

# *Nehemiah*

## *Leader Guide*

(NASB and ESV)

REBUILDING, REVIVAL, AND  
RESTORATION OF THE  
PEOPLE OF GOD

*Nehemiah Leader Guide (NASB and ESV)*

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## USING LEADER GUIDES

Leader Guides are intended for you, the leader, to guide your Precept Upon Precept® and In & Out® discussions. They are designed to help you reason through the content of the lessons and to ensure you have understood what your group should have learned from their study. The guides offer effective plans for leading discussions.

The Holy Spirit is your guide as you prepare. He is the one who knows what your group needs to apply to their lives. Pray for them as they study and for yourself as you prepare to lead the discussion.

These guides can be used for either the NASB or the ESV edition of the courses. ESV words follow the NASB after a slash / or are set off with parentheses.

### Leader Guides include the following:

- Lesson emphasis
- A logical order for the discussion
- Discussion questions
- Suggested visual aid(s)

### Practical tips for using the Leader Guide:

- **Don't simply "do" the lesson.**  
Stay with the lesson until you have a good understanding of it. This will give you a better grasp of how the Leader Guide takes you through the lesson.
- **You don't have to ask every question in the guide.**  
Often one question will be covered while discussing another question so there is no reason to ask it. Your goal is not to ask every question, but to ask enough questions to make sure your group understood the lesson and to help them apply the truths to their lives.

### Using the Leader Guide with In & Out


#### When your entire group uses In & Out

Compare an In & Out lesson with the Leader Guide. Use what relates to the In & Out lesson as a guide for the discussion. Don't teach what's not in In & Out lessons. Remember your goal in the discussion is for your group to discuss what they've learned, not for you to lecture on what you learned.

#### For groups studying both Precept Upon Precept and In & Out

Use the Leader Guides as designed for PUP, knowing that the In & Out assignments will be covered in the discussion. Make a note in the Leader Guide of what is not in the In & Out.

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## NEHEMIAH LEADER GUIDE Lesson 1

### Lesson emphasis:

- Nehemiah 1–2

### HISTORICAL SETTING

To begin your discussion, you can ask your group what they learned about the setting for this book. Tell them to look at the chart “The Times of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther,” and the map in the lesson as visual aids.

Who was Nehemiah? Where was he? What was he doing there?

Nehemiah was a descendant of Judah, or Israel.

He was in Susa, the main city of the Persian kingdom.

He served King Artaxerxes as his cupbearer.

Why was he in Susa serving the King of Persia instead of in Israel? Ask what your group learned from the cross-references.

#### Deuteronomy 30:1-5

The Lord told Moses, after he led His people Israel out of bondage in Egypt, about their future.

God would banish / drive His people Israel to other nations.

When they returned to Him, to obey Him from the heart, then He’d restore them from that captivity (ESV—restore their fortunes). He’d bring them back to their own land.

#### 2 Chronicles 36:15-21

The people of Israel were continually disobedient to the Lord and didn’t listen when He sent prophets to call them to return to Him.

So He did as He said in Deuteronomy 30. He sent them into captivity / exile in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon / Chaldea took Jerusalem and burned it.

Verse 20 says they served the Babylonians until Persia conquered Babylon.

God's people served the kings of Babylon for 70 years.

2 Chronicles 36:22-23

Cyrus was a king of Persia before Artaxerxes. He sent the people of Israel back to their land to build the Lord's temple again in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1

This tells what happened when Cyrus sent the Jews—those from Judah—back to their land of Israel. God stirred the spirits of those who were to move in fulfillment of what He said would happen.

The Lord God of heaven sent His people home, with the articles / vessels from His temple or house. This was approximately 536 B.C. The book of Nehemiah begins in about 445 B.C., about 90 years later.

What happened in Judah between the people's return and the book of Nehemiah?

They worked on the temple for about 2 years then stopped.

Then about 14 years later, they worked on the temple again until they finished it in 4 years. In all, building the temple took about 20 years to complete.

Several other kings of Persia ruled between Cyrus and Artaxerxes. Nehemiah's story began in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes' rule.

**NEHEMIAH 1**

Verses 1-3

How does this book begin? What are these verses about?

