

## Finishing Well

October 30, 2022

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### **BIG IDEA - The sweetest part of a project is finishing well**

scripture focus - **Nehemiah 6:15-16 NLT**

**So on October 2 the wall was finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun.** When our enemies and the surrounding nations heard about it, they were frightened and humiliated. They realized this work had been done with the help of our God.”

**The Best beginnings have the end in mind! Finishing Well.**

We have a fairly famous local man who had humble beginnings but seems to be finishing well. **Steven was rejected from USC film school three times. But that didn't stop him, instead, he just tried a different school. He applied to Cal State, Long Beach, and got into their film program. And while still a student at Cal State, he landed an unpaid internship at Universal Studios. It was a fortuitous gig that soon led his dropping out.** It was a calculated move that would allow him to rub elbows with movie makers at Universal Studios to shortening his path to fulfilling his dream.

Unfortunately, his internship didn't last long enough for him to break into the movie business like he had planned. But, undeterred, Steven would still sneak into the studios, pretending to work there so he could learn more about movies until he could catch his break.

Legend has it, that he had an 8 mm film that he knew the studio executives would love, if only they would watch it. He found a way to get it into their hands, but they flip flopped on him, and then said they would only watch it if he shot it on a 16-mm film. So, Steven went out and rented a 16-mm camera and reshot the whole

movie. When he brought it back to the executives, they told him not to come back until it was on a 35-mm film. Undeterred, he jumped through their hoops and reshot the movie on the 35-mm film.

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**In 1975 summer, Steven Spielberg directed the blockbuster movie Jaws and that was the last time I went bodyboarding!**

**It matters not where you start, it's how you finish.**

We've now come to the end of our series Re-Vision. I have such a respect and appreciation for this man who's the title of the book we've been in for seven weeks – Nehemiah.

Even more so, I believe Nehemiah gave us a huge gift through the wisdom and principles he lived by an accomplished – to FINISH well.

**To finish well, you need to BE well, DO well and consistently live towards the end in sight.**

**Let's look back at the moment that the project, the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem was finished.**

**Observation #1 – Marking the day was critical**

**Nehemiah 6:15-16 NLT**

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about it, they were frightened and humiliated. They realized this work had been done with the help of our God.”

**How many days since we started this series called Re-Vision? 56**

Days <https://howlongagogo.com/date/2022/september/4>

**In about the same time that we have been in this series, Nehemiah, along with the citizens of Jerusalem and the help from God himself rebuilt the wall and the culture of the city (the people themselves).**

In the same amount of time, their “all-in” effort paid off.

**Did you know that Jerusalem is “seasonally” matched with Southern California?** Yeah, we are basically on the same place on the equator - the 33rd parallel.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/33rd\\_parallel\\_north](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/33rd_parallel_north). That means that we generate share weather and seasonal patterns with Jerusalem. Yes, Jerusalem is about 30 miles from the ocean at an elevation of 2,500 feet, but it feels very much like Southern California.

**2,467 years ago on October 2, 445 BC the Jerusalem wall was finished! The Wall Story is still told as a example of overwhelming odds to rebuild - not just a wall, but a people as well.**

Over just fifty-two days, the community came together as ONE and did the impossible with the help of God.

**As a local community of faithful followers of Jesus, we look to the future of Lakewood and surrounding cities, we see hope and possibility of re-visioning and rebuilding an expression of the Church for our future.**

When it was finished, it became clear that **the wall was the visible goal**, but **the hard work and sacrificial unity became the best way to REBUILD THE PEOPLE** who had returned from captivity.

