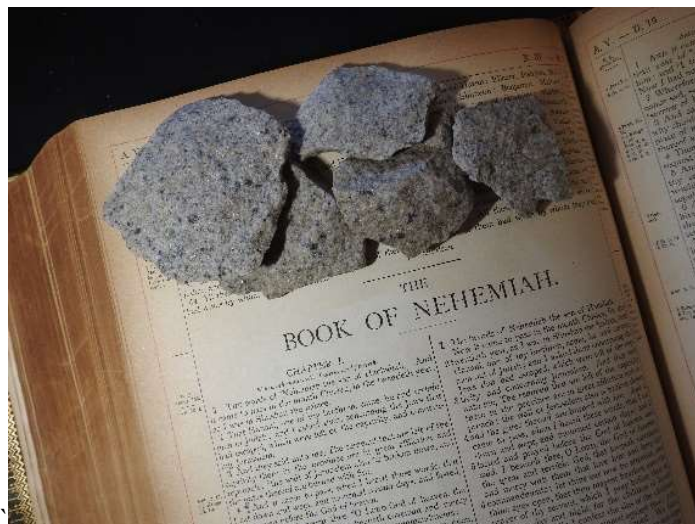




Nehemiah



Small Group Study Guide

Table of Contents

An Introduction to the book of Nehemiah	3
➤ Week 1: The Prayer of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1)	4
➤ Week 2: Nehemiah and the City of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2)	7
➤ Week 3: Rebuilding (Nehemiah 3)	9
➤ Week 4: Defense Against Enemies (Nehemiah 4)	11
➤ Week 5: Oppression Opposed and Generosity Applied (Nehemiah 5)	13
➤ Week 6: Completion in the Face of Conspiracy (Nehemiah 6)	15
➤ Week 7: The People (Nehemiah 7)	17
➤ Week 8: The Return of the Law (Nehemiah 8)	19
➤ Week 9: Consideration, Confession and Consecration: Part 1 (Nehemiah 9)	21
➤ Week 10: Consideration, Confession and Consecration: Part 2 (Nehemiah 9)	23
➤ Week 11: The Covenant of the People (Nehemiah 10)	25
➤ Week 12: Dwellings (Nehemiah 11)	27
➤ Week 13: Priests and Levites (Nehemiah 12)	29
➤ Week 14: Principles and Reforms – Rejecting Compromise (Nehemiah 13)	32
Bibliography	35

An Introduction to the book of Nehemiah

Author: Widely thought to be Nehemiah, although Ezra assisted in writing and editing the book.

Destination / Audience: This is the last of the historical books of the Old Testament. It was not written to a specific people, but served as a recording and testimony to the work of God in the nation of Israel.

Date written: Approximately 440 B.C.

Themes of the Letter: The main ideas of the letter include prayer, rebuilding, leadership, repentance and revival, and dealing with the problems and challenges of conflict and resistance. At the highest level the main structure of the letter is the rebuilding of the wall, and the revival of the people to a fervent love of God's Word.

Key Verse: Nehemiah 6:15-16 *“¹⁵ So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. ¹⁶ And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.”*

Keywords: Prayer, Leadership, Revival, Rebuild, Obedience, Faith, Opposition

Context of the writing: The book of Nehemiah was written to record the events related to the third return of Jews from captivity in Babylon. Zerubbabel and Ezra, respectively, had led the first two returns from the Jews from exile. The rebuilding of the walls was the fulfillment of the prophecies of Zechariah (Zechariah 2:4-5) and Daniel (Daniel 9:25); both were prophecies that the walls would be rebuilt because the Lord promised to keep and prosper His people.

Months of the Jewish Calendar

Name	Corresponding Gregorian Months
Tishrei/Tishri	September – October
Heshvan	October – November
Kislev/Chislev	November – December
Tevet	December – January
Shvat/Shevat	January – February
Adar	February – March
Nissan/Nisan	March – April
Iyar/Iyyar	April – May
Sivan	May – June
Tamuz/Tammuz	June – July
Av	July – August
Elul	August – September

➤ **Week 1: The Prayer of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1)**

Question: What are your first reactions when you are confronted by unexpected bad or tragic news?

Read Nehemiah 1:1-3

Question: Despite there being two previous groups of Jews that had “escaped” or returned to Jerusalem, Nehemiah was still in Shushan (also known as Susa). Why might some of the exiled Jews remained in Susa like Nehemiah?

Question: In verse 2, Nehemiah inquired about the condition of both the city and the people. What did the city of Jerusalem represent to the Jews? What might the physical condition of the city reflect about the spiritual condition of the people?