Nehemiah heard a report from his brother and some others who had come to Susa from Jerusalem.

The Jewish remnant who had returned was in distress and reproach (ESV—great trouble and shame).

Jerusalem's wall was still broken and burned.

Verses 4-11

What was Nehemiah's response to the report he heard?

He wept and mourned for days.  
He fasted and prayed.

When combining the time of chapters 1 and 2, it seems that Nehemiah prayed for about 4 months. Refer to “The Jewish Calendar” as a visual aid.

How did he begin this prayer? Why is that important?

He beseeched (not in ESV)

The Lord God of heaven

The great and awesome God

Who preserves / keeps covenant and lovingkindness / steadfast love

Ask your group if they know the Lord like Nehemiah did. Do they focus on Him, who He is, in their prayers? Encourage them that they can get to know Him by studying what He’s said about Himself in His Word in passages like this one.

What was Nehemiah’s prayer based on?

He knew what the Lord had promised about Judah.

He knew God’s Word.

Now discuss the content of this prayer.

Nehemiah asked the Lord to hear his prayer of confession on behalf of Israel.

He confessed his own sin, that of his father’s house, and Israel.

Then he reminded the Lord of His Word about gathering and bringing them back to their land. He reminded the Lord that He had redeemed this people.

Then he made a specific request for himself.

He asked for success and compassion / mercy “today” before King Artaxerxes.

Ask what your group noted on their At a Glance chart as a possible theme for this chapter.

Nehemiah’s prayer regarding the Jews in Jerusalem

Before discussing Nehemiah 2, you might ask if there is any application from chapter 1 that has not been discussed.

## **NEHEMIAH 2**

### Verses 1-8

What is this first section about?

Nehemiah recorded the answer to his prayer in chapter 1.

It seems that it was the “today” of 1:11.

The king noticed his sadness because it was out of the ordinary for him.

Then verse 2 said that Nehemiah was very much afraid.

Why might he have been afraid?

Ezra 4:7-23

After the remnant returned to Jerusalem and was working on rebuilding it, a letter against it was sent to King Artaxerxes. It referred to Jerusalem as a rebellious and evil / wicked city, damaging to the king’s revenue and inciting revolt (ESV—stirring up sedition).

The letter was sent by Israel’s enemies close by them.

King Artaxerxes replied that it was not to be rebuilt until a decree was issued by him. Those who received the king’s answer, decree, stopped the work by force.

This was the same king Nehemiah stood before.

What did he do about his fear?

He prayed to the God of heaven.

What did Nehemiah request from the king?

Specifics:

- Send me to rebuild Jerusalem
- A definite time to do it and return
- Letters to the governors
- Letter for timber from the king’s forest

When does it seem that Nehemiah planned his task?

During the four months of prayer  
God put into his heart what to do—what to ask.

How might the information in Ezra 7 have encouraged Nehemiah?

Ezra 7:6-28

In the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes, the king granted Ezra the scribe all he requested—to go to Israel and teach His statutes and ordinances there—because the good hand of his God was upon him. Ezra took with him the silver and gold provided to buy offerings for the house of God and for whatever else was needed for the house of God.

Lead your discussion back to Nehemiah 2.



Why did the king grant Nehemiah’s requests?

Because God’s good hand was on him.

Nehemiah had sought God for 4 months. He knew what the Lord had promised; he knew His will, what the Lord wanted. He knew the great and awesome God with the great power and strong hand was able to accomplish His will.

How does Proverbs 21:1 relate?

The Lord turns the heart of the king whatever way He wishes.

You might ask your group how knowing the Lord and His Word can help with fear and accomplishing His will. What place does prayer have in their lives? Should it have?

#### Verses 9-10

What are these verses about?

Nehemiah made his journey and gave the governors their letters from the king.

Two men, whose names will be repeated in Nehemiah, were not pleased about someone seeking Israel’s welfare.

But Nehemiah knew what the Lord wanted him to do.

You might ask your group if this relates to them in any way.

There will always be opponents to the welfare of God’s people—Israel or the church.

#### Verses 11-16

What happened next?

Nehemiah inspected the walls after he was in Jerusalem for 3 days.

