of Kings. To be the recipient of Your favor is an unspeakable gift. Thank You for the example of Your servant Nehemiah. As You did for him, instruct my heart to deeper prayerfulness, greater longing for Your kingdom to be established and less regard for my own personal comfort. Bless those in leadership over me. Strengthen my hands for the work You would have me to do. Amen.

SESSION 2

RETURN

NEHEMIAH 2 / GROUP STUDY

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What thoughts do you have based upon this week's personal study?
2. What stood out to you? What challenged you? What prompted questions?

READ NEHEMIAH 2 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

3. Nehemiah secures the trust and respect of a pagan king without compromising his commitment to God. How can we do the same today with those in positions of authority over us?
4. Nehemiah uses his position of authority for the benefit of his people and the accomplishment of God's will, even at great personal risk. What wrong thinking causes us to protect ourselves rather than risk like Nehemiah?
5. Do Nehemiah's requests of the king seem deliberate or spontaneous? How is his readiness to speak an example to us? What does it indicate about his state of mind in the midst of difficulty?

6. The route from Susa to Jerusalem covered terrain that was both harsh and treacherous, yet Nehemiah does not mention the length or difficulty of the trip. Why do you think this is so?
7. Are there any kingdom-building goals that you might hesitate to commit to because of difficulty or danger? What are they?
8. How is Nehemiah's decision to tour the city at night wise? When is it wise to do things on your own and when is it wise to seek the help of others?
9. On finding the situation in Jerusalem to be as dire as he heard, Nehemiah chooses hope over discouragement, issuing a call to rebuild. What does the people's response teach about how contagious a leader's attitude can be?
10. How does Nehemiah's example challenge you to think and act as a member of your gospel-centered community?
11. What good work would the Lord have you strengthen your hands to build? Where has He given you a vision to build His kingdom right now?

GUIDE TO PRAYER

- *Thank the Father for granting favor to His people. Thank Him for specific times He has shown you favor.*
- *Ask the Lord to strengthen the hands of His servants. Pray specifically for your church leaders, your Home Group leaders and your Home Group members.*
- *Ask the Lord to grant you wisdom in your relationships with those in authority over you. Ask Him to incline the hearts of our leaders to show favor to the people of God as they pursue His will, on earth as it is in heaven.*

SESSION 3

SYSTEMATIC WORK

NEHEMIAH 3 / PERSONAL STUDY

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Father, incline my heart to Your testimonies. Open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things in Your Word. Unite my heart to fear Your name and satisfy me with Your steadfast love. I ask this by Your Spirit and through Your Son.

INTRODUCTION

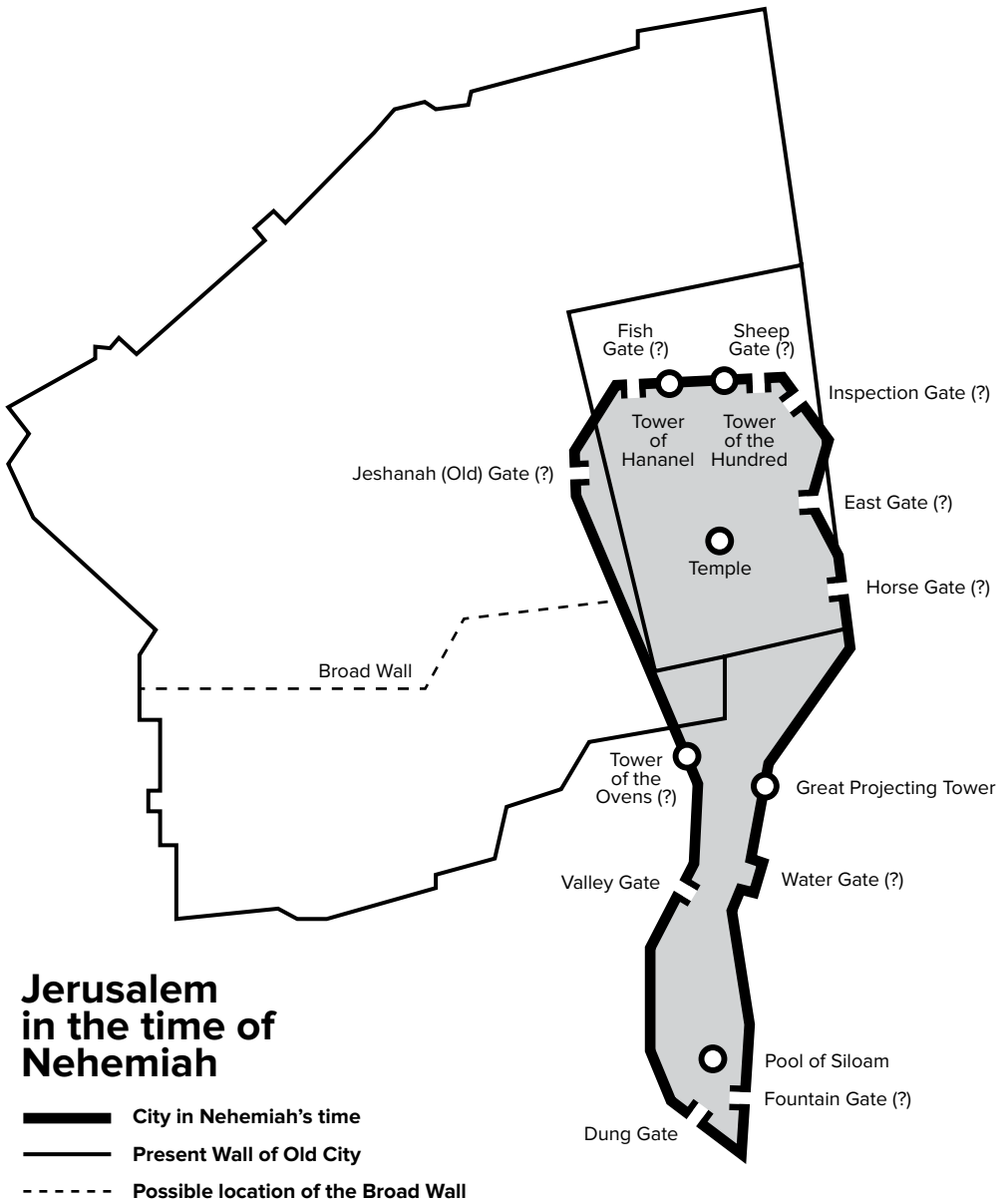
Nehemiah is a book about building. After learning about the scope of the problem and the potential for opposition, we at last come to the moment where the workers assemble and the good work begins.

During the darkest hours of World War II, Winston Churchill issued a now-famous call to the British people to rise up in the face of great opposition. He laid before them the bleakness of their situation and issued a call to unity and great effort, exhorting them to action with the pronouncement, “I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.”

Nehemiah, after surveying the rubble of Jerusalem’s walls, issues a similar call to his people: “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.” He gives no promise of fame or prosperity, no special accommodations for the wealthy or the powerful, just a call for all to come and build. And build they do, placing themselves along the walls and working steadily to restore the good name of their God.

READ NEHEMIAH 3 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. Nehemiah lists the names of those who helped rebuild the city wall. Below is a map of Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah. On the map, number each location in the order it is mentioned. What do you learn about Nehemiah's system for recording the work?