**The best work was done in the individuals, the families and the community of Jerusalem.**

**The day itself, October 2nd, the physical, visual experience of standing within the rebuilt wall was critical for making the memory stick!**

**Job done, well done**

**Q: How many times did Nehemiah acknowledge God's help? Seven times.**

1. Nehemiah 2:8 NLT "because the gracious hand of God was on me."
2. Nehemiah 2:18 NLT "Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me."
3. Nehemiah 2:20 NLT "I replied, "The God of heaven will help us succeed."
4. Nehemiah 4:15 NLT "When our enemies heard that we knew of their plans and that God had frustrated them, we all returned to our work on the wall."
5. Nehemiah 4:20 NLT "Then our God will fight for us!"
6. Nehemiah 5:19 NLT "Remember, O my God, all that I have done for these people, and bless me for it."
7. Nehemiah 6:16 NLT "They realized this work had been done with the help of our God."

**Just a side note. Those opposed to rebuilding the wall never gave up! Nehemiah 6:19 NLT - "Tobiah kept sending threatening letters to intimidate me."**

**Observation #2 – God brings order out of chaos**

**Nehemiah 7:4-5 NLT**

"At that time the **city was large and spacious, but the population was small, and none of the houses had been rebuilt.** So my **God gave me the idea to call together** all the nobles and leaders of the city, along with the ordinary citizens, for registration. I had found the genealogical record of those who had first returned to Judah. This is what was written there:"

**Q: Why would God give Nehemiah the idea of getting ALL the people together for registration?**

**Q:** What do you think about people who say they received and “idea from God?”

**God brings order out of chaos. All that the people had seen, had experienced was done so in utter chaos. The ruins of the city reflected the ravages in their lives.**

**The rebuilt temple gave them hope, the rebuilt wall gave them a working object lesson on courage and unity,** but as they looked around there was still much to be done. The gathering and registry reminded them of who they were as the people of God.

**Nehemiah 7:66 NLT**

“So a total of **42,360 people returned to Judah,**”

**Observation #3 – Celebration is absolutely necessary**

**One week later... they celebrate**

**Nehemiah 8:1-3 NLT**

“**In October, when the Israelites settled into their towns, all the people assembled with a unified purpose at the square just inside the Water Gate.** They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given for Israel to obey. **So on October 8 Ezra the priest brought the Book of the Law before the assembly, which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand.** He faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning until noon and read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people listened closely to the Book of the Law.”

**Nehemiah 8:5-6 NLT**

“Ezra stood on the platform in full view of all the people. **When they saw him open the book, they all rose to their feet.** Then Ezra praised the Lord, the great God, and all the people chanted, “Amen!”

Amen!" as they lifted their hands. **Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground."**

### **Nehemiah 8:8 NLT**

**"They read from the Book of the Law of God and clearly explained the meaning of what was being read, helping the people understand each passage."**

**As they were celebrating, they heard the Word being read and began to cry.**

**"For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law."**

**I don't how many of you have read Deuteronomy, but I don't think it's ever made me CRY!**

**Q:** What we're they crying about?

### **Nehemiah 8:9-10 NLT**

**"Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were interpreting for the people said to them, "Don't mourn or weep on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the Lord your God." For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. And Nehemiah continued, "Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!""**

**Ezra makes an interesting comment about dedicating the new temple in Ezra 3:12, he writes**

**"But many of the older priests, Levites, and other leaders who had seen the first Temple wept aloud when they saw the new Temple's foundation. The others, however, were shouting for joy."**

**Who were those who had seen the first temple?** They must have been children or youth! They were young when they saw the magnificence of Solomon's Temple. 70 years had passed while in exile and now they were old. They remembered both the enormity of the building and the grand gatherings that took place. They remembered and **WEPT!**

Why did they cry at the sight of the new temple? **IT SHRUNK!** And it wasn't the only thing that shrunk. They looked around and they saw a tiny temple surrounded by devastation. Not thousands of priests in rich colorful clothes, not hundreds of musicians with shiny instruments. Not a King, proud, powerful, and rich. And certainly not millions of their kinfolk packed into a sea of reverence towards God.

But what did the others see? These who were born in Babylon, raised in captivity, lost without hope of ever being anything but poor and in a foreign land. They saw a **NEW HOPE** and they were shouting for Joy!

