

Building for Christ: Nehemiah Chapters 1 and 2
Bible Study
Lesson 1

A Bible Study Series of The Mt. Zion Church

Written by: Pastor Ken Patterson, Ph.D.



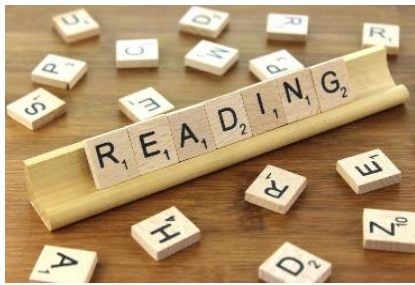
We Have the Vision to be a LEARNING Church!
We are Rooted in Christ and Reaching the One!



Lesson Introduction

The following study in Nehemiah is purposed to allow Christians to understand how average people can complete God sized purposes. While many center their lives on comfort and personal attainment, Nehemiah used his position to benefit others. Thus, the history of Nehemiah implies that we are not placed in positions of prominence solely for ourselves. Rather, God desires us, regardless of position, to have sensitivity for others. We are to use what He has placed in our proverbial hands to lift those in distress. Nehemiah used his position to rebuild the walls and gates of a city which had been destroyed by the people who employed him! He was courageous, but more importantly he was committed to the task that God placed on his heart. To prepare for this study, take time to read the chapter to be studied in Nehemiah prior to the class. Additional passages of scripture will also be highlighted within the lessons

Reading for week 1:



Nehemiah 1-2:9

Proverbs 19:17

Proverbs 21: 13

Isaiah 58: 1-12

I. The Problem

The Jews were scattered. They lived throughout the Persian Empire. Originally many had been taken captive by the Babylonian kingdom. Eventually the Persians conquered Babylon. In keeping with God's promise to return the Jews to the land He had given them, God worked through the Persian kings to allow the people to return to the land.

The remnant of people descended from those who had originally returned were not doing well. They were in "great distress." The city was in disrepair. Over 150 years before, Babylon destroyed the wall. Though the people had returned 90 years before, the wall was still not rebuilt. Even the gates were lying in ruin. Basically, the people were living in the middle of ruins. Since the Jews were living in a ruined city this visible picture of outward decay would seem to indicate that there were much worse spiritual problems as well. We can see some of those problems in Ezra and Haggai when the people intermarried with other nations and focused

on paneling their own homes rather than building God’s temple. Though there was a remnant, the outlook for the country was not good.

II. Sensitivity to Others’ Condition

1. What did Nehemiah ask Hanani?
2. How did Nehemiah react?
3. List 3 issues that you see within your community that need to be addressed.

| Community Issue | Impact this has on people |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ex. Car break ins, downtown St. Louis | This makes people feel unsafe and impacts the ability of the downtown area to grow financially because businesses and people who are middle and upper middle class are less likely to come. |
| | |
| | |
| | |



Have you responded to any of the issues like Nehemiah? Why or why not?

Are you someone who has sympathy or empathy?

In general, 'sympathy' is when you share the feelings of another; have pity or sorry for them. 'empathy' is when you understand the feelings of another but do not necessarily share them and then move to solve the problem.

Nehemiah’s reaction shows us a lot about him as a person. He was empathetic. Nehemiah himself didn’t face any of the problems the people of Jerusalem faced.

He was an important official, one of the upper-class. He could have kept on living and enjoying his life without dwelling on the problems of others. But he didn't. From this we learn that Nehemiah was others-centered. He had a heart for others. Hearing about the struggles of others saddened him.

Do you have a heart for others? When you hear about other people's struggles are you sympathetic, empathetic, indifferent? Do you perhaps feel empathy with them for a few minutes and then forget it?



Read Matthew 25: 34-36: Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

promise
willingness to
commitment.
dedicated to
a pledge of
be loyal

- **Christ calls us to commit to work for people.** We are in the serving business and as we serve others we create opportunities to preach and teach people about Jesus.

Which issue on your community issue list is one that you are passionate about? I am passionate about _____.

