
Nehemiah

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book recording Israel's return from exile in **three waves**.

Leader	to Rebuild	Section
Zerubbabel	The Temple	Ezra 1-6
Ezra	The Law	Ezra 7-10
Nehemiah	The Walls	Neh 1-13

The book of Nehemiah records how Nehemiah led the third wave of the Jews to return from exile in 445 BC. This was 93 years after the initial wave of Jews returned with Zerubbabel, and 13 years after the second wave returned with Ezra. The people are poor, not treated well by others, and in constant fear. They have become careless in their faith.

Outline

The book of Nehemiah is divided into two parts:

Chapters	Rebuilding	Emphasis
Neh 1-7	The Walls	External
Neh 8-13	The Hearts	Internal

At a high level, we can apply lessons from Nehemiah by:

- building walls of protection in our lives
- building ourselves and others in God's Word

Key Words, Verses

walls

[Nehemiah 6:15](#)

Personal Reflection and Application

Meditate on the significance of the order of gates that Nehemiah repaired in [Nehemiah 3](#).

- Sheep Gate: Is your first priority your relationship with Christ ([John 10:1-16](#))?
- Fish Gate: Are you seeking faithful fish ([Mat 4:19](#))?
- Old Gate: Do you slip back into your old ways, or live a life of fruitfulness ([Mat 13:20-22](#))?
- Valley Gate: How do you respond to and learn from trials ([Jas 5:10-11](#))?
- Dung Gate: How are you doing at throwing out the rubbish in your life, so you are ready to bathe in the fountain ([2Cor 7:1](#))?
- Fountain Gate: Do you hear the Holy Spirit ([John 9:7](#))?
- Water Gate: Do you allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in understanding and applying God's Word ([Eph 5:26](#))?
- Horse Gate: Are you mounted and ready for spiritual warfare ([Eph 6:10-18](#))?
- East Gate: Are you looking for Christ to return ([Eze 44:1-2](#), [1The 4:16-17](#))?
- Inspection Gate: Do you look forward to Christ's judgment ([Rom 14:12](#))?

Assess your current spiritual life. To what extent do you have a sword in one hand and a brick in the other?

	<i>Need More - -Hands Are Full</i>
Sword: prayer, Bible Reading...	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
Brick: applying God's Word	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Sometimes an apparently harmless invitation is a hidden attack. It tries to distract you from what God desires for you. Nehemiah didn't even consider accepting the invitation from Sanballat [[Neh 6:2-3](#)]. How do you decide whether to accept an invitation or opportunity?

Try one or more of the following.

- Pray, asking God if accepting the invitation is the best thing for you.
- Look at your current commitments to see if the new opportunity would cause you to fail to meet those commitments.
- Ask yourself what would be the best use of your time, participating in the new opportunity or attending to a current high-priority item.

Small Group Conversation Guide

What would be the spiritual equivalent in our community today of being in great distress and reproach [[Neh 1:3](#)]?

What hinders us from responding to the distress and reproach of people as Nehemiah did [[Neh 1:4](#)]?

What was Nehemiah's initial response to the burden God gave him [[Neh 1:1-4](#)]? What do you tend to do first when God puts a burden on your heart?

Consider the structure of Nehemiah's prayer:

- ▶ **Praise God** [[Neh 1:5](#)]. How often do you begin your prayers by telling God how wonderful He is in your eyes?
- ▶ **Confess to God** [[Neh 1:6-7](#)]. How often do you acknowledge your sins before asking God for something?
- ▶ **Claim God's promises** [[Neh 1:8-9](#)]. Do you know God's promises well enough

that you can repeat them back to Him [[2Pet 1:3-4](#)]? What can you do to become more familiar with His promises?

- ▶ **Make the request** [[Neh 1:10-11](#)]. Do you remember to say please when you ask God for something? Why is saying "Please" important?

Notice that Nehemiah had never been sad in the presence of Artaxerxes [[Neh 2:2](#)]. How can our demeanor affect the way people respond to us? How could our demeanor affect the way God responds to us?

Nehemiah responded by first affirming his loyalty to the king, then he said a silent prayer before he made a request [[Neh 2:3-4](#)]. When we get an open door, what could help us remember to pray silently before speaking?

Nehemiah had a specific plan in mind to present to the king (**Neh 2:5-6**). How important is it to think things through as you are awaiting an open door (**Pro 21:5**)? What types of things are you doing to prepare for open doors?

Nehemiah said, "If it pleases the king" (**Neh 2:5**). What can help us present requests respectfully rather than make demands or put the person in a no-win situation?

When the king approved Nehemiah's plan, to whom did Nehemiah give the credit (**Neh 2:8**)? How often do you give God the credit for success (**Psa 52:9**)?

When Nehemiah and the Jews faced ridicule, what did they do (**Neh 4:1-6**)? What is the source of your self-worth? How have you reacted when someone ridiculed you? How would God prefer you react the next time it happens?

When the Jews learned that their enemies planned to attack them physically, what did they do (**Neh 4:7-9**)? In what ways have you combined prayer and safety precautions?

Notice how the rubbish was interfering with the work (**Neh 4:10-12**)? What types of spiritual rubbish can incapacitate us?

What would it take for us to remember the great and awesome Lord when we are afraid (**Neh 4:13-15**)? What daily practices can help us remember?

Do you keep a brick in one hand and a sword in the other (**Neh 4:17-18**)? Discuss how this might look in a typical day.