2. Nehemiah details interesting facts about those who built the wall. Skim through the chapter and note which of the following types of people helped build:
- Goldsmiths
 - Priests
 - Homeowners
 - Local residents
 - Perfumers
 - Rulers
 - Daughters
 - Out-of-towners
 - Merchants
 - Levites
 - Sons
3. What conclusion can you draw from the varied nature of the builders with regard to:
- Nehemiah's recruitment skills?
 - His leadership skills?
 - The dedication of the people?
 - The favor of God?
4. Is everyone in the area eager to help with the building? Who refrains from joining the project (3:5)?

What is their motive for not participating?

Nehemiah could have left out this detail. Why does he include it?

5. What idea is repeated in vv. 1, 3, 6, 13, 14 and 15? How many gates stood without any type of door or lock? Look back at your map. How many gates total did Jerusalem have? What practical problems do you think this presented for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the keepers of the recently rebuilt temple?

6. Take a few minutes to read and reflect on Psalm 62. How does this psalm expand on the picture of God's faithfulness in the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem?

7. Nehemiah shows great attention to the contributions of specific people in chapter 3. Whom do you receive help from who would be blessed by your recognition of their efforts?

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, You are our strong fortress, our tower, our refuge. It pleases You to involve us in the work of Your kingdom. May we be quick to respond to the call to build. May we build humbly and willingly at our appointed place. May our voices not be raised among the opposition. May they not be lifted among the proud. May they be joined with those of the saints of all ages who have boldly proclaimed, "Let us rise up and build." Amen.

SESSION 3

SYSTEMATIC WORK

NEHEMIAH 3 / GROUP STUDY

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What thoughts do you have based upon this week's personal study?
2. What stood out to you? What challenged you? What prompted questions?

READ NEHEMIAH 3 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

3. Rather than carefully record names and details about the builders of the wall, Nehemiah could have simply written, "And many people from all walks of life rose up to rebuild the wall." Why do you think the Spirit prompted him to include these details? What can we learn about God from this careful listing?
4. Nehemiah employs workers from all walks of life – those who would have been suited for heavy labor and those who would have not. Have you ever been tempted to avoid a necessary but unpleasant ministry task with the excuse, "That's not really my area of gifting."? Is such an excuse valid?
5. The life of a believer is the life of a builder. What building project does Jesus describe in Matthew 7:24-27? What is the foundation? The building?

6. Whose less-than-best words are we tempted to use as the foundation for our lives? What less-than-best building materials do we choose to construct our lives?

7. What well-known building project is described in Genesis 11:1-9? Contrast the motives of its builders with those in Nehemiah 3.

How many names and details about the builders of the tower of Babel are recorded? What lesson can we draw from this?

8. What kind of a builder are you? Do you build your life to make a name for yourself or to make much of the name of God? How should the way believers handle money, relationships and time reflect their desire to build God's kingdom rather than their own?

GUIDE TO PRAYER

- *Thank the Father that He knows you by name. Thank Him for uniquely gifting you and placing you to build at your appointed spot.*
- *Ask the Lord to give you the patience, compassion and humility to work well with your fellow builders of God's kingdom. Ask Him to help you love them as you love yourself.*
- *Confess to the Lord where you have attempted to build a name for yourself. Ask Him to make His Name the motivation for and object of all of your efforts.*

SESSION 4

OPPOSITION

NEHEMIAH 4 / PERSONAL STUDY

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Father, incline my heart to Your testimonies. Open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things in Your Word. Unite my heart to fear Your name and satisfy me with Your steadfast love. I ask this by Your Spirit and through Your Son.

INTRODUCTION

The people have a mind to work. They take to the rubble together and begin to sort, sweat and build until the work is halfway done. The wall will be rebuilt, and they will do it.

Little Israel, picked on and bullied by the nations – everyone hears the name-calling, the harsh taunts. Israel’s enemies speak with sideways glances just in ear shot of someone who tells someone else, with each retelling tearing at the seams of Israel’s confidence.

Soon the people grow weary, and their progress slows: “By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.” The people no longer have a mind to work. Instead, they have a mind to fear, building with their doubts and framing walls of worry. “We will never finish at this rate.” they tell themselves. “It is too much.” they say. “We can’t keep building; we have to defend ourselves now. Please, help us!”

Nehemiah watches Israel’s strength fail and hears their fearful cries. “Do not be afraid of them!” he says. “Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your homes!”

And with the fear of the Lord, every man returns to his work, each stone a stitch repairing the true confidence of Israel. The people have a mind to remember the Lord.

READ NEHEMIAH 4 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. Summarize the events in chapter 4 into three sections. List a key theme of each section below:
 - (vv. 1-9)
 - (vv. 10-14)
 - (vv. 15-23)
2. Sanballat and Tobiah criticize and mock the Israelites. Why are they unhappy about the rebuilding of the wall? What do they hope to accomplish with their criticism?
3. Nehemiah responds to their criticism with a strongly worded prayer in 4:4-5. What do you think of his prayer? Does it seem harsh? Why or why not?
4. Think of a time when someone criticized you for doing good. How did you respond? Did you respond like Nehemiah, with righteous words directed toward God? Did you respond with angry words directed toward your attacker? Did you respond with self-justifying words directed toward your supporters? What does our response toward criticism reveal about our fears?
5. When Sanballat and Tobiah begin plotting an attack, what two actions do the builders take in response (4:9)? Why are both important?
6. The Israelites in the surrounding areas hear rumors of attack when the wall is only halfway done. They come in from the field and beg for help. What do we learn about the confidence of the Israelites? How would you characterize their state of mind (4:10-12)?

7. Nehemiah gives three commands to the people in 4:14. What are they? Why does he give these three specific commands?

8. What kind of a work environment does Nehemiah describe in 4:21-23?

How is the Christian life similar to what Nehemiah describes? In what ways do we build the kingdom with a shovel in one hand and a sword in the other?

9. How might you act as a type of Nehemiah to your church and your family, leading them away from the fear of opposition and into a reliance on God?

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, You are faithful and gracious, and Your presence will soothe all of my fears if only I trust You more fully. Show me the roots of my unbelief and grant me repentance. Help me to recall Your gracious provision in the gospel. Help me to say with Nehemiah, "My God will fight for me." Thank You for Christ who perfectly demonstrated reliance on You. Bless me with a great passion for You and Your kingdom. Amen.

SESSION 4

OPPOSITION

NEHEMIAH 4 / GROUP STUDY

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What thoughts do you have based upon this week's personal study?
2. What stood out to you? What challenged you? What prompted questions?

READ NEHEMIAH 4 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

3. What emotions or feelings would be natural in the midst of the opposition that surrounded the Israelites?

Which of these feelings are acceptable and which are the result of unbelief?

4. What is often your first response to fear? What does your response say about where you place your confidence?
5. How do you handle loss of control? What does your response say about where you place your confidence?

6. While physical harm might not be our imminent threat, there is a very real threat against our souls every day. What are some of the daily battles you fight and how might you need the Lord's help in them?

7. What does it look like for you as a believer to fight for holiness through grace-driven effort? Give an example.

8. Where are you tempted to fear man over God? What situation or relationship tempts you to trust in your own strength, control or provision more than God's?