His inspection was at night and he was alone except for a few men. He told no one else what he was doing. He saw for himself the condition of Jerusalem’s walls.

Nehemiah was a careful man who considered and prayed before he acted.

#### Verses 17-20

What was Nehemiah’s conclusion after inspecting the walls?

He told the people that they were in a bad situation.

According to the cross-references in the lesson, what was a wall around a city for? Why was it important?

Joshua 6:5, 20

When Jericho's wall fell, then the people were able to enter it and take it.  
The wall was for protection from enemies.

2 Samuel 11:18-24 and 18:24-26; Ezekiel 33:1-6

People inside cities fought from the top of the walls.

Watchmen stationed on the walls warned those inside the city of coming danger.

1 Kings 3:1

King Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem and the wall around the city.

What did Nehemiah call the people to do?

Rebuild the wall so that they would no longer be a reproach / suffer derision.

How did he reason with them to do this building?

God's hand was favorably on him.

He told of what King Artaxerxes said to him in granting his requests.

What was the result?

The people joined in the project which the Lord put in Nehemiah's heart to accomplish.

How did this chapter end?

Another man joined the opposition.

Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab heard that Nehemiah had motivated the people to rebuild the wall.

They mocked (ESV—jeered at) and despised the builders.

They questioned them about rebelling against King Artaxerxes.  
Compare this with Ezra 4.

How did Nehemiah handle this?

Since the promise of gathering, possessing, and multiplying in the land of Israel was from the Lord to His people Israel...

And since Nehemiah prayed for months about this goal the Lord put on his heart...

And since the Lord had answered his prayer...

Nehemiah told the opposition that the Lord would give them—the Jews—success (ESV—make them prosper). That’s why the Jews were willing to work, to arise, and rebuild their city.

Nehemiah also said that the mockers had no portion or right in Jerusalem.

They were not part of God’s people Israel.

Ask your group how the events of these verses might apply to their lives.

Have they prayed about accomplishing a task from the Lord and faced opposition and mocking? Did they let that stop them?

Ask what they noted on their At a Glance chart as a possible theme for Nehemiah 2.

The king sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls

What have they learned about prayer in these two chapters? About Nehemiah? About the Lord?



## NEHEMIAH LEADER GUIDE Lesson 2

### Lesson emphasis:

- Nehemiah 3–5
- External enemies and internal problems

### REVIEW

To begin this discussion, ask what your group remembers about Nehemiah 1–2.

Use the At a Glance chart as a visual aid for this part of your discussion.

#### Nehemiah 1

Nehemiah, the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, was in Susa when he heard that the remnant in Jerusalem was in great distress and reproach (ESV—great trouble and shame) and the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and its gates burned.

As a result he sat down, wept, mourned for days, fasted, and prayed.

The main point of his prayer is that the people were in that condition because of sin. He asked the Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God, to remember His word and return them to the place He had chosen to cause His name to dwell.

After four months of prayer, Nehemiah asked for success and compassion / mercy before the king and received it.

#### Nehemiah 2

Nehemiah was prepared to give the king his plan for returning to Jerusalem and back to Susa. Nehemiah knew the king granted his requests because the good hand of God was on him.

After surveying the damage to the walls in Jerusalem he addressed the people; he told them how the hand of God had been favorable (ESV—upon him for good) to him and about the king's words.

When the enemies, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem mocked the people, Nehemiah told them the God of heaven would give them success (ESV—would make them prosper) and that they—the enemies—had no portion in Jerusalem.

### NEHEMIAH 3

How does Nehemiah 2:18-20 relate to chapter 3?

The word “arise” (ESV—rise up, verse 18) is used in Nehemiah 2:18 and 20.  
Then Nehemiah 3:1 mentions first that Eliashib the high priest “arose / rose up” and built.

Using the diagram in the Appendix as a visual aid to discuss this chapter, ask what direction is described by the gates mentioned? Where did it begin? With whom?

The Sheep Gate is mentioned first as the one Eliashib, the high priest, and his brothers worked on. They consecrated it and the northeastern part of the wall to the Tower of Hananel.

