

Introduction

“[In Nehemiah,] the city of Jerusalem still lies in ruins, with its modest temple unprotected by a defensive city wall. Nehemiah is filled with shame for the deplorable condition of the city where David ruled, God dwelled, and his ancestors were buried. His return shows that faithfulness to God results in blessing, but hostile opposition is close at hand (chapters 1–6). With the godly leadership of the priest Ezra and the governor Nehemiah, the people confess their sins and devote themselves to covenant (chapters 8–10). They celebrate the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls (chapter 12), but when Nehemiah returns from a trip to Persia, he is dismayed to see the people have returned to unfaithfulness (chapter 13).”

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This year we are memorizing Isaiah 40. This week’s verse is Isaiah 40:30–31...
“Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly,
yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles,
they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.”

Day One

Read *Nehemiah 1–4*, skimming chapter 3; ***Nehemiah Returned to Jerusalem***

1. In Nehemiah 1, what news was brought to Nehemiah regarding the condition of Jerusalem, and how did he respond?
 - a. From Nehemiah 1:4–2:8, what action did the prophet take regarding his concern for Jerusalem? How did the Lord accomplish Nehemiah’s desire?
2. According to Nehemiah 2:9–20, what was the first thing Nehemiah did as the governor of Judah, and what did that accomplish?
3. From 2:10, 2:19–20, and 4:1–14, summarize briefly the opposition that Nehemiah and the people encountered, and how they responded.
4. From Nehemiah’s prayer in 1:5–11, list some characteristics of prayer revealed by his words and attitudes, (e.g., reverence). What principle can you apply to your own life when facing difficulties and obstacles?

Day Two

Read *Nehemiah 5–6*; ***Nehemiah as Governor***

1. From Nehemiah 5:1–5, what problem arose among the Jews after they dealt with external opposition from the surrounding people?
 - a. According to verses 6–13, how did Nehemiah deal with the conflict? (Take note of Nehemiah’s specific motivation to the people in verse 9.)
2. In chapter 5, what characteristics of Nehemiah’s leadership stand out to you, and how can you imitate him in the areas where the Lord has given *you* leadership and influence?

3. From the following texts, identify Sanballat's specific opposition, the purpose behind the attacks, and Nehemiah's response.
 - a. Nehemiah 6:1-4

 - b. Nehemiah 6:5-9

 - c. Nehemiah 6:10-14

 - d. In your opinion, which of these attacks had the potential to do the most damage, and why?

4. When you are maligned or your motives are questioned, what characteristic of God or passage of Scripture can you call to mind to fight discouragement?

Day Three

Read Nehemiah 8-10; Judah's Repentance and Covenant Renewal

1. From Nehemiah 8:1-7, what indications show that the people were spiritually hungry?

2. According to 8:6, 9-12 and 9:1-3, how did the people respond to the reading of God's Word?
 - a. Remembering the context of our study this year, why would the words "the joy of the Lord is your strength" in verse 10 have encouraged the people?

3. From Nehemiah 9:5-15, identify some of the promises and deliverances that God gave to Israel.

4. In verses 16-37, which aspects of God's character stand out in direct contrast to Israel's disobedience?

5. From Nehemiah 10:28-39, how did Nehemiah and the people prove they were intentional in their commitment to these covenant obligations? Identify some of the specific promises the people made.

Day Four

Read Nehemiah 11-12; Urban Renewal

1. Read Nehemiah 11:1-4. What kind of challenges do you think the people who moved to Jerusalem would have faced, as well as those who remained in the other cities?

2. From Nehemiah 12:27-43, identify different elements that were included in Israel's celebration at the dedication ceremony for Jerusalem's walls.
 - a. What is the emphasis in verse 43, and how does that connect with Israel's covenant commitment to God?

3. All of Nehemiah's new policies and practices set the Jews apart from the surrounding people. Why was that important?
 - a. Do you think it's important for Christians to be set apart in today's society? How would your obedience and joy honor God and be an example to unbelievers?

Day Five

Read *Nehemiah 13* and *Malachi 1–2*; ***Nehemiah's Second Return to Jerusalem***

Note: Following the people's repentance and renewal of the covenant, Nehemiah returned to Persia as he had promised in Nehemiah 2:6. During his absence, the people were again unfaithful, led by the high priest. It was during this time that the prophet Malachi ministered and indicted the people's sin. After hearing of the poor condition of Jerusalem, Nehemiah returned to the city, this time to confront their sin. Nehemiah 13 is the last portion of the Old Testament to be written.

1. According to Nehemiah 13:4–14 and Malachi 1:6–2:9, identify some of the specific ways that the priests sinned against God.
 - a. From Nehemiah 13:8–13, how did Nehemiah respond once he heard of the corruption of the leadership?
 - b. It had only been a short time since Nehemiah had left Judah, yet the people quickly returned to their sin. What does this teach about the risk of religious superficiality and "going through the motions?"
2. From Nehemiah 13:23, in what other sin had the people become involved, one that had been dealt with only a generation earlier by Ezra?
 - a. According to verse 24, why was this particular sin singled out as being so significant?
3. **Dig Deeper:** With these books closing the Old Testament canon, how do they prepare Israel for what's to come and move God's plan of redemption forward?
4. From Psalm 19:7–13, Psalm 119:11, and 2 Timothy 3:16–17, what are some purposes that reading and meditating on Scripture serve in the life of those who fear the Lord?
 - a. Do you structure your day in such a way to make devotional reading and prayer central? What practical steps can you take to do so?
 - b. What will you do to follow the examples of Ezra and Nehemiah and develop a plan for your spiritual growth over the summer? What specific elements will you include in this plan and who will you ask to hold you accountable?



Women of Grace

• Lesson 25 • Overview of Nehemiah •

Brown

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