9. Read Romans 8:14-17 aloud. How does our adoption as sons and daughters of God change both our doubts about His attitude toward us and our ability to face opposition?

GUIDE TO PRAYER

- *Praise God for His faithfulness and provision.*
- *Confess your doubts, worries and fears.*
- *Ask the Lord to help you to rest in His love more fully.*

SESSION 5

OPPRESSION AND GENEROSITY

NEHEMIAH 5 / PERSONAL STUDY

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Father, incline my heart to Your testimonies. Open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things in Your Word. Unite my heart to fear Your name and satisfy me with Your steadfast love. I ask this by Your Spirit and through Your Son.

INTRODUCTION

Nehemiah has his hands full. The Hebrews are scared from the threat of an outside attack, while internal issues boil between them. The complaints to Nehemiah come from three different groups of people whose men left their day jobs to build the wall.

In an agrarian society, this means the wives and children stayed home to do the work in the field, and the men lost the fruit of their labor. This sacrifice cost their families, and they were forced to mortgage their land, put their children into debt slavery and ask for help with basic food. The interest on their debt was high, and either they couldn't pay or they had mortgaged all just to survive.

The issue was that those who were charging the interest, the ones foreclosing on debts and taking fields and vineyards away from the Hebrews, were other Hebrews. The upper class of the nation was forcing their own countrymen to sell their children into debt slavery, and they were selling Hebrews to Gentiles for a profit.

*Now our flesh is the flesh of our brothers, our children as their children. Yet we are forcing our sons and daughters to be slaves...but it is not in our power to help it, for other men have our fields and our vineyards. **Nehemiah 5:5***

Nehemiah doesn't mince words about his feelings in response, but he also doesn't respond immediately out of an emotional reaction. He considers the issue and takes time to think it through. There is no hasty email with choppy sentences shot off to the city councilman or the business bureau; he takes counsel with himself and then calls a meeting.

READ NEHEMIAH 5 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. In your own words, rewrite the outcry of the people in 5:1-5.

2. What do you think motivated the upper class to charge such high interest on the loans to their countrymen?

3. Nehemiah responds to the situation with anger and carefully chosen words. Summarize what he says to the nobles and officials in response to their actions. What reasons does he give to point out their error (5:6-13)?

4. How quickly do you turn anger into speech? Why is there wisdom in waiting to speak? Look up the following verses and note what they add to your understanding:
 - Proverbs 14:29

 - Ecclesiastes 7:9

 - James 1:19

5. In 5:14-19 we learn that Nehemiah does more than just make convincing arguments – he is also extremely generous. Summarize how his actions back up his words to the nobles and officials.

6. Compare 5:9 and 5:15. What common reason is given for being obedient to God? What do you think it means to obey God for this reason? What does it not mean?

7. We often let what others think of us dictate our decisions, allowing our fear of man to control our thoughts and actions. Do you tend to base your decisions on fear of God or fear of man? How does fear of man negatively affect the way you spend your time?

8. Nehemiah's fear of God prompts him to great generosity. How does our fear of man limit our ability to be generous to others?

9. To whom can you be generous this week with the gifts of time, money or possessions God has given you? Whom has God placed in your path who needs your generosity?

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious Father, You are slow to anger. Your decrees are upright. Teach me to learn self-control in dealing with my anger and words that I might better reflect Your character. You are a generous God, giving to those who do not deserve Your grace. Teach me to be open-handed with the things You have entrusted to me. Help me to see the needs of others before my own. Thank You that You are a God worthy of our reverent obedience. Amen.

SESSION 5

OPPRESSION AND GENEROSITY

NEHEMIAH 5 / GROUP STUDY

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What thoughts do you have based upon this week's personal study?
2. What stood out to you? What challenged you? What prompted questions?

READ NEHEMIAH 5 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

3. This chapter opens with disunity among the people of God. Can you think of other examples in Scripture where disunity was a problem?
4. The disunity of chapter 5 is caused by injustice. What lesser reasons can cause disunity among believers today? How can we guard ourselves against falling into disunity over unimportant or secondary matters?
5. Why does Nehemiah tell the Hebrew nobles and officials to walk in the fear of the Lord? How would this fear have changed their actions? How should it change ours?
6. The Hebrews are the people of God, but they fail to protect their national unity because of sin. Is there anything that keeps you from being unified with your Christian brothers and sisters in this room?

7. The nobles and officials let greed guide their decision making, resulting in injustice and selfishness. How does greed damage the modern-day church? How do believers use other believers to gain an advantage for themselves? How does greed damage our key relationships with family and friends? Who are we most likely to use to improve our own comfort or standing?

8. Nehemiah lets the fear of the Lord guide his decision-making, resulting in justice and generosity. How have you seen justice and generosity operating within the body of believers? How could you join in those efforts? What specific steps could you take to demonstrate fairness and generosity in your key relationships with family and friends?

GUIDE TO PRAYER

- *Pray for the Lord to grant greater unity to His people and specifically for unity within your gospel-centered community and The Village.*
- *Ask the Lord to deliver us from pride, arrogance and greed that might cause us to oppress others. Ask Him to stir our hearts to pursue justice and generosity.*
- *Thank the Lord that He is faithful, just, generous and good.*

SESSION 6

CONSPIRACY, COMPLETION AND RECORD KEEPING

NEHEMIAH 6-7 / PERSONAL STUDY

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Father, incline my heart to Your testimonies. Open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things in Your Word. Unite my heart to fear Your name and satisfy me with Your steadfast love. I ask this by Your Spirit and through Your Son.

INTRODUCTION

With order restored among the Hebrews, Nehemiah's attention turns once again to the completion of the wall. The wall is virtually complete, but there will be a final effort on the opposition's part to halt it by harming, intimidating and discrediting Nehemiah.

Nehemiah's character is tested to its utmost on the eve of this great accomplishment for God – not once, but three times. A man less concerned with God's opinion may have given in to the desires of those around him, those who opposed the work. Opposition to our character is often a test far greater than any physical or academic challenge, especially when our enemies attempt to deceive and derail us by intrigue and seemingly good proposals. But Nehemiah's singleness of purpose and loyalty to God alone serve as a shield for him in this final showdown.

As the main conflict resolves, God compels Nehemiah to register the people in a clear and orderly manner. The purpose is to repopulate Jerusalem.

READ NEHEMIAH 6-7 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. As the rebuilding project nears completion, what final threats does Nehemiah face from Sanballat, Tobiah and their cohorts?
2. What does the proposed meeting claim to be (6:7)? Why does Nehemiah suspect otherwise?
3. Even if the meeting were sincere or well-intentioned, how does Nehemiah not let the “good” distract him from the “better”? What better purpose keeps him from accepting the invitation to meet?
4. Why does Sanballat send an “open letter” instead of a sealed letter? (6:5-7) What impact is the unsealed letter intended to have on the public at large? On the ruling of the Persian king? What is Nehemiah’s response?
5. What is the prophecy of Shemaiah intended to do? How does Nehemiah discern that Shemaiah is a false prophet? Note: Only priests can enter the sanctuary at this time (Num. 18:7).
6. Jerusalem’s walls lay in neglect for over a century and a half. Amazingly, Nehemiah completes the job in just two months. Look back at 6:15-16. How does Nehemiah’s matter-of-fact report of the wall’s completion shed light on the kind of man he is?