- ▶ Beginning your day
- ▶ During your daily tasks or job
- ▶ At meals
- ▶ When talking with others
- ▶ Ending your day

From what **Nehemiah 8:1-3** says, who should have the opportunity to hear God's Word? Discuss the advantages of hearing God's Word in a group setting. Discuss other settings where adults and children can hear God's Word. In what ways can we make it intentional to hear God's Word?

How does Ezra begin teaching from God's Word (**Neh 8:6**)? Discuss how we can properly acknowledge God as we open His Word.

When we overcome obstacles or accomplish something, how can we make it about what Jesus does through us instead of about ourselves? What role do the following play?

- ▶ Using His Word to praise Him (**Neh 8:8**)
- ▶ Celebrating or feasting to praise Him (**Neh 8:9-12**)

Why did the people weep when they heard God's Word (**Neh 8:8-9**)? Discuss times when you have wept at hearing God's Word (**Heb 4:12**).

It was a sacrifice for those who moved to Jerusalem because they had already established lives elsewhere. The people blessed those who volunteered (**Neh 11:2**).

Your gift of yourself makes you valuable to God even if it does not appear so to others. God remembers every labor you do (**Heb 6:10**).

- Discuss your experience with volunteering within the church.
- What types of volunteer work do you find most satisfying.
- In what way does knowing God's view of volunteers change your attitude about volunteering?

Leadership Principles from Nehemiah

Characteristics of a Spiritual Leader

Reflect on the characteristics of a spiritual leader that Nehemiah demonstrated.

1. Faced Reality: Nehemiah didn't ignore the problem [[Neh 1:4](#)]
2. Personally Cared: Nehemiah had a cushy circumstance, but he cared about his people. When he heard the bad news, he sat down and cried [[Neh 1:4](#)]. He mourned for several days.
3. Brought the Need to God First: Nehemiah didn't rush off to fix the problem on his own. What he did immediately was pray. [Of course, temper this with the urgency of the situation. No doubt, you can pray while you act.] Notice how he began his prayer by telling God how awesome He is [[Neh 1:5](#)]
4. Knew God's Promises: Nehemiah knew God's promises well enough to admit where he and the people had gone wrong and also claim the promises that God had made to them [[Neh 1:6-9](#)].
5. Was Available for God to Use: Nehemiah let God know that He was there and ready to do what God desired regarding the problem [[Neh 1:10-11](#)].

Do you face reality, personally care, bring needs to God first, know His promises, and make yourself available for God to use?

Identify the Needs

Nehemiah's first action was to see where the walls needed repair [[Neh 2:13-16](#)]. When creating a plan what are some of the things you consider? How do you make certain you have identified the needs?

Pause First

Nehemiah waited three days before he took his first action related to what God had put in his heart to do [[Neh 2:11-12](#)]. Do you pause before beginning a task God has put in your heart to do? In what ways can a pause be helpful?

- [Mark 6:30-32](#)
- [Mat 14:23](#)
- [Luke 6:12-13](#)

Tell How God is Working

When speaking to the people, Nehemiah told them how God was directing him and how He had softened the king's heart to support the repair of the walls [[Neh 2:17-18](#)]. When you present the vision for a task, what would make it more likely for people to rise up and work?

Begin at the Sheep Gate

When Nehemiah rebuilt the walls, work began at the Sheep Gate [[Neh 3:1](#)]. This provided for the sacrifices for the sins of the people. In what way does this indicate our first priority [[Mat 6:33](#)]? How can we be sure we set and keep the right priorities?

Diverse, Yet Unified

Notice the variety of people that Nehemiah called to the work [[Neh 3](#)]. Think of ways to engage volunteers who are diverse, yet unified in the work [[Eph 4:11-13](#)].

Overcome Discouragement

What can a leader do to help people overcome discouragement? Here are some tips adapted from Charles Swindoll's "**Hand Me Another Brick.**"

1. Unify people around a meaningful goal [**Neh 4:13-14**].
2. Point people toward God [**Neh 4:14** and **Php 4:6**].
3. Encourage people to get back into balance [**Neh 4:16-17**].
4. Provide a rallying point for people. They need to know they are not alone [**Neh 4:20**].
5. Occupy people in serving to increase morale and confidence [**Neh 4:21-23**].

Read It, Do It, Rejoice

Consider this leadership lesson adapted from Charles Swindoll's "**Hand Me Another Brick.**"

- No life is complete without spiritual dimension [**Neh 8:8**].
- No spiritual dimension is complete without input from Scripture [**Mat 4:4** and **Deu 8:3**].
- No input from Scripture is complete without personal obedience [**Jas 1:22**].
- No personal obedience is complete without rejoicing [**Neh 8:10-12**].

Something to Find in Each Chapter

As you read through the book, it may help to have something to find in each chapter. Try these:

01. What caused Nehemiah to weep	02. What caused the king to ask what Nehemiah wanted
03. How everyone repaired their own section of the wall	04. How Nehemiah organized for building and defense
05. What caused Nehemiah to confront the nobles	06. How people tried to stop the walls from being rebuilt
07. Why some priests were removed from the priesthood	08. How the people heard the word of God
09. How much time people spent in the word and worship	10. Who received people's tithes (10%) to the Lord
11. What percentage of people lived in Jerusalem	12. How Israel celebrated the dedication of the city walls
13. What Nehemiah did to Tobiah's things in the temple	