This is close to the temple area, and it’s significant that the priest and his brothers consecrated this part of the work.

The details of the work continue toward the northwest Fish Gate, then south and back around to the Sheep Gate in verse 32.

The word “repair” is used repeatedly, and referred to both the gates and the walls. According to Nehemiah 1:3, the walls were broken and the gates burned, but there was something left for the people to repair.

*NOTE: The towers mentioned would have been important for watchmen so they could warn if an enemy should approach and to protect the gates.*

Who worked on the repairs?

priests, near the temple area  
perfumers  
goldsmiths  
officials / rulers  
daughters  
Levites  
temple servants

The people worked together with a common goal—repair the wall so they were no longer a reproach / suffer derision or shame.

One group mentioned didn’t support the work, the nobles in verse 5.  
But verse 21 says that Meremoth of verse 4 repaired another section.

*NOTE: Evidently some of the people were temporarily in Jerusalem like those from Jericho in verse 2 and those from Keilah in verses 17-18.*

Where did they work?

“Next to him / them” and “made repairs / repaired” are repeated phrases.

References to houses or quarters / chambers are also repeated.

It seems that some of the people arose to build close to where they lived, such as in verses 23, 28, 29, and 30.

Direct your group to look at the theme they wrote on the At A Glance chart for this chapter. What is this chapter about?

The people rebuilt and repaired the wall and gates.

You might ask your group what they learned from this chapter that applies to their lives. How does this relate to any work God gives His people to do?

#### **NEHEMIAH 4**

##### Verses 1-3

Who were the enemies? What were their tactics?

Sanballat and Tobiah, from Nehemiah 2:10 and 19

In chapter 2, they were displeased that someone sought the Jews’ welfare. And when they heard Nehemiah’s plan to rebuild, they mocked / jeered at it and accused him of rebellion against the king.

In 4:1, Sanballat was furious and very angry (ESV—angry and greatly enraged) when he heard that the Jews were rebuilding the wall. Again, he mocked / jeered at the Jews. Tobiah joined him.

At this point, you might begin to note the problems Nehemiah faced in this lesson. There is a sample visual aid at the end of this guide.

##### Verses 4-6

Who and what are these verses about?

Nehemiah prayed boldly. He asked God to take care of the enemy.

The wall was joined to half its height.

The people were successful because they had a mind to work.

God’s hand was on them for success (ESV—prosper, verse 20), Nehemiah 1:11; 2:20.

Give time for your group to share what they've learned from Nehemiah about prayer.

Verses 7-9

What happened in these verses? Tell your group to look at the map.

When the enemies heard, they were very angry and conspired / plotted to fight against Jerusalem.

More names were added to the list of enemies—the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites.

But the people prayed, and because of the enemy, set up a guard day and night.

God answers prayer and gives His people plans for accomplishing His tasks. Nehemiah 1–2, after prayer Nehemiah knew what to ask King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah 4 is another example of this. They prayed, then set up a guard.

Verses 10-14

What are these verses about?

The people of Judah, Jews, said verse 10 about their failing strength and inability.

The enemies threatened surprise attack.

Nehemiah armed and stationed the people to be able to respond to attack.

He reminded the people of Who their God is when he saw their fear.

Nehemiah knew God called him to this “work” and that His good hand was on him.

Give time for discussing application.

When constantly faced with opposition to the Lord's Word, remember who He is.  
Be armed and fight.

Ask what your group learned from the cross-references about opposition from the enemy today when doing kingdom work.

John 15:16-21

A slave is not greater than his master. Believers will be persecuted as Jesus was.

John 16:33

There will be tribulation in the world, but Jesus has overcome the world.



John 17:13-21

Jesus gave His disciples God’s word, and the world hated them because they were not of the world. He prayed not only for His disciples but also for all who believe in Him through their word.

Lead your discussion back to Nehemiah 4.

Verses 15-23

How does this chapter end? What are the results?

When the enemies heard that God frustrated their plan, all returned to work on the wall with weapons in hand.

The trumpeter with Nehemiah was there to warn in case of attack from the enemy. They were separated on the wall far from one another. The trumpet would call them to rally to wherever Nehemiah was.