7. Why does Nehemiah list the returned exiles?

How should the fact that the Bible lists people by name reassure you? Look up Luke 10:20 to help with your answer.

8. Whom does God use to contribute to the rebuilding (7:70-72)? What does this say about each person's role in God's plan?
9. In chapters 6 and 7, Nehemiah demonstrates wisdom and humility. What areas of your life would benefit from exercising more of these two things?

CLOSING PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, Your name is holy. Forgive us for the times that we have wilted under pressure rather than clinging in truth to You. Thank You for forgiveness and Your gracious preservation in the midst of trials and difficulties. Thank You for the example of Nehemiah's wisdom and humility. Thank You for Your Son who modeled these perfectly. Keep us in Your love and strengthen us to walk in faithful obedience to You. In Christ's name and for His sake. Amen.

SESSION 6

CONSPIRACY, COMPLETION AND RECORD KEEPING

NEHEMIAH 6-7 / GROUP STUDY

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What thoughts do you have based upon this week's personal study?
2. What stood out to you? What challenged you? What prompted questions? Was there anything you wanted to study further?

READ NEHEMIAH 6-7 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

3. What are your thoughts on the opening verses of chapter 6? What practical wisdom can we take from Nehemiah's response to his enemies?
4. What makes Nehemiah persistently refuse to confer with those who keep requesting a meeting? What makes the proposal to meet attractive?

How does Nehemiah's handling of this event contrast with Eve's folly in Genesis 3:1-5?

5. Which questions do you toy with that should never be considered?

6. Nehemiah stays focused on the “better” thing instead of being distracted by a potentially “good” thing. In doing good for the cause of Christ, when have you been tempted to settle for second best or good enough?

7. Nehemiah discerns that Sanballat and Shemaiah are dealing falsely with him. How does a Christian discern between truth and error? Look up the following verses to help with your answer: Romans 12:2, James 1:5 and John 10:27

8. Nehemiah’s rebuilding of the wall represents an enormous accomplishment. When the Lord grants you great favor and success, how do you respond in your thoughts, words and actions? What temptation to sin do we face in those times?

9. Nehemiah repeatedly turns to prayer when his enemies assert themselves. What difficulty are you currently facing that could benefit from greater prayerfulness? What activity have you been practicing in place of prayer?

GUIDE TO PRAYER

- *Thank the Lord for His faithfulness to His name and therefore to those called by His name.*
- *Confess your fears and failures and ask Him to forgive your sins.*
- *Ask the Lord to guide you in wisdom to know when to sacrifice what is good for what is even better.*

SESSION 7

READING OF THE WORD AND RESPONSE

NEHEMIAH 8-9 / PERSONAL STUDY

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Father, incline my heart to Your testimonies. Open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things in Your Word. Unite my heart to fear Your name and satisfy me with Your steadfast love. I ask this by Your Spirit and through Your Son.

INTRODUCTION

Nehemiah 8-9 describes a remarkable revival in the life of Israel. With the wall completed, Nehemiah leads the people to respond to God's Word as read by Ezra. As the people gather together to hear the Law read aloud from daybreak to noon, the Scripture tells us they all "could understand what was being read." And the Holy Spirit leads them to respond powerfully and repent as a community. For seven days, the reading continues as godly leaders turn God's people to His Word.

The public reading of God's own words leads the people to celebrate their God and to turn their attention to confession of sin and repentance. They praise Him by recalling His mighty works in their history and giving glory to God: "In all that has happened to us, you have been just; you have acted faithfully, while we did wrong" (Neh. 9:33).

READ NEHEMIAH 8-9 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What is the occasion for assembling the people on the first day of the seventh month (see also Lev. 23:23-25 and Num. 29:1-6)?
2. Why do the people assemble in the public square instead of the temple?
3. Ezra came to Jerusalem 13 years prior to teach the Law (Ezra 7:6-10). Why does it take so long for this general assembly to gather and hear him proclaim the truth of God's Law? What changes have made this assembly possible?
4. What is the makeup of this historic gathering of people? Who is helping these people understand the Scriptures clearly (8:2,7,9)?
5. What happens when the people truly understand God's Word? (8:9-11) Why do they respond in this way?
6. Look up 2 Corinthians 7:10-11. Based on this passage, what evidence do you find in Nehemiah 8-9 that genuine repentance is occurring?
7. Who is involved in the second day's reading (8:13)? What do these people discover and do?

8. Look up Leviticus 23:23-43 and note what the Feast of Booths was intended to help the Israelites remember. Having just completed the building of a permanent structure (Jerusalem's wall), how would living in an impermanent structure for a week remind the people of God's faithfulness?

9. In chapter 9 the people respond to what they have heard and learned with a time of corporate confession. In the recorded prayer, God's grace and power are reviewed throughout redemptive history. What key events are recorded? How are both the justice and mercy of God shown working in and through them (9:6-31)? What do the Israelites recognize and ask in light of the faithfulness of God (9:32-37)? What do the Israelites commit to do (9:38)?

10. Think back through your own history with God. What key times can you point to as evidence of His goodness? In light of His past faithfulness, what present difficulty can you entrust to Him?

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I bless You for the beauty of Your Word. Your Word is good and right and pure. It is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Sanctify me by Your Word that I might more fully reflect Your great glory among the nations. I pray this through Your Son and by Your Spirit. Amen.

SESSION 7

READING OF THE WORD AND RESPONSE

NEHEMIAH 8-9 / GROUP STUDY

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What thoughts do you have based upon this week's personal study?
2. What stood out to you? What challenged you? What prompted questions? Was there anything you wanted to study further?

READ NEHEMIAH 8-9 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

3. In Nehemiah 8:7-8 we see the Word of God not just being read but also being taught. How has the reading of God's Word spurred you on in your spiritual renewal? What about the preaching and teaching of God's Word? Give examples.
4. Why is teaching an essential part of understanding the Scriptures? Why can't we just trust the Holy Spirit to teach us in our private times of study?
5. In this week's passage, the proclamation of the Word causes the people to mourn. What role does mourning play in genuine repentance? Is it possible to genuinely repent over sin that does not grieve us? Why or why not?

6. When you read your Bible or sit under someone's teaching, do you seek to mourn or be comforted? Explain.

7. As part of the Ceremonial Law, the Feast of Booths is no longer observed. How can modern-day believers stay mindful of the temporary nature of this life? What steps can we take to remind ourselves that God is preparing a permanent home for us beyond this impermanent life?

8. What is repentance? Is it a one-time event, a lifestyle or both? What role should God's Word play in our confession and repentance? What role should prayer play?

9. The people's repentant response is to return to faithful covenant with God (9:38). What sin have you grieved and repented of that still needs you to respond with renewed faithfulness? What one step can you take this week to not merely stop sinning but start obeying?

