REBUILD

Start With What Breaks Your Heart

Week 1 • A 5-Day Devotional Guide

Finding Hope, Purpose and Renewal in the Book of Nehemiah

Introduction

We all know what it is like to look at something and think, “This is not how it should be.” It might be a relationship, a family worry, a need in our community, or something within ourselves. Sometimes we rush to fix it. Sometimes we look away because it feels too big.

Nehemiah begins differently. He allows himself to care, brings his grief honestly to God, and prepares to act. His prayer is not a way of avoiding responsibility. It is an expression of dependence on the God whose faithfulness is greater than the problem.

This week is not about becoming the hero of every situation. It is an invitation to bring one burden to God and ask, “What is my next faithful step?” Whether you have followed Jesus for years or are just beginning to explore faith, you can start with an honest prayer.

Big idea: Don’t just complain about what is broken—bring it to God and begin.

How to use this guide

Read the complete passage listed each day in your own Bible. The focus passage highlights the verses most closely connected to the reflection; it is not a replacement for the full reading. Then consider the questions and use the prayer as a starting point.

Day 1: Allow Yourself to Care

Scripture

Read: Nehemiah 1:1–4

Focus passage: Nehemiah 1:4

Thought for the Day

Bad news can leave us overwhelmed, numb, or desperate to move on. Nehemiah hears that Jerusalem's people are in distress and its walls are ruined. He does not immediately offer advice. He sits down and weeps. Before he rebuilds anything, he allows the reality to affect him.

These are not simply damaged buildings. This is the city bound up with his people's identity and their relationship with God. Nehemiah's concern begins with a real community in a real place. Our application should begin with real people too, rather than a vague ambition to change everything.

You cannot carry every burden. Caring does not make you responsible for fixing every problem. But you can bring one concern honestly to God. If prayer is unfamiliar, begin simply: "God, this matters to me. Help me know how to respond."

Reflection

- What situation has genuinely moved you recently?
- Do you tend to rush into fixing, withdraw, or allow yourself to grieve?
- What one concern will you bring to God today?

Prayer

God, you see the people and situations I find hard to face. Help me care without assuming everything depends on me. Meet me in my sadness and show me how to bring this burden to you. Amen.

Day 2: Bring the Burden to God

Scripture

Read: Nehemiah 1:5–11

Focus passage: Nehemiah 1:5–6

Thought for the Day

When a problem feels urgent, we often begin with what we need. Nehemiah begins with who God is: great, faithful, and committed to his covenant of love. A covenant is a binding relationship of promises and responsibilities. His confidence rests in God’s character, not his own ability.

His prayer includes confession. He does not blame everyone else while keeping himself at a safe distance. He acknowledges his own family’s sin alongside the people’s failure. He also remembers God’s promise to gather his people when they return to him.

This is more than positive thinking. Nehemiah brings a particular situation into the light of God’s promises. For us, honest prayer can include gratitude, responsibility, and a specific request. Through Jesus we are invited to approach God with our need, not with a carefully managed image.

Reflection

- What does Nehemiah’s prayer reveal about the God he trusts?
- Is there something you need to acknowledge rather than excuse?
- What specific help will you ask God for today?

Prayer

Faithful God, help me remember your character before I rehearse my fears. Forgive what I need to confess, and teach me to ask honestly for your help. Thank you that I can come to you through Jesus. Amen.

Day 3: Pray and Act Courageously

Scripture

Read: Nehemiah 2:1–8

Focus passage: Nehemiah 2:4–5

Thought for the Day

Nehemiah has prayed, but the next step is still frightening. When the king notices his sadness, Nehemiah is afraid. Courage does not mean the absence of fear. It means responding faithfully when fear is present.

Asked what he wants, he prays and answers. His requests are practical: permission to go, letters for safe passage, and timber for the work. Dependence on God and careful preparation belong together. He recognises the king's favourable response as evidence of God's gracious hand.

Our situations will not always open up as Nehemiah's did. This story is not a guarantee that every request will be granted. But it does invite us to combine prayer with wise action. A conversation, a request for help, or an apology may be the next step. You do not need a complete plan before taking a responsible first step.

Reflection

- What do you notice about the connection between prayer and preparation?
- What fear is making a necessary conversation harder?
- What practical step can you prepare for and take this week?

Prayer

God, give me courage that depends on you rather than on feeling fearless. Help me prepare wisely, speak honestly, and accept that I cannot control the outcome. Show me the next faithful step. Amen.

Day 4: Face the Reality Honestly

Scripture

Read: Nehemiah 2:9–16

Focus passage: Nehemiah 2:13–15

Thought for the Day

Arriving in Jerusalem does not mean Nehemiah immediately launches a campaign. There is opposition, a period of waiting, and a quiet inspection of the damage. He takes time to understand the reality before asking others to join the work.

Faith is not denial. A strained relationship, an exhausted household, or a struggling community needs honest attention, not simply an encouraging slogan. Seeing clearly can help us respond wisely rather than react out of anxiety or assumptions.

Nehemiah’s inspection is not an invitation to scrutinise everyone else’s faults. Begin with what you actually know, listen to those affected, and recognise your limits. Jesus’ call to truthfulness makes room for acknowledging need. Today, look carefully at one situation you have avoided. You may need advice or support before deciding what rebuilding should involve.

Reflection

- Where do you need a clearer picture rather than another assumption?
- Whose experience do you need to listen to?
- What would a wise, honest assessment look like today?

Prayer

God, help me face what is true without losing hope. Give me patience to listen, humility to learn, and wisdom to recognise what I can and cannot do. Lead me away from denial and towards responsible action. Amen.

Day 5: Invite Others to Begin

Scripture

Read: Nehemiah 2:17–20

Focus passage: Nehemiah 2:17–18

Thought for the Day

Nehemiah names the trouble, tells the people how God has helped him, and invites them to rebuild. His language matters: this is the trouble “we” are in, and the invitation is to rebuild together. He does not offer himself as a solitary rescuer.

The people respond with willingness to work. Opposition is still present, but the beginning is shared. Nehemiah’s confidence in God does not remove the need for participation; it gives the community a reason to begin.

We should not transfer the ancient dispute about Jerusalem’s rights directly onto people who question a church project today. The helpful invitation is to prayerful, shared responsibility. Who could help you think, pray, or act wisely? Following Jesus is not a solo rebuilding project. Invite someone into the next step rather than trying to carry everything yourself.

Reflection

- What makes Nehemiah’s invitation both honest and hopeful?
- Where are you trying to do something alone that needs shared wisdom?
- Who could you invite into one practical next step?

Prayer

God, thank you that I do not have to carry every burden alone. Help me invite others without pressure or manipulation. Give us a shared willingness to serve, and keep our confidence rooted in your grace. Amen.

Created with the help of AI using the Rebuild sermon series plan.