**Memories don't serve us well if we can't think about what God IS doing and WILL do in our future through our children!**

This is the most critical, generational observation in the difference between those who have experienced God in their past and those who want to experience God in their future.

**It's okay to weep when you remember but turn and shout for joy for what God is doing NOW!**

**Q:** Do you believe in celebrations? What has been your experience of celebrating after a successful project or thriving after a difficult season.

**Q:** What do you think about this odd comment out of Ezra? Some wept, others shouted for joy.

**Observation #4 – Together through confession they are restored to God.**

four weeks later...

### **Nehemiah 9:1-3 NLT - Repentance**

**“On October 31 the people assembled again, and this time they fasted and dressed in burlap and sprinkled dust on their heads. Those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all foreigners as they confessed their own sins and the sins of their ancestors. They remained standing in place for three hours while the Book of the Law of the Lord their God was read aloud to them. Then for three more hours they confessed their sins and worshiped the Lord their God.”**

**Q:** What in the world were the people confessing to?

**Q:** Why do you think confession of sin is difficult for folks?

**The people's confession is a vital step towards their restoration**

**I would go so far to say this,**

**You can't have restoration without confession!**

Part of their captivity meant the people had NOT gathered and had NOT heard the Word of God being read out loud, in community.

**They were starving for this communal experience of hearing God's Word and didn't even know it!**

The Word of God was restorative, lifting them to worship together and bring great Joy and hope – **they could feel God's presence among them.**

This has been quite the journey, looking over the shoulder of Nehemiah and watching God work through his life. Then, traveling with the Israelites out of captivity and into a massive rebuilding project! The entire review of the main points are in the notes for this message. But what does this all mean for us?

For us, here on Candlewood, a 70-year-old church, that was started in a garage over on Montair, it means we have kind of a roadmap



for change. It means it will take huge faith, hard work, sacrifice, unity, and humility before God to accomplish what God has before us in the future.

I have faith in our Big God to do the impossible in us and through us.

I believe that God is at work right now in our community, in our culture and will supernaturally draw young and old men and women, sovereignty to Himself.

Our job, our mission is to be ready for those who will be coming. The unchurched, the dechurched, the deconstructed, the disenchanting and all those who are broken, searching for meaning, purpose and real love – not hashtagged, fake insta-tic-tok love but sacrificial, enduring, saving love.

I believe Psalms 68:5-6, because He has done this for me!

**“Father to the fatherless, defender of widows—** this is God, whose dwelling is holy. **God places the lonely in families;** he sets the prisoners free and gives them joy. But he makes the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.”

**On November 13, Sunday Night at 6:30pm we are going to have a night of worship, prayer, and confession. I encourage you; I dare you to join with us and experience God’s presence TOGETHER.**

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## NOTES

### [Steven Spielberg](#) – by the Strive Team

Steven Spielberg journey to becoming well, Steven Spielberg is a fantastic motivational story. Here's why, Spielberg was rejected from USC film school three times. But that didn't stop him, instead, he just tried a different school. He applied to Cal State, Long Beach, and got into their film program. And while still a student at Cal State, he landed an unpaid internship at Universal Studios. It was a fortuitous gig that soon led to his dropping out. It was a calculated move that would allow him to rub elbows with movie makers at Universal Studios to shortening his path to fulfilling his dream.

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**Also take a look at [Bob Bufford's book, Halftime](#): **Moving from Success to Significance. Also the author of *Finishing Well*.****

## Scriptures

### **Nehemiah 6:15-16 NLT**

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**the Law before the assembly, which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand.** He faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning until noon and read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people listened closely to the Book of the Law.”

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#### **Ezra 3:12 NLT**

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## **Questions**

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**Q:** Why would God give Nehemiah the idea of getting ALL the people together for registration?

**Q:** What do you think about people who say they received and “**idea from God?**”

**Q:** Do you believe in celebrations? What has been your experience of celebrating after a successful project or thriving after a difficult season.