GUIDE TO PRAYER

- *Ask God to grant you, your group, The Village and the global Church a greater passion for and confidence in the Scriptures.*
- *Spend time confessing and asking the Lord to lead you to repentance in any areas that were revealed in your heart over the past week. Ask Him to show you what renewed faithfulness looks like.*
- *Thank God that He is faithful and just, through Christ, to forgive all unrighteousness that we bring before Him.*

SESSION 8

NAMES AND OBLIGATIONS

NEHEMIAH 10 / PERSONAL STUDY

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Father, incline my heart to Your testimonies. Open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things in Your Word. Unite my heart to fear Your name and satisfy me with Your steadfast love. I ask this by Your Spirit and through Your Son.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine you are an Israelite during the time of Nehemiah. You have just spent almost two months building the walls of Jerusalem under constant fear of attack from your enemies. You are hot, sweaty, tired and afraid. Your sword has rubbed the outside of your leg raw because you have had to wear it in case you get attacked while working. Although God has been gracious to you and your people by delivering you out of slavery in Egypt, giving you your own land and choosing you to be His people, you know that the reason you were recently exiled into both Assyria and Babylon was due to the fact that you and your people rejected God by disobeying His commands.

You now hear God's law read aloud and repent. God has given you a second chance. How will you do things differently moving forward?

READ NEHEMIAH 10 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. Though many people are listed in the opening verses of chapter 10, to what groups do these people belong? Note: Nehemiah is called the governor, and there are three other specific categories.

2. What is significant about the leaders making an oath to be obedient? Why is godly leadership important?

3. In addition to the leaders, who else takes the oath to obey God's commands (10:28-29)?

4. Why should repentance and obedience be corporate acts as well as individual acts? Why are both corporate and individual repentance and obedience necessary and good?

5. What do the people commit to do with regard to:
 - Marriage (10:30)?
 - How they spend their time (10:31)?
 - How they spend their money (10:32-39)?

6. Why is it important for the Israelites not to intermarry with pagans (Exod. 34:12-16; Deut. 7:1-4)?

7. Why is the observation of a Sabbath rest important to observe faithfully (Deut. 5:12-15)?

8. What phrase is repeated in Nehemiah 10:32-39 to emphasize why the Israelites are committing to give their finances? Why is this phrase significant in light of the fact that it was torn down during the exile?

9. The Israelites turn repentance into action by committing to change the way they handle relationships, time and money. Which of these areas in your life needs to be impacted by repentance and change? Note a specific change you can make in each area.

10. What final thought closes out the covenant at the end of chapter 10? The neglect of God's house brings ridicule upon the Jews. Rewrite this statement as a positive commitment. What is the implied "we will"? What can you do personally to fulfill this "we will" statement?

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I so often neglect the house of my God by spending my energies on my own concerns and by acting in ways that discredit Your grace. I confess my sin to You and ask You to alter how I treat my relationships, my time and my resources. Use them for Your glory so that Your house and Name might be great among the people of the earth.

SESSION 8

NAMES AND OBLIGATIONS

NEHEMIAH 10 / GROUP STUDY

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What thoughts do you have based upon this week's personal study?
2. What stood out to you? What challenged you? What prompted questions?

READ NEHEMIAH 10 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

3. The names and groups of people listed as affirming the covenant represent a unity of purpose across all levels of Jewish society. What is the link between corporate repentance and unity within the body? How does repentance set the stage for unity?
4. How is repentance linked to obedience in chapter 10? How is this link evident in your own life? Share an example.
5. Israel covenants to not intermarry with pagans to protect against adopting pagan practices (10:30). Is this still a valuable concept? How do we reconcile the Old Testament commands to be separate from unbelievers with the New Testament example of Jesus seeking out the company of unbelievers (see Luke 5:27-32)?

6. Israel renews its commitment to observing Sabbath rest (10:31). What activities or commitments are most likely to interfere with your obedience to observing regular periods of rest? What wrong thinking does an inability to cease from our labors reveal?

7. Israel covenants to not neglect the house of God with their finances (10:32-39). Why do we sometimes resent giving money to support ministry efforts? How is this resentment a failure to trust God with our finances?

8. Read John 14:21-24. How is obedience linked to loving Jesus in this passage? Is it possible to love Jesus and not obey Him? Explain.

9. What action do you need to take in your life in response to the words of Nehemiah 10?

GUIDE TO PRAYER

- *Confess and repent of places in your life where you have failed to follow God's commands.*
- *Ask the Holy Spirit to help you delight in obeying God and to help you realize that God's commands lead to greater joy. Ask Him to protect you from legalism as you seek to be obedient.*
- *Pray for true repentance which includes not only being sorry for your sin but also a commitment to put that sin to death and a desire to respond in obedience.*

SESSION 9

LEADERS, DEDICATION AND SERVICE

NEHEMIAH 11-12 / PERSONAL STUDY

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Father, incline my heart to Your testimonies. Open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things in Your Word. Unite my heart to fear Your name and satisfy me with Your steadfast love. I ask this by Your Spirit and through Your Son.

INTRODUCTION

God promises the Israelites that they will be His people and that He will be their God. He promises them the land of the Canaanites as their possession. He promises that they will rule and that His glory will stretch through them to the ends of the earth. But then they are exiled – no land, no temple, no home. Does God forsake His promises? Does He forget about His people?

Then, by His grace, God allows His people to return to Israel and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. God remains faithful. As a response to His goodness, the people celebrate and worship with great joy: “And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away” (Neh.12:43).

READ NEHEMIAH 11-12 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. The people commit to bring tithes (one tenth) of their income to the house of the Lord (10:38). What kind of tithe do they commit to in 11:1-2?
2. Why is the repopulation of Jerusalem a logical next step in fulfilling the promise of 10:39 that “We will not neglect the house of our God.”?
3. Though lots are cast to select them, the leaders go willingly to live in Jerusalem (11:2). What does this say about God’s faithfulness to Israel (see also Ps. 122)? What does it say about Israel’s commitment to God?
4. Why do you think Nehemiah devotes so much care to recording the names of the priests and Levites in 12:1-26? Look up Numbers 3:9-10 to help with your answer.
5. What musical instruments accompany the songs and hymns (12:27)? What about music makes it such an appropriate universal response in worship?
6. Chapter 12 describes joyful worship occurring after the people have repented and taken an oath. How are faithfulness and repentance linked to joyful worship?
7. Do you feel great joy during worship? What act of faithfulness or repentance might add to your joy?

8. What does the information recorded in 12:44-47 tell us about the eagerness of the people to fulfill their oaths? Look back at 10:38-39.

9. Read and reflect on Psalm 48:9-14, a song reflecting on a similar time of celebration. What truths about God are celebrated?

10. Think about your own life as a believer. What completed work of “rebuilding” can you worship God for? What area in need of rebuilding can you trust him for?

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You for being so merciful to me. I ask that You will give me a heart of great joy. I ask that, by Your Spirit, You will help me remember that You are merciful and kind. Help me to serve willingly in the place You have marked for me. Remind me of the rebuilding You have done and continue to do in my life. I bless Your name for turning mourning into dancing. I give You glory and honor in Jesus' name. Amen.

SESSION 9

LEADERS, DEDICATION AND SERVICE

NEHEMIAH 11-12 / GROUP STUDY

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What thoughts do you have based upon this week's personal study?
2. What stood out to you? What challenged you? What prompted questions?