Question: Hanani and the others tell Nehemiah that the people were in “*great distress and reproach*” and the walls were “*broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.*” Why would the people be in such great distress and reproach?

Read Nehemiah 1:4

Question: Nehemiah’s response to the news of the people and the walls of Jerusalem caused him to sit, weep, mourn, fast and pray. Nehemiah was not a priest, scribe, or pastor. However, as a layperson he had a heart for God’s chosen people and the City of David, and he was heartbroken at the news. What does Nehemiah’s reaction tell you about his character?

Question: The phrase “God of heaven” is not a very common reference to God in the Old Testament however, it is found several times in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. How does our awareness and understanding of the character and majesty of the God we pray to influence our prayers?

Question: What kinds of things cause you to weep, mourn, fast, and pray in a manner similar to Nehemiah? What about things related to the church and your faith?

Read Nehemiah 1:5-11a

Question: Describe Nehemiah's prayer. What is the focus of his prayer?

Question: Nehemiah addresses his prayer to the "*Lord God of heaven*". Jesus, when He teaches the disciples how to pray, begins the prayer with the phrase "*Our Father, who art in heaven...*". What do these two examples tell us about how we should pray?

Question: Nehemiah prays and confesses the “...*sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You*” (emphasis added). He also says “*We have acted very corruptly against You*”. What does Nehemiah’s inclusion of himself in the list of people that have sinned against God say about him as a leader?

Question: What does Nehemiah’s prayer teach us about praying for the situations that seem impossible or overwhelming in our lives?

Read Nehemiah 1:11b

Question: What does this simple statement teach us about Nehemiah’s understanding of the position and role that he served in?

Question: How does our “position” and “role” in our own personal lives give us opportunity to minister on behalf of others and glorify God?

Take it with you: Nehemiah is often considered one of the greatest biblical examples of godly leadership. He modeled a life of prayer, planning, and persistence. This week take time to consider your own life to see what kinds of things you are modeling to others in your home, your job, and your relationships.

Homework: Read Nehemiah 2 for next week.

➤ **Week 2: Nehemiah and the City of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2)**

Read Nehemiah 2:1-5

Question: It had been four months since the visit from Hanani, but the news of the people and the city still weighed heavily on Nehemiah's heart. What can we learn from Nehemiah's concern about going before the king when he was sad?

Question: Based on Nehemiah's ability to respond to the king's question "*What do you request?*" we can conclude that Nehemiah spent a great deal of time in prayer and preparation during those four months. What are some areas in our lives that would benefit greatly from patience, planning, and prayer?

Question: Verse 4 gives a glimpse into the life of a godly man of prayer and a great example of silent, situational prayer. When given the opportunity to share his request, Nehemiah says a quick, quiet prayer to the God of heaven before starting his petition to the king. What do you think he prayed for? How would you have prayed if you were in Nehemiah's position?

Read Nehemiah 2:6-10

Question: Verses 6-8 demonstrate an incredible degree of preparation on the part of Nehemiah. How does his preparation help us to understand how to work, manage our homes, raise children?

Question: Nehemiah points to the "*good hand of my God upon me*" in verse 8 as the source and degree of success that he had with the king. What does his example teach us about how we respond to God, and to those that may bless us in our life?

Read Nehemiah 2:11-16

Question: Since the moment God had put the burden on his heart, Nehemiah had not shared the specifics of the plan to rebuild the walls and gates of the city; even with the king! In what ways does leadership often require secrecy/confidentiality in planning, preparation, and execution?

Read Nehemiah 2:17-20

Question: Nehemiah now shares the specifics of the plan with people, but only after personally surveying the reality of the damage and destruction. Why is first-hand knowledge of a situation critically necessary to being able to lead people and cast a vision?

Question: In 1:10 and now here in 2:19, Sanballat and Tobiah are already questioning Nehemiah, his motives, and now appear to be a threat to the success of the project and Nehemiah's leadership. How does Nehemiah's response serve as an encouragement to the people? What does it teach us about responses to adversity or opposition?

Question: Nehemiah encouraged the people to rebuild so that they "*would no longer be a reproach.*" In what ways does the physical condition of a church give glory to God and encourage the church? In what ways can we, as members of Christ's church, give glory to God in the church?

Take it with you: Jesus and Nehemiah both shared a deep-seated passion and burden to pray for people. This week consider developing a pattern of praying fervently for those in your closest inner circles and then begin to expand to others that God puts on your heart.

Homework: Read Nehemiah 3 for next week.