**Q:** Nehemiah writes, “For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.” What were they crying about?

**Q:** What do you think about this odd comment out of Ezra? Some wept, others shouted for joy.

**Q:** What in the world were the people confessing to?

**Q:** Why do you think confession of sin is difficult for folks?

## COMMENTARY REFERENCES

### Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges

**7:4 The inhabitants of Jerusalem were in Nehemiah's time very few in comparison with what they had been before the captivity**, see [Nehemiah 11:1-2](#). The number of Jews that had returned with Zerubbabel had been 42360 ([Ezra 2:64](#); [Nehemiah 7:66](#)). With Ezra there had come rather more than 1500 ([Ezra 8:1-20](#)). Others had come from time to time. But of the whole number of 50,000 or so, a very large proportion were settled in the country and towns in the neighbourhood, as appears from [Nehemiah 7:73](#), [Nehemiah 11:25-36](#), [Nehemiah 12:27-29](#).

[*the houses were not builded*] An expression that cannot be understood literally. The meaning is, there were large open spaces within the walls unoccupied.

### Benson Commentary

**Nehemiah 7:5.** *And my God put into my heart, — Whatever good motion is put into our minds, we must acknowledge it to come from God; and even what is done by human prudence is to be ascribed to the direction of divine providence.* *To gather together the nobles and the rulers of the people* —Not only for the particular end here mentioned, but for divers other weighty purposes and matters, of which the following chapters treat.

### Ezra 3:12

#### Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Wept ... shouted ... for joy - Compare the marginal reference and [Zechariah 4:10](#). It is implied that the dimensions of the second temple were smaller than those of the first. Hence, the feeling of sorrow which came upon some. They, however, who had not seen the former temple, and so could not contrast the two, naturally rejoiced to see the sanctuary of their religion begin to rise from its ruins.

## Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

Those painful emotions were excited by the sad contrast between the prosperous circumstances in which the foundations of the first temple had been laid and the desolate, reduced state of the country and city when the second was begun; between the inferior size and less costliness of the stones used in the foundations of the second (1Ki 7:9, 10), and the much smaller extent of the foundation itself, including all the appurtenances of the building (Hag 2:3); between the comparative smallness of their present means and the immense resources of David and Solomon. Perhaps, however, the chief cause of grief was that the second temple would be destitute of those things which formed the great and distinguishing glory of the first; namely, the ark, the shekinah, the Urim and Thummim, &c. Not that this second temple was not a very grand and beautiful structure. But no matter how great its material splendor was, it was inferior in this respect to that of Solomon. Yet the glory of the second far outshone that of the first temple in another and more important point of view, namely, the receiving within its walls the incarnate Saviour (Hag 2:9).

## The New Bible Commentary

### Nehemiah 9:1–37 (NBC): 9:1–37 Confession

In the overall structure of chs. 8–10, the reading of Scripture (ch. 8) is followed by confession (ch. 9) as a preparation for a renewed pledge to keep the law (ch. 10).

9:1–5 **Assembly for confession.** The striking point about this paragraph is the absence of the names of either Ezra or Nehemiah. The emphasis is on each individual accepting a share of responsibility in word, attitude (1) and deed (2) for the past sin and present plight of the community. Appropriately, therefore, it was two groups of otherwise unknown Levites who led the congregation in their worship and confession (4–5).

9:5b–37 **Prayer of confession.** True confession arises from a renewed appreciation of who God is, and that is very much the starting point for this prayer. From the beginning of time, God has revealed himself as one who is worthy of all blessing and praise (5b). He alone is the Lord, as shown by creation (6); he chose Abram, freely promised him a land and proved that he is righteous by keeping that promise (7–8); and he proved himself worthy of such a reputation (name, 10) by the deliverance of his people in the exodus and at the Red Sea (9–11). These first three sections of the prayer, therefore, speak in unqualified terms of God's goodness and grace, and they provide the basis for the sharp contrast which the community felt in its present circumstances as outlined in the closing verses of the prayer (32–37), where several key terms from this opening section are repeated.