The work was great and extensive / widely spread.  
God will fight for His work and His people.

Ask your group what application they might have from this chapter.

The enemies became angry when they heard that the walls were being rebuilt. They mocked / jeered at, ridiculed, demoralized (ESV—provoked God to anger in the builders’ presence), and conspired / plotted against them. God frustrated their plan, and His work continued.

Tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart and ask what they noted as a possible theme for this chapter.

Enemies tried to stop the work, but God frustrated their plan.

**NEHEMIAH 5**

How do chapters 4 and 5 compare? What was Nehemiah dealing with in these chapters?

Nehemiah 4—enemies from outside  
Nehemiah 5—problems within

Add this problem to your visual aid.

Verses 1-5

How does this chapter begin?

There was a great outcry from the people because they needed grain during a famine.

They  
mortgaged their fields  
borrowed money to pay taxes  
sold their fields to others  
and became slaves to one another

Verses 6-13

How did Nehemiah react when he heard this great outcry? What was the problem in this chapter?

He was very angry about the way the nobles were treating their Jewish brothers—  
exacting usury / interest. Usury is “excessive profit, often in high interest charges.”<sup>1</sup>

What did the Lord say about this in His Law?

Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35-43; Deuteronomy 15:7-11; 23:19-20

If one Israelite loaned money to another, he was not to charge / exact interest.  
They were to lend generously to the poor among them, sufficiently for the need.

Interest could be charged to a foreigner, but not fellow Israelites (Jews).

How did Nehemiah reason with them about this in verses 8-10?

“We” bought our Jewish brothers out of slavery to foreigners, the nations.  
He and some others had actually bought fellow Jews sold as slaves among the nations.

After that, should they be sold again—to their own brothers? No.

Instead those exacting usury / interest should fear God.  
The usury was disobedience, sin.

They should instead help one another because of the nations’—their enemies—reproach /  
taunts.

Reproach is pointing a finger, scorning, shaming, pointing out guilt.

One reason Nehemiah mourned in chapter 1 was because the people in Jerusalem  
were in great distress / trouble and reproach / shame.

The enemy mocked and conspired / plotted, causing fear from without.

From within, usury added the shame of mistreating one another.

Nehemiah told them to return everything.

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<sup>1</sup> Warren Baker and Eugene E. Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 675.

He took an oath from them to do it, and it was witnessed by the priests.

Verse 13 shows the consequences for going back on their word.  
The people agreed and did according to the oath.

Verses 14-19

What was Nehemiah's example?

He was Judah's governor for 12 years, 20<sup>th</sup>– 32<sup>nd</sup> year of King Artaxerxes.

He didn't use the governor's food allowance even though he fed many at his table.  
He didn't burden the people because he feared God.

He and his servants worked on the wall just like everyone else.

Nehemiah led by example. He knew why he was in Jerusalem. He knew God had His hand on Him. He revered the great and awesome Lord God of the heavens.

Verse 19 is another one of Nehemiah's short prayers.

Tell your group to look at the theme they noted for this chapter on their At a Glance chart, and ask what they wrote.

Maybe something like:

Usury / interest stopped; Nehemiah governor

How do the New Testament passages relate to Nehemiah 5?

John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:16-18; Acts 2:43-45

Jesus gave a new commandment—love one another as He loved us.

Don't withhold this world's goods from a brother who needs them.

The early church took care of one another, sharing as anyone might have need.  
Nehemiah did this.

James 5:1-5

This is about an outcry (ESV—a crying out) from the poor laborers who were not paid by the rich. It's similar to Nehemiah 5. James was condemning these rich people.  
When the end comes, treasures don't help.

Give time for your group to discuss application of what they've learned in these two lessons.

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Solution</b>
Enemies	Prayer Continued to work Set up a guard God will fight for us
Brothers—usury / interest	Stop Help brothers

## NEHEMIAH LEADER GUIDE Lesson 3

### Lesson emphasis:

- Nehemiah 6–7
- Fear and enemies

### REVIEW

To begin this discussion you might ask what Nehemiah 1–5 is about.  
Use the At a Glance chart as a visual aid.

Nehemiah 1	Nehemiah heard a report about Jews