➤ **Week 3: Rebuilding (Nehemiah 3)**

Read Nehemiah 3:1-5

Question: We now see the task of rebuilding the walls begin and many of the people get involved in the work. These people were not all masons, blacksmiths, or carpenters but they all had the ability to help and get involved. What can their example teach us about the people of God working together to do the work that God has called them to?

Question: Verse 5 tells us that “...*the Tekoites made repairs; but the nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.*” Later, in verse 27, we read “...*the Tekoites repaired another section, next to the great projecting tower, and as far as the wall of Ophel.*” How are the efforts of the non-nobles to not only rebuild their own section of the wall, but to also work on other sections, an example to us?

Read Nehemiah 3:6-14

Question: There were district leaders, perfumers, and goldsmiths that made repairs. While they may have had their primary responsibilities and jobs in life, they laid it aside to work alongside one another using generally understood skills and physical labor to rebuild the walls and gates. How can we apply this example to the volunteer work that is needed in the church?

Question: Many of the repairs were done by people on an area in close proximity to their homes. Why would that be helpful in getting the work done? In what way is evangelism “close to home” in your life?

Read Nehemiah 3:15-21

Question: There were families that lived both inside the city as well as in the surrounding areas outside the city walls. What would be the motivation for the people that lived outside of the city to support the work of rebuilding? How might this situation help us to view missions?

Read Nehemiah 3:22-27

Question: Throughout these verses we read of the lock being put back on the gates. Without locks the enemy would not need to tear down the wall, they could simply walk in and do harm. When we consider the church of today, what are the “locks” that serve to protect the people of God from the enemy just walking in and causing damage?

Read Nehemiah 3:28-32

Question: Verse 28 says the “*priests made repairs*” then in verse 32 it says that “...*the goldsmiths and the merchants made repairs*”. Chances are they had a different approach to the work, but the work got done. How does that help us to work together, side-by-side in church ministry?

Question: What do those same verses teach us about the need for unity in the church to do the will of God?

Take it with you: This week take time to evaluate the spiritual “walls” in your life that could use some rebuilding. Make time for study in God’s Word and prayer for His leading in your life in these areas and then allow Him to sanctify you and do a work in you.

Homework: Read Nehemiah 4 for next week.

➤ **Week 4: Defense Against Enemies (Nehemiah 4)**

Read Nehemiah 4:1-6

Question: When God's people are committed to doing the work and will of God there will be those in this world that will be "*furious and very indignant*" and they will mock the church. What kinds of things does our world of today say and do in an effort to stop the work of God through His people and church?

Question: What was Nehemiah's immediate reaction to the criticism of Sanballat and Tobiah? What can we learn from his example?

Question: Verse 6 says that the people "*had a mind to work*" and as a result the work continued and the wall was built to half its height. What does the relationship between a people with a heart for the will of God to be accomplished and their having a "*mind to work*"? How does it show itself in the life of the church?

Read Nehemiah 4:7-9

Question: As the number of nations that were angry about the rebuilding increased, the threat of attack increased as well as the need to protect the people. As the attacks on the church increase, how do God's people balance the need to be about the work, but also "*...set a watch against them day and night*"?

Question: Verse 9 says "*Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night.*" Nehemiah took a two-fold approach in response to the threats from the other nations: prayer and personal protection. Does Nehemiah's decision to "*set a watch*" demonstrate a lack of trust in God's ability to protect His people? Why or why not?

Read Nehemiah 4:10-14

Question: A combination of rumors, exhaustion, and messy work areas had led to a near stop of the work. Nehemiah calls a city-wide meeting to squelch their fears and to remind the people of the greatness and awesomeness of the Lord. In what ways do Nehemiah's actions instruct and encourage us?

Read Nehemiah 4:15-20

Question: Nehemiah was faced with what appeared to be competing priorities; build the wall, and protect the people. His solution was to have some working while others served as guards, and still others that carried materials had their sword at the ready. Sometimes we are forced to juggle multiple urgent and critical priorities in our lives. How does Nehemiah's example help us in those situations?

Question: Nehemiah tells the people at the end of verse 20 "*Our God will fight for us.*" How does his confidence in God encourage you for when you go through trials in your life?

Read Nehemiah 4:21-23

Question: Nehemiah says that they "...*labored*", worked hard. He also says that he and his people worked and served right alongside the rest of the people day and night. How does that kind of leadership elicit loyalty and unity amongst a people? What happens when leaders appear to be uninterested or unwilling to help, or give reason for people to think that the work is beneath them?

Take it with you: Satan, our enemy, is defeated, but he is still very powerful and seeks to attack us each and every day (1 Peter 5:8-9). Take time this week to read Ephesians 6:10-20 regarding the armor of God and how we prepare for spiritual battles that are sure to come.