With the journey through the wilderness (12–21) a new note is sounded. Alongside the continuing gracious provision of God (12–15), the people began to rebel (16–18). This, however, only revealed another aspect of God's character, his mercy (17b), for despite everything he continued to supply and sustain them (19–21), and eventually brought them to the land which he had promised so long ago (22–25).

The portrayal of life in the land (26–31) is very much influenced by the pattern which recurs throughout the book of Judges and to a lesser extent Kings. We cannot identify specific events here; rather the focus is on the underlying rebellious nature of the people and God's response to it. Three times we are told that they were disobedient and so were handed over to their enemies (26–27a; 28a; 29–30). In the first two cases, they then cried to God, who delivered them in his compassion (27b; 28b). That element in the pattern is not repeated the third time, however, probably because vs 29–31 are speaking of the Babylonian conquest and exile, a state which theologically speaking was still in force at the time of this prayer; the restoration could not yet be regarded as complete because foreign oppression continued (36–37).

**Instead, in a most powerful move from the point of intercession, the expected report of the people's cry to God is replaced by an actual prayer** to that effect, starting at v 32. Against the background of all that has gone before, this breathes a strong atmosphere of hope that **God will again move to liberate his people from their present experience of bondage, and that he will again allow them to experience freedom in the land which he had given them in faithfulness to his original promise.** The **people's confession is thus a vital step towards their restoration** which is the subject of these chapters as a whole.

## The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Nehemiah 9:1–37 (BKC): 2. the israelites' confession of sin (9:1–37)

**"The Word of God had a tremendous impact on the Restoration community. It pointed the people to their sin (8:9), led them to worship (8:12, 14), and gave them great joy (8:17)"** (J. Carl Laney, Ezra/Nehemiah, p. 104).

## Summary Review

**First week** - see reality, grieve the loss, recognize our part of the problem and do something about it.

**Second week** - Seeing God at work, use the time to prepare and take ownership - Our city, Our people.

**Third week** - see who and what you are up against, **make people see the truth** by not only seeing where they are but also where they could be. And realizing **Not everyone will join.**

**Fourth week** - Leaders go first, people over project, even the smallest commitments are important.

**Fifth & Sixth week** - Opposition is real and inevitable. Attacks come from within and without.

**Seventh week** - We must finish what we start and celebrate what God has done.

## Observations Review

### Review from Chapter One

1. see reality,
2. grieve the loss,
3. do something about it
4. recognize our part of the problem.
5. And together, in the months ahead, asking for God's help and favor.

### Review from Chapter Two – first half

1. God is at work
2. Use the time to prepare
3. Let godly character and wisdom guide us
4. Take ownership - Our city, Our people
5. Be ready with plan

### Review from Chapter Two – second half

1. You've got to see **who** you are up against
2. You've got to see **what** you are up against
3. You have to **make people see the truth!** Where they are and where they could be.
4. **Not everyone will join** and some may openly oppose you and the plan.

### Review from Chapter Three

1. Leaders go first.
2. People really matter to God, they should matter to us.
3. A commitment from all, no matter how large or how small, will eventually build the wall strong and tall.

### Review from Chapter Four

1. Opposition starts with verbal mockery
2. Reflect on words, but redirect them to God

3. Physical threats normally follow verbal threats
4. Exhaustion weakens resolve
5. Enemy chatter will increase, but so can our faith
6. Be Ready and Resolved

## **Review from Chapters Five & Six**

1. You expect enemies from the outside, but rarely from within
2. Nehemiah didn't go straight to prayer, he spoke to power
3. A miracle happens, the nobles do what is right
4. Nehemiah reveals his wealth and modeled generosity
5. Betrayal is a bitter drink.

## **Review from Chapters Six Through Nine**

1. Marking the day was critical
2. God brings order out of chaos
3. Celebration is absolutely necessary
4. Together, through confession, they are restored to God.