What can you do to show the love of Jesus regarding that issue by utilizing a couple of hours a month to address it? I can do the following in 2-3 hours a month
_____.

This was an important issue. He didn't just offer up a 1-minute prayer and then move on. He spent a lot of time before the Lord praying about it and searching for God's will about what he could do.

III. Empathy to Action

➤ STEP 1: Pray—Read Nehemiah 1: 1-5

Nehemiah sought God and the wisdom that comes from God. He didn't just weep. He didn't just have a pity party. He turned to the Lord. He fasted. He prayed. Nehemiah didn't rush to the king to get help immediately. Neither did he start issuing orders. Neither did he immediately consult with Hanani and the others. He didn't rely on his own wisdom to begin taking actions. From the world's perspective he did nothing.

- Why should we always seek God before we act?
- What role does fasting and praying have in seeking God?

What does this teach us about our leaders' quickness to action? Have you ever prayed that your pastor seeks God's direction even when it did not match the speed of doing that you preferred?



STEP 2: Identify the REAL Problem--Read Nehemiah 1: 6-7

What is the problem that Nehemiah identifies? Is the problem the wall or sin?

Nehemiah admits “We have acted very corruptly against You.” Nehemiah says, “and have not kept the commandments...which You commanded Your servant Moses.”

Every sin is a sin against God. Disobeying God is sinning against God. Since our sins are against God, confession is not complete until we ask God to forgive us. True confession doesn't minimize the sin. Notice that Nehemiah doesn't say, “We have sinned against you a little.” He says, we have acted very corruptly. Their sin problem was not a little problem. It was a big problem.

What is the difference in BIG and LITTLE Sin? (Trick Question)

“Is your sin serious.” Most answer, “No.” That is our problem. We think that our sin is not serious. But in fact, it is. Don’t minimize it. The problem wasn’t some vague mistake. It wasn’t vague at all. The problem was that they had as a nation specifically disobeyed many of the commands God had given to Moses.

- The Result: The distress of the people Verse 8 – In verse 8 we see Nehemiah admit that the problems they faced as a nation were a direct result of God’s discipline for their sin. He quotes Moses saying, “If you are unfaithful I will scatter you.” He is admitting that the people were unfaithful and that is why they were scattered. This doesn’t mean that all trials are the result of sin.

But in the case with Israel, God had already told them that this was because of their sin He was disciplining them. Many times, we fail to see that sin has a consequence. In fact, we prefer to ignore this reality and simply whine and complain about the consequences rather than facing the sin which can cause negative outcomes.

STEP 3: Petition God for Forgiveness: Read Nehemiah 1:10-11

Nehemiah asks God to forgive the nation and to look towards those who are trying to live righteous lives. His last statement is for God to give him favor. It would seem that Nehemiah had plans to do a work for God’s people, but the work hinged on God forgiving and then granting him favor.

FOLLOW THE PROCESS!



Notice, Nehemiah apologizes first and then asks for God’s blessings. How often do we find ourselves asking God for more instead of giving Him the apology He deserves first?

1. We ask for protection but do not apologize for not worshipping Him regularly.

2. We ask for wealth and new jobs even though we do not apologize for not tithing.
3. We beg for opportunities and positions but do not apologize for taking credit for God opening doors.
4. **REMEMBER:** God does not desire us to actively do work for Him if we are not in relationship with Him. Sin breaks the relationship with Him and hinders us from the ability to succeed in the way God intends.

The Results!!!!—Read Nehemiah 2:1-8

Nehemiah had a desire to do a work for God. Yet, this work could not occur because a large roadblock stood in the way. What was that roadblock? _____ After this is removed things begin to change.

List the actions that happen in these 8 verses.

| Verse of Action | What Happens? |
|-----------------|---------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

TAKEAWAY: Whatever building God has in store for you this year is possible. Always begin with other centered focus. Then seek God to see if there is anything that would inhibit your work. If you have sin in the way of your work, acknowledge it and ask for forgiveness. Then set out to do God’s will for your life!



Closing Prayer: Dear Lord, please prepare me to do your will. I desire to put others needs before mine and show people the Love of Christ. In Jesus’ name, amen.