Homework: Read Nehemiah 5 for next week.

➤ **Week 5: Oppression Opposed and Generosity Applied (Nehemiah 5)**

Read Nehemiah 5:1-5

Question: There are almost always individuals that will take advantage of others in some form or another, especially during times of crisis, disaster, or need. Nehemiah is now faced with an internal battle of Jew taking advantage of fellow Jews. In what ways can internal division and disunity in a church be more damaging than an attack from outside the church?

Read Nehemiah 5:6-8

Question: Nehemiah was angered by the situation and once again, called the assembly together. Before he called them together and took action, he gave the situation “...*serious thought*”. Why is it so helpful when we are angry to take time to give the situation “*serious thought*” before we react and respond?

Question: Nehemiah called a large assembly together to confront the offenders and address the issue. Why is it sometimes necessary to call out sin publicly?

Read Nehemiah 5:9-13

Question: Nehemiah could have taken a very different, judicial and punitive approach to the usury (charging excessive interest rates and taxes) that was going on. Instead, his approach was to encourage people to demonstrate love, obedience to scripture, generosity, selflessness, and to do it all out of a reverent fear of God. Nehemiah led by lending and helping people himself. How did his example influence others?

Question: In what ways is Nehemiah's actions in response to the usury Christ-like?

Read Nehemiah 5:14-18

Question: Nehemiah served for 12 years as governor. In all that time he "*did not demand the governor's provision*" which he was entitled to. His reason was that "*...the bondage was heavy on this people*". Paul took a similar approach with the Corinthian church when he was a bi-vocational pastor making his way as a tent maker. What can we learn from their examples of sacrifice for the sake of others?

Read Nehemiah 5:19

Question: Nehemiah trusted God to remember him and to take care of him as he served the people. How do we apply that prayer and practice in our own lives?

Take it with you: Consider how you can be generous to those in your life that may benefit from your stepping in and helping out in some way. Get creative!

Homework: Read Nehemiah 6 for next week.

➤ **Week 6: Completion in the Face of Conspiracy (Nehemiah 6)**

Read Nehemiah 6:1-9

Question: The initial assaults from their Sanballat and the others were targeted at the project in general. Now the attack is directed towards Nehemiah himself, calling his motives into question in hopes of making the people afraid and stop working. How does Nehemiah's response reflect his devotion and trust in God to deal with and thwart this threat?

Question: In the book of Ezra, we read of the work to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. In Ezra 4 we read that a subversive letter was written to king Artaxerxes about the rebuilding of the walls, and as a result the king promptly ordered all work be stopped. With that history fresh in their mind, how might this new letter have affected the people and their commitment to the project, to Nehemiah, and to God?

Question: How does Nehemiah's pattern of a prayerful response to trials seen in verse 9 relate to passages in the New Testament like Eph 6:18, 1 Thes 5:17-18, and 1 Tim 2:1-2?

Read Nehemiah 6:10-14

Question: By asking Nehemiah to go to the temple "together", Shemaiah, a spy hired by Sanballat and Tobiah, pretended to be under attack himself. How might Shemaiah's actions and words have influenced Nehemiah to make a bad decision? In what way is this kind of deceit hard to detect?

Question: How can we as believers identify times when the enemy is seeking to deceive us? What is our defense in that battle?

Question: Nehemiah once again goes to prayer, only this time he is praying for his enemies, leaving their fate to the just and righteous judgment of God. Why is seeking wisdom and demonstrating patience and trust in God for his judgement of our enemies so important? How does it help us?

Read Nehemiah 6:15-16

Question: The wall was finished in just fifty-two days. What were some of the critical factors and influencers that resulted in such an incredible project being completed so quickly?

Question: In what ways can you serve and lead others that would help to ensure that the work got done exceedingly well, promptly, and that in it all God was glorified?

Question: The nations around Jerusalem “*perceived*” that the work was done because of God. Nobody had to tell them. The successful completion of the rebuilding spoke as a testimony of God’s work in and through His people. In 1 Timothy 3:7 it says of pastors, “*Moreover, he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*” How does Nehemiah, as a leader and governor, compare and relate to the qualification listed here in 1 Timothy?

Read Nehemiah 6:17-19

Question: Just because the wall was rebuilt, the attacks continued. When a project is complete it is easy to relax and lower our guard. Why is it important that we are ever-vigilant against the attacks of the enemy?