READ NEHEMIAH 11-12 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

3. Though the repopulation of Jerusalem is decided by casting lots, those selected respond with willingness to relocate. What other possible responses could they have had?
4. What other passages in Scripture tell of people given significant roles they might not have chosen for themselves? How did God use these people for His glory and their good?
5. Have you ever had to take on a responsibility that was clearly the will of the Lord but one that you never would have willingly volunteered for on your own? How did the Lord work through your willingness to serve?

6. What causes the Israelites to worship with such joy and extravagance? Does your worship focus on your own feelings or on giving God the honor He is due? What is the key to right focus in worship (see Ps. 96:7-9)?

7. Look at the first words of 12:44. What do they communicate about the people's willingness to fulfill their oaths to the Lord? What makes us slow to deliver on the promises we have made to God and others? What does our slowness reveal about what we believe to be true about God?

8. What recent commitment have you made in the sight of God that needs your eager, willing fulfillment? What action can you take this week to fulfill it?

9. What long-standing commitment needs your ongoing, faithful fulfillment? What action can you take this week to fulfill it?

GUIDE TO PRAYER

- *Confess and repent of places in your life where you have withheld your joyful worship for the Lord. Ask Him for a desire to experience more joy in worship.*
- *Thank the Lord for the work of rebuilding He has done and continues to do in your life.*
- *Ask Him to remind you of your commitments to Him and to prompt you to act on those commitments.*
- *Thank the Lord that His oath to you is sure and certain, that your salvation is sealed in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.*

SESSION 10

DISCIPLINARY ISSUES

NEHEMIAH 13 / PERSONAL STUDY

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Father, incline my heart to Your testimonies. Open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things in Your Word. Unite my heart to fear Your name and satisfy me with Your steadfast love. I ask this by Your Spirit and through Your Son.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine you have a friend who goes to prison for stealing. This friend spends several years locked up in a cell and away from his home. Finally, after finishing his sentence, he returns to society. You decide to pay your friend a visit and, to your dismay, you find out that he has returned to a life of stealing. How do you feel? How do you respond?

This scenario is similar to that of Nehemiah. Israel and Judah are exiled for idolatry and disobedience but are eventually allowed to return to Jerusalem. Nehemiah organizes and accomplishes the rebuilding of the wall and the repopulating of the city, setting in place solid leaders to govern. His term as governor complete, he goes back to the court of King Artaxerxes. Returning three years later for a second term, he discovers that Jerusalem's people are still doing the very things for which they were exiled.

READ NEHEMIAH 13 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. Why was it necessary to remove the Ammonites and Moabites from Israel (13:1-3; Deut. 23:3-6)?
2. In chapter 11 the people commit to not intermarry with other races. Now they recognize that those of non-Jewish descent must be removed from their midst. What negative effects were these non-Jews likely having on the community of believers?
3. The Jews learn that their commitment to remain separate from pagans needs to extend beyond simply avoiding intermarriage. Have you ever repented of a sin only to find that the problem went deeper than you first thought? Why are we sometimes slow to understand the depth of our sin?
4. What evil thing does Eliashib do (13:4-5)? Why is Tobiah, of all people, the wrong person to move into a chamber in the temple courts? (Look back at 2:19-20, especially Tobiah's nationality.)
5. Nehemiah 13 is a chapter about forgetting and remembering. What commands do the people forget during Nehemiah's absence?
6. What does Nehemiah ask God to remember about the corrupt priests during his absence (13:29)?

7. What does Nehemiah ask God to remember about him (13:14, 22, 31)? Does Nehemiah's desire to have his good deeds remembered indicate that he believed he had earned God's favor? Why or why not?
8. Why is it important for us to not forget the commands and faithfulness of God? Look up Isaiah 49:13 to help with your answer.
9. Nehemiah goes to dramatic lengths to restore order. What do you personally think of his actions? Are they eccentric? Extreme? Do you think he is justified in acting this way? Why or why not?
10. How does James 5:19-20 give insight into Nehemiah's motives?
11. What keeps us from confronting a fellow believer about disobedience to God's commands? What would Nehemiah (and James) say about our reasons for avoiding such conflict?

CONCLUSION

As we come to the end, think back over our study of Nehemiah and answer the following questions.

1. What character trait of Nehemiah do you most want to develop? Why?
2. What aspect of God's character is most evident to you in the book? How has reflecting on this character trait deepened your understanding of the gospel?

3. What act of obedience or repentance has the Holy Spirit shown He desires from you?

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, I ask for Your forgiveness for the times I have treated Your commands lightly. I thank You that, even though I sin, You are kind and gracious to forgive me because of Jesus. I pray that You will give me a heart, like Nehemiah's, that fervently wants to see Your will done. I also pray that I will be faithful to You, not to earn Your favor but because I already have it. Help me maintain the balance between loving people and hating sin. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

SESSION 10

DISCIPLINARY ISSUES

NEHEMIAH 13 / GROUP STUDY

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What thoughts do you have based upon this week's personal study?
2. What stood out to you? What challenged you? What prompted questions?

READ NEHEMIAH 13 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

3. How does Nehemiah address Tobiah's unacceptable living situation (13:8-9)? Compare his response to that of Jesus in Matthew 21:12-13. How are they similar?
4. Have you ever felt anger that you could truly characterize as righteous anger? If so, when? How can we know if our anger is righteous or sinful?
5. Based on the pattern in Nehemiah, what should we do to gain a better picture of our sinfulness so that we might repent? Look up James 1:22-25 to help with your answer. Explain the comparison.
6. Does the amount of time you give to learning Scripture reflect a desire to confront or avoid sin? What wrong thinking causes us to hide from the mirror of God's Word?

7. In chapter 13 Nehemiah deals aggressively with the problem of pagan influence through intermarriage. Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-15. What is the difference between being unequally yoked with unbelievers and living missionally among the lost? What motive lies behind each scenario?

8. What potentially dangerous relationship with an unbeliever have you justified as missional living? How did (does) that relationship undermine your relationship with God? What action should you take to flee from sin?

CONCLUSION

1. Having now completed our study of Nehemiah, what have you learned about the nature and character of the Lord?

2. How has this study affected your view of God, the gospel, your gospel-centered community and your own heart?

3. Is there one particular take-away from this study that you want to process, pray through and act upon in the days and months ahead?

GUIDE TO PRAYER

- *Confess and repent of places in your life where you have failed to follow God's commands.*
- *Ask the Holy Spirit to help you enjoy righteousness and hate sin. Ask the Lord for a greater desire for holiness.*
- *Pray for a desire to follow God's commands and encourage others to do so out of a loving and kind heart.*

LEADER GUIDE

LEADER GUIDE

SESSION 1

INTERCESSION / NEHEMIAH 1

1. Personal response
2. Personal response
3. Personal response
4. Fasting teaches us dependence on God. It teaches us to deny our own will, thus helping us to more clearly perceive the will of the Lord.
See also: Fasting resources on The Village Church website
5. Like Nehemiah, we dwell as aliens and strangers among people of unbelief (1 Pet. 2:11). We, too, are called to know, serve and cling to the character and promises of God rather than be absorbed into the culture and beliefs of those around us.
6. “We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses” (Neh. 1:7). Nehemiah confesses the reason that the Jews were sent into exile. We might ask forgiveness for our government leaders, our church leaders, our boss or co-workers, our parents or children or ourselves. Corporate confession softens our hearts toward those for whom we ask forgiveness. It helps us to view them out of compassion rather than judgment. By confessing on their behalf, we love them as we love ourselves. Note also that this seemed to be a common practice in the Old Testament (Job 1).
7. A person who is mindful of his own sin is less likely to practice corporate confession out of a prideful motive. We must see ourselves as sinners before we can safely ask for forgiveness for others.
8. God does not need to be reminded of His promises. His people do. This is the basis for the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper – that we would regularly remember the Lord’s provision for sin. In reminding God, Nehemiah demonstrates that he himself remembers the faithfulness of the Lord to his people, the very thing his people forgot.
9. Personal response

Note: Since we have considered the topic of “covenant” this week, you might look at the “What is a Covenant?” section of The Village Church Membership Covenant to reacquaint yourself with the concept.

LEADER GUIDE

SESSION 2

RETURN / NEHEMIAH 2

1. Personal response
2. Personal response
3. Most people serve those in authority over them out of a desire to gain favor or influence. We must serve them as if we were serving the Lord (Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:23). We must be above reproach and demonstrate that we are people of integrity.
4. We believe that our position is ours to use for personal advancement rather than for kingdom advancement. We believe that we have earned it by our own effort and that we are entitled to the security it provides us.
5. His requests are the product of months of prayer and thought. He has not merely waited for an opportunity to speak; he has thought carefully about what to say and how to say it. He displays great presence of mind, no doubt born out of months of prayer and fasting.
6. Nehemiah is single-minded in his purpose. He counts the difficulty of the trip as not worth mentioning in light of the great task ahead.
7. Personal response
8. It is wise because he gets to survey the situation firsthand without interruption or opinions from others. He can speak with authority of what he has witnessed with his own eyes. As a newcomer to Jerusalem, he may not have known whom to trust yet. It is certainly wise to seek the help of trusted advisors. In their absence, it is wise to gather your own information.
9. They made both a verbal and a physical demonstration of their unified support for Nehemiah's plan.
10. If those who lead my community are wise and accurately informed, then they deserve my verbal and physical support. This does not imply that we always support leadership without question. Nehemiah's example is an obvious need requiring immediate attention.
11. Personal response

LEADER GUIDE

SESSION 3

SYSTEMATIC WORK / NEHEMIAH 3

1. Personal response
2. Personal response
3. God cares about individuals. He knows our names and assigns us our portion. He chooses men and women of high and low station, from all walks of life to do the work of building His kingdom.
4. This may be a valid excuse if there are others better equipped and able and willing to do the task. In Nehemiah's situation, there was no one else to do the work, so primary skill sets were set aside for the sake of necessity. There are times when we set aside our primary skill sets to meet a pressing need. We must never use our gifting as an excuse to avoid an undesirable task. The foundation is the gospel. The building (house) is our character.
 - Philippians 2:1-4 – unity of mind, unity of love, humility, self-sacrifice
 - Colossians 3:12-17 – compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, love, peace, thankfulness, the Word
 - Hebrews 10:24-25 – community, encouragement
 - 1 Peter 3:8 – unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, a humble mind

We might base our lives on the words of men instead of the words of God. We might build our lives out of things of no eternal significance rather than things that last.
5. The Tower of Babel: The men of Babel built to make a name for themselves. The people of Judea built to make known the name of God. No names are recorded. If we seek to make a name for ourselves, our names will be forgotten. If we seek to make known the name of God, our names will be remembered for eternity.
6. Personal response

LEADER GUIDE

SESSION 4

OPPOSITION / NEHEMIAH 4

1. Personal response
2. Personal response
3. Fear, anxiety, worry, anger, bitterness, confusion, etc. would all be fairly natural. Any of these responses could be motivated by disbelief or doubt in the goodness of God. Help the group to understand that natural responses are often prompted by the old nature in rebellion to God and not the new nature ruled by the Spirit.
4. While some people might be frozen by fear, others are challenged by it. Either can be detrimental. Our first response to fear shows where our trust is: If panicked or terrified, an individual might be trusting in their own strength, unable to see beyond their doubts and worry. If challenged, it could show an over-reliance upon one's self to perform and control. The proper response is to walk with a gospel-centered confidence that acknowledges God's sovereignty and good will toward His children.
5. The underlying issue for people may be new to you. The "fight or flight" response may have never been seen as a failure to recognize God's provision, power and favor toward them in Christ. One's attitude toward control shows who is believed to really be in charge. For the believer who is to become like a child, this is a humble dependence upon God's ultimate plan. It is an active placing of trust within the mind of the individual.
6. Eugene Peterson writes, "Everyone you meet is fighting a great battle." Each individual has bents, sin patterns, hurts and trials that they have either walked through or are walking in. While the devil is actively pursuing the destruction of believers, we have within us our remaining corruption, the part of us that is still loyal to sin, and it is active as well.
7. Talk through what a disciplined life looks like. What habits shape your character in large and small ways? Do these honor the Lord? Like the Hebrews were called to live a life set apart from the nations because of their relationship to God, Christians are called to live holy lives because we are God's children. This means that we live out our identity as God's children instead of trying to earn this identity. We order our steps, limit our options and pursue depth over convenience out of gratitude to God, not to earn His favor.

8. Listen to the fears that are presented. These are the daily worries of the people in your group. Are theirs any different than yours? Most daily worries are common to us all, yet we work hard to control them instead of trusting them to God and others. How can you encourage one another to actively trust God together with the cares of life?
9. Trees grow out of the soil they are planted in. If the soil we put our roots into is our adoption by God into his family, our roots will grow strong. We must ask the Lord for grace to see His love toward us in Christ as being particular toward us as individuals and toward His people as a whole. If you struggle to believe that God loves you as a person but are okay with Him loving people in general, ask Him for grace to believe. Adoption changes a person's future, and ours is forever a testimony to the love of God for those in Christ Jesus.

In Nehemiah 4:4-5 we have an example of an imprecatory prayer. For more thoughts on these types of prayer, search "imprecatory prayer" on the Desiring God website.

LEADER GUIDE

SESSION 5

OPPRESSION AND GENEROSITY / NEHEMIAH 5

1. Personal response
2. Personal response
3. Constant examples of disunity in the Old Testament could be mentioned. In the New Testament, we could look at the bickering between the disciples, the disunity in Corinth, or various evidences of greed and oppression combated in Galatians and James.
4. Disunity can be caused by church building campaigns, changes in leadership, changes in ministry philosophy, rumors, gossip – the list goes on. We can guard ourselves by remaining humble, remembering the important things that unite us and guarding our thoughts and speech.
5. Israel's relationship with God was one of humility and dependence. God took the people and formed a nation, and they were to live in a way that demonstrated their faith in the God who saved them. "Fear of the Lord" sounds like being afraid of His wrath, but it is the kind of close relationship that would cause a redeemed person to want to please their heavenly Father. Discuss how a right understanding of God's role in saving us helps us to see our complete dependence upon Him. If we recognize our need for the Lord and how He has abundantly provided, the idea of walking in the fear of God becomes clearer (Prov. 8:13, 9:10, 14:26; Heb. 13:6).
6. If there is a failure to see our identity in Christ as being part of the family of God, the Christian life can become one of comparison and competition. Our desire to grow in Christ is intermingled with worldly desires, and mixed motives quickly cause frustration in the human heart. A desire for a house, job, family, etc. causes discontentment and doubt toward the Lord's provision for you, rather than seeing everything as coming through the hand of God. If our identity is rooted in Christ, then trusting the Father is where we are to live, even when it is a struggle.
7. Leaders might use their platform to obtain wealth or power. Members might use their influence to push their own agendas or gain support for the issues they think are important. Greed damages our relationships with family and friends because it breaks the Golden Rule of loving others preferentially.

Greed elevates us above others. It destroys trust, fellowship and mutual affection. A greedy person favors relationships that give him the upper hand rather than require mutual benefit or self-sacrifice.

8. Personal response

LEADER GUIDE

SESSION 6

CONSPIRACY, COMPLETION AND RECORD KEEPING / NEHEMIAH 6-7

1. Personal response
2. Personal response
3. Nehemiah refused to sacrifice the better thing for the lesser, which showed a prioritization of his efforts and affections. Often our intentionality and kingdom perspective are compromised by pursuing neutral or even good things rather than the greatest thing.
4. Nehemiah would not be swayed from the work God told him to do. No doubt the proposal to meet was attractive because it might result in a peaceable agreement, assuming Sanballat's motives were pure. Whereas Eve allowed the whispers of her enemy into her mind and heart, Nehemiah refused to even allow a foothold. Compare this to Christ who quickly and decisively resisted temptation in the desert (Matt. 4).
5. Personal response
6. Personal response
7. By testing according to the Word of God and being sensitive to the leading of the Spirit (who never contradicts the Word since He inspired it). Romans 12:2 by the renewing of our minds, James 1:5 by asking God for wisdom, John 10:27 by recognizing the voice of our Shepherd (this happens through familiarity with the Scriptures).
8. We are often tempted to take credit for what God has accomplished through us.
9. We often replace prayerfulness with worry or activity that enhances our illusion of control.

LEADER GUIDE

SESSION 7

READING OF THE WORD AND RESPONSE / NEHEMIAH 8-9

1. Personal response
2. Personal response
3. Personal response
4. The Bible tells us that the spiritual gift of teaching has been given to some within the body (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:7-8). It follows that we must benefit from sitting under the teaching of others.
5. We do not turn from a sin we do not hate. We do not hate a sin that does not grieve us. Until our sin grieves us, we have not begun to properly understand our offence against a holy and perfect God.
6. Many times we seek only the comfort of what we want to hear. We look for passages or teachers that deal with topics other than those that confront our sin. We avoid passages or teachers that call out our sin.
7. Examples of ways to remember that this life is temporary might be visiting the sick/elderly, going to a museum exhibit of ancient artifacts, attending a funeral or visiting a cemetery.
8. Martin Luther's first of 95 theses nailed to the door of Wittenberg reads, "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ...willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." Repentance involves a turning from sin and turning toward the Lord in the heart, mind and actions of a believer. The Lord's Prayer modeled repentance as a key element of prayer. Prayer can be both a means of requesting that sin be revealed and of confessing sin that has come to mind.
9. Personal response

LEADER GUIDE

SESSION 8

NAMES AND OBLIGATIONS / NEHEMIAH 10

1. Personal response
2. Personal response
3. This chapter is pointing out that the leaders of Israel and those who define the nation as a whole – the governor, priests, Levites and the leaders of tribes – are those repenting. It shows that corporate and individual repentance go together. Corporate repentance is a general acknowledgment of humility. We are never more willing to work together than when we are all keenly aware of our need for God and others.
4. The Israelites who were previously exiled because of their sin and idolatry have repented and are committing again to following the Lord. Repentance involves being obedient, not just feeling “sorry.”
5. There is a distinction between missional living and communal living. We can strategically reach out to those who are lost without giving them unlimited access to our lives that could result in a negative influence. In all our relationships with unbelievers, it is wise to periodically ask ourselves who is influencing whom.
6. The wrong thinking behind an inability to cease activity is usually self-reliance and self-sufficiency: “If I stop doing x the world will stop turning. I am indispensable in my role as x.” The point of Sabbath rest is to acknowledge that only God is self-reliant and self-sufficient. Everything relies on Him to create and sustain.
7. We may resent giving our finances because we want to specify how they are used. We sometimes believe that by giving to ministry we have earned a say in how it is run. In this, we fail to trust God with our finances, operating out of the wrong belief that they are ours – ours to control as we see fit, even after we have given them away.
8. One who truly loves Jesus obeys His commands out of the overflow of the heart. It is not possible to truly love Jesus and not obey Him. A person can love Jesus and fall into sin but continual, unrepentant sin is evidence that one does not love Jesus, no matter what they say.
9. Personal response

LEADER GUIDE

SESSION 9

LEADERS, DEDICATION, AND SERVICE / NEHEMIAH 11-12

1. Personal response
2. Personal response
3. They could have refused to go or gone unwillingly.
4. There are numerous examples. In the Old Testament: Abram, Jacob, Moses and more. In the New Testament: Paul, Peter, John the Baptist and more.
5. Personal response
6. They remember and delight in what God has done to restore Jerusalem. They also rejoice at the forgiveness of their sins. The key to right focus in worship is to set aside any expectations for what worship will do for us and train our expressions on ascribing God the glory He is due. This kind of worship does feel great, but how we feel is the by-product rather than the goal.
7. "On that day" – these words show an eagerness to fulfill what they have purposed to do. When we are slow to deliver on our promises, we reveal that we do not believe God holds us accountable for our words. Our obedience reveals the extent to which we "fear the Lord" (5:9, 15). For more thoughts on keeping your commitments, see "Abide by Your Word" on The Village Church blog.
8. Personal response
9. Personal response

Note: As some of your people might come from a tradition that disapproves of the use of instruments in corporate worship, be sensitive to that context. There is a resource on The Village Church website called "Is it Sinful or Inappropriate to Include Instruments in Worship?" that might shepherd anyone coming from this background.

LEADER GUIDE

SESSION 10

DISCIPLINARY ISSUES / NEHEMIAH 13

1. Personal response
2. Personal response
3. He throws Tobiah out in righteous anger, just as Jesus drove out those buying and selling in the temple courts.
4. Righteous anger is jealous for the will of God to be obeyed. Unrighteous anger is jealous for the will of its owner to be obeyed. Insofar as our own will aligns with God's, our anger is righteous. Righteous anger comes from a heart that wants God to be worshiped and people to be obedient so they might experience God's blessing. Sinful anger comes out of a heart that wants to hurt people and also seeks to "feel better" by allowing their emotion to come out in a fit.
5. We should spend time in the Word, which acts as a mirror for us, revealing our sin.
6. We wrongly believe that if the Word exposes our sin the unpleasantness will outweigh the relief of repentance. We believe it is better to hide from our sin than to confront it, much like Adam and Eve in the garden.
7. Living missionally among the lost is motivated by a desire to see them saved. Being unequally yoked is motivated by a desire to live in close proximity to sin and temptation rather than fleeing from it. For more on being unequally yoked, see "Should a Believer Marry an Unbeliever?" on The Village Church blog.
8. Personal response

Conclusion

1. Personal response
2. Personal response
3. Personal response



The Village Church
thevillagechurch.net