Question: What would have been the impact on the project if Nehemiah had lived or responded in fear to the threats of the enemy nations around and within? How does that influence your understanding of the command to be praying for those in authority? (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

Take it with you: Satan will try to use situations and people to make us afraid to be obedient to God. When that happens consider Nehemiah’s words “*Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.*”

Homework: Read Nehemiah 7 for next week.

➤ **Week 7: The People (Nehemiah 7)**

Read Nehemiah 7:1-3

Question: Walls and doors can sometimes provide a false sense of security. Can the routine of going to church and being a good person create a false sense of eternal security? How?

Question: In chapter one we read that “*The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach*”. The safety of the walls, gates and guards not only provided a measure of safety, they likely relieved much of the “*great distress*” that the people had been enduring. How does the security and safety that God promises us in His Word and through prayer, relieve the “*distress*” that this world can cause?

Read Nehemiah 7:4-5

Question: In 2 Samuel 24, David was seen taking a census of the people and it angered God. What was the difference between the census, or registration of people that David did, and the one that Ezra/Zerubbabel had conducted (Ezra 2) and that Nehemiah was doing now?

Read Nehemiah 7:6-8 (read 7:9-72 on your own)

Question: These verses are the register that Nehemiah was able to locate and they pertained to the first return of the exiled Jews. Why was it important for God to share this record of the Jewish lineage in Scripture?

Read Nehemiah 7:73

Question: Verse 73, while referencing the first exiles to return, says “*So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the Nethinim, and all Israel dwelt in their cities.*” Why is the statement that all of these people “*dwelt in their cities*” significant?

Question: What does the truth about the people returning to the city after being in exile teach us about the character and promises of God?

Question: How can we apply that same truth to our own lives?

Question: Jeremiah 29:10 says “¹⁰ *For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.*” John 14:3 says “*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*” What can we conclude about the promise in John when we consider the passage in Jeremiah?

Take it with you: Consider the things that have been passed down in your family from generation to generation. What are the things that you treasure and what things would you want to discard. This week, consider the things that you would want to pass down to the next generation, and what things you might need to set aside.

Homework: Read Nehemiah 8 for next week.

➤ **Week 8: The Return of the Law (Nehemiah 8)**

Read Nehemiah 8:1-3

Question: This section of Nehemiah is sometimes titled “The People and the Book”. Israel was, at its core, a people that studied, learned, and lived by the “Book”, the Law. What happened to Israel when they forgot God’s Word and rejected His commandments? What happens to us when we are not in the Word?

Question: This reading of the Law was a city-wide bible study! What would happen if all of the believers in our town/city/area gathered together in the “common square” of Four Corners for the reading of the Word? If you were going to open up and read from the Bible, where would you start reading? Why?

Question: Nehemiah turns from the priority of the walls, to the priority of the law; from the physical to the spiritual. What kinds of physical needs can take a church off track and cause us to forget the spiritual needs of the church? How can a church prevent that from happening?

Read Nehemiah 8:4-8

Question: Verse 6 is a beautiful picture of the people of God responding to the word of God. It says that when Ezra was done reading, the people “...answered, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.” This is what revival looks like. What were the people responding to? Why do we sometimes get too enamored in the preacher and not the Word being taught?

Question: What does their response tell you about the hearts of the people? Can a revival in the hearts of people happen without the word of God? Why or why not?

Read Nehemiah 8:9-12

Question: Based on the timeline given in Nehemiah, we understand that the reading of the law came shortly after the people had celebrated the Day of Atonement, a time of great joy and thanksgiving for the forgiveness of God. Why then, were the people weeping at the reading of the words of the Law?

Question: When we are convicted by the word of God through the power of the Holy Spirit, it is normal and proper for us to be pierced to the heart (Hebrews 4:12-13). Why might the knowledge that Scripture penetrates, judges and uncovers those hidden thoughts and attitudes in our lives keep people from wanting to spend time in the Bible?

Read Nehemiah 8:13-15

Question: While the people might have known the word of the Law being read to them, what was significant about the gathering of people to the priests, Levites and Ezra being present with the people? Why is understanding Scripture so important? Where do you turn when you don't understand the Bible?

Question: For many that had been in exile this was their first opportunity to celebrate the festival of booths. While we do not usually celebrate these festivals, why are these events important for us as believers to understand and reflect on?

Read Nehemiah 8:16-18

Question: This passage tells us that everyone that returned lived in booths, spent time in God's Word, and feasted for seven days. The result was "*very great gladness*". How does spending time with other believers, spending time learning God's Word, and fellowshiping impact you?

Take it with you: Consider your personal response to the reading and teaching of God's Word this week. Does it bring you joy and a desire to say "Amen"?

Homework: Read Nehemiah 9 for next week.

➤ **Week 9: Consideration, Confession and Consecration: Part 1 (Nehemiah 9)**

Read Nehemiah 9:1-3

Question: Why are times of personal assessment in the light of God's Word, and confession of our sins necessary and important to our lives as believers?

Question: Verse 3 tells us that the people spent six hours in reading of the Law, and another six hours confessing and worshipping the Lord. Why do we often find it so hard to spend even a few minutes each day in study, confession, and worship? How can we grow in that regard?

Read Nehemiah 9:4-8

Question: These verses remind us of the role and importance of leadership in the church as these leaders called the people to "*stand up and bless the Lord*". They led by example and then called the people to join in. In what ways does leadership model this kind of behavior in modern times?

Read Nehemiah 9:9-15

Question: Why would this retelling of the work of God in the history of the nation of Israel, have been a powerful and impactful to the people hearing it? What does it tell us about the importance of remembering the work of God in our own lives?

Read Nehemiah 9:16-21

Question: Verse 21 speaks of God's sustaining work for the nation of Israel. In what areas of your life has God sustained and provided for you so that you have "*lacked nothing*"?

Nehemiah 9:22-25

Question: The leaders speak of God's provision of the promised land as an inheritance for the nation. In what ways does the promise of an eternal inheritance in heaven help us to understand and delight in God's goodness demonstrated towards us here on earth?

Question: What kinds of things do you consider to be God's "provision" in your life?

Question: What things do you take for granted or perhaps view negatively rather than as a provision for you?

Take it with you: Take a few moments this week to evaluate how much of your time is spent in spiritual exercise. Consider the writing of Paul in 1 Timothy 4: "*But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. ⁸ For bodily exercise profits a little, but **godliness is profitable for all things**, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. ⁹ This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.*" (1 Timothy 4:7-10 NKJV)

Homework: Read Nehemiah 9 for next week.

➤ **Week 10: Consideration, Confession and Consecration: Part 2 (Nehemiah 9)**

Read Nehemiah 9:26-27

Question: Israel was a nation that cycled from obedience to disobedience to God; of turning towards God and turning away. In what ways do you see God's grace, mercy and love demonstrated in the verses above?

Question: In what ways has God demonstrated His lasting grace, mercy and love in your life?

Read Nehemiah 9:28-31

Question: Throughout chapter 9 we read of the greatness, mercy, grace, patience, power, and calling back of His people when they had strayed. Having just returned months earlier from a decades-long exile, how might the people have responded to the recounting of the cycles of disobedience and grace/mercy of God?

Question: How can we keep ourselves from turning our back on God, not listening to Him, not obeying Him, and not living for Him?

Read Nehemiah 9:32-35

Question: Verse 33 says: “*However You are just in all that has befallen us; For You have dealt faithfully, But we have done wickedly.*” We might, at times, be tempted to minimize our sin rather than to declare our sins for what they really are, “*wicked works*”. In doing so, what do our actions say about our understanding of God as a just and righteous God?

Read Nehemiah 9:36-38

Question: While the people had been allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, the walls, and their homes, they were still under the dominion of the Persian empire. How might we compare the state of the nation of Israel, to our own condition of having to live in the tension between a broken, temporal world and the eternal Kingdom of God?

Question: In what ways are God’s covenants initiated by Him and made with His people, different from “covenants” initiated or made by man with God? How does that difference encourage you?

Take it with you: This week consider the ways in which God has been longsuffering with you, patiently waiting for you to submit to His sanctifying work, and then commit to being consistently obedient.

Homework: Read Nehemiah 10 for next week.

➤ **Week 11: The Covenant of the People (Nehemiah 10)**

Read Nehemiah 10:1-27

Question: Each of the leaders listed represented a clan or group of individuals. Some people, like women and children were not allowed to sign legal documents so these individuals represented them. The prerequisite for committing to the covenant was that they had heard and understood the teaching from Ezra from the Law and they were agreeing to obey God. How might we as individuals personally covenant to obey God and the teachings of His word?

Question: We do not often, if ever, make public covenants like this one in our modern times. How might that impact the seriousness with which we commit to our Christian walk seen in our reading, understanding and obeying God's Word? In prayer? In loving others?

Read Nehemiah 10:28-31

Question: The people were committing, covenanting, to personal and corporate purity and holiness. How might we encourage one another to live a life of purity and holiness?

Question: Verse 28 speaks of those "...*who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God*". How can we as believers, practically separate ourselves from the things of this world and commit to the "*Law of God*"?

Read Nehemiah 10:32-34

Question: The commitment of the people, again, to support and sustain the work of the priests and the temple was both necessary, but also demonstrated a vested interest and commitment to support the “*service*” of the “*house of our God*”. In what ways does being a part of a church provide us with an opportunity to commit to support the work of the church? Why was it important for the Jews? For us?

Read Nehemiah 10:35-38

Question: The term firstfruits is found throughout Scripture, particularly in the commands of God regarding the giving of things to the work of the temple, sacrificial system and house of the Lord. What was significant about the firstfruits? What does this word mean today, and what does this truth teach us about our own lives when it comes to giving to the Lord from that which He has blessed us with?

Read Nehemiah 10:39

Question: While the people could have simply responded in an emotional response to hearing the teaching of the Law, they committed to practical actions that demonstrated their understanding and desire to be obedient to the commands of God. John 14:15 says “*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*” James 1:22 tells us “*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*” What are practical things that we can commit to doing that demonstrate our commitment to obeying the commands of God?

Take it with you: When it comes to diets and exercise, people are often well intentioned and initially very committed to the task at hand, but commitment often fades over time. Consider your personal commitment and desire to be a person that spends time regularly in God’s Word. Perhaps this week you can ask someone to help keep you accountable to your heart’s desire and goal to be a faithful student of God’s Word.

Homework: Read Nehemiah 11 for next week.

➤ **Week 12: Dwellings (Nehemiah 11)**

Read Nehemiah 11:1-9

Question: Have you ever felt like you were just a number or a statistic? God provides lists of people like this for a host of reasons. How do verses like the following that speak to God knowing us and writing our names down in heaven encourage you? (John 10:14, Matthew 10:30, Jeremiah 1:5, Hebrews 12:22-24)

Question: In looking at the list of names, what are some of the personal remarks that Nehemiah makes of some individuals? What is significant about his making those remarks?

Question: While we may never have our five minutes of fame in the news, the things we do are important to God. How does that promise of God's knowing about every part of your life influence the way you want Him to recognize and remember you for all eternity?

Read Nehemiah 11:10-18

Question: One of the important tasks for Nehemiah was to help repopulate the city with people that would care about the city, the other people, and God. How would this list of names have reflected that goal and those concerns?

Question: One of the highest concerns was for the purity of the nation which is reflected in this exhaustive list. In what ways does the purity of the people still concern God when it comes to the people and the church of today?

Read Nehemiah 11:19-24

Question: It is an interesting fact in verse 23 to see that the King took a personal, financial interest in making sure they were providing “*a portion*” for “*singers in charge of the service of the house of God.*” Why might he have done this?

Read Nehemiah 11:25-36

Question: Much of this part of the passage talks about lands and villages outside of the city of Jerusalem. How might this have helped the people to think beyond the “four walls” of their freshly walled-in city when thinking about the people of God and their testimony to those around them?

Take it with you: Nehemiah’s talks about certain individuals being “*overseers*”, “*gatekeepers*”, “*keepers*”, and “*in charge*” of various areas of responsibility. This week consider the things which God has made you a “keeper”, and ask God to show you how you might grow and be strengthened in that area of stewardship that He has blessed you with.

Homework: Read Nehemiah 12 for next week.

➤ **Week 13: Priests and Levites (Nehemiah 12)**

Read Nehemiah 12:1-21

Question: Here, again, we have a list although this time it is of many of the priests and ministry workers. The list is in part from the original list of exiles that returned under Zerubbabel found in Ezra. In what ways does church history help us to understand the purpose, and current state of the church today?

Question: How have notable pastors, leaders, and teachers of decades gone by, help you in your Christian walk? Consider for instance individuals like Charles Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, D. L. Moody, and Billy Graham. What is it about them that you find helpful?

Read Nehemiah 12:22-26

Question: One of the interesting notes about these verses is that they tell us where people physically stood and served as they performed their work of ministry. Consider where people sit, stand and serve in your church. Are there things about certain individuals that stand out to you? For what things will your place and role in the ministry be remembered by God?

Question: While we are not to serve in a manner by which we “perform” for others and bring attention to ourselves, we each have gifts and functions to do in the family of God. Romans 12:4-6 tells us: *“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them...”* What are some ways that we can identify, develop, and stir up the gifts that God has given each of us as believers?

Read Nehemiah 12:27-37

Question: All of the work that had been done, both physically and spiritually, has led to this grand dedication service and processional on the wall. Why is the celebration of events and milestones in the church such as the completion of a building project, a baptism, the dedication of a missionary to the field of ministry, or the ordination of a pastor, worthy of our celebration? What is the purpose for celebrating?

Question: The dedication services had musicians, two huge choirs, and singers and leaders lined up along the wall. What are some reasons for why this dedication ceremony and celebration were so significant to the people?

Question: One point that might be easy to overlook is found in verse 30 where it says “*Then the priests and Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, the gates, and the wall.*” In what ways are the purifying and sanctifying of the people and places significant and important? In the modern church, do we view the physical church and the people as being sanctified, set apart for God and worthy of special care?

Read Nehemiah 12:38-43

Question: The procession of the choirs, priests, rulers, and leaders went in two different directions on top of the wall around the entire city, ultimately ending up in the temple. How might you describe what it would have been like to be in the city that day after years of being in exile? What would you compare it to in our current day?

Question: In the Holman Old Testament Commentary, the authors write about this event saying “The dedicatory service was marked by unrestrained joy” (Larson and Dahlen, p.260). The joy that they had was from God. What kinds of events in your life have resulted in “unrestrained joy”?

Read Nehemiah 12:44-47

Question: With the dedication ceremony complete, the time had come for Nehemiah to implement organizational and procedural reforms, in order to guide the people and religious leaders in the work, ministry, and life of the people. How would those reforms have benefited the people? How does structure and the consecrating of things in your own life help you to grow spiritually?

Question: People often use the phrase “That’s just the way we have always done it”. What are the good and bad implications of this statement and this kind of thinking?

Take it with you: The next time you are worshipping at a church, take a moment to prepare your heart and to commit to being filled with joy, knowing that you are ushered into the very presence of God, worshipping Him with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Homework: Read Nehemiah 13 for next week.

➤ **Week 14: Principles and Reforms – Rejecting Compromise (Nehemiah 13)**

Read Nehemiah 13:1-3

Question: The separation presented in verse 3 is not detailed, but it is clear that there was some form of separation based on the Law. These outsiders wanted the blessing of being a part of the city, but not the expectation of obedience to the Law. In what ways does the church of today have a “*mixed multitude*” in its midst? Are we sometimes guilty of wanting the blessing without the obedience?

Question: As non-believers come into the church and are presented with the truth of Jesus Christ, they have the choice of repenting and accepting Jesus as their Lord and Savior, or rejecting Him. Why might some people continue to come to church when they are not willing to accept Jesus’ free gift of salvation?

Read Nehemiah 13:4-13

Question: “While the cat’s away the mice will play” is an old adage that still rings true today. When Nehemiah returned from a trip back to Susa, and he saw the relational and spiritual mess, how did he react? Was his reaction too extreme or appropriate for the situation? Consider the cultural norms of his day.

Question: What does Nehemiah’s reaction tell us about the priority of the things of God in his heart and mind?

Question: How do you react when the things of God are misused, abused, or neglected?

Read Nehemiah 13:14

Question: As Nehemiah made reforms and changes, he asked God to remember him for the “*good deeds*” that he had done for Him. What kinds of things do we do, that we would want God to remember? What kinds of things do we do that we would rather God forget?

Read Nehemiah 13:15-22a

Question: Once again Nehemiah was confronted with the neglect of the things of God. This time the people were profaning the Sabbath day. How did Nehemiah’s leadership serve to reclaim the importance of the Sabbath day and the spiritual lives of the people? How can we do that in our own homes/lives?

Question: Why is it important that we earnestly commit to setting aside one day a week to the worship of God?

Read Nehemiah 13:22b

Question: Again, we read here of Nehemiah praying for God to remember him. How does Nehemiah’s understanding of God’s mercy influence his prayer?

Read Nehemiah 13:23-31a

Question: As the cycle of disobedience continued, Nehemiah now witnesses people intermarrying once again. His response that we read in verse 25 would not have been uncommon in his day, but we may be alarmed by it. Why was this such an offensive act in the eyes of Nehemiah?

Question: The Holman Commentary says of Nehemiah's reaction and temperament that "...we see a spontaneous reaction against what he viewed as a deplorable offense and threat to the nation and God's law." (Larson and Dahlen, p.274). In Acts 20:28 we read of the call to pastors to "...take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." In what ways is the call to shepherd the flock seen in the New Testament, similar to the call that Nehemiah had to care for the nation of Israel?

Read Nehemiah 13:31b

Question: One last time Nehemiah asks God to remember him for the good work he had done. While the nation of Israel continued to stumble and stray, Nehemiah was concerned about how God would view his works done for God. What can Nehemiah's example teach us about how we should be concerned about the works that we do in this life for God?

Take it with you: In considering this study of the book of Nehemiah, what areas of your life has God called to mind in your own life where you have been challenged to lead, rebuild, or reform?

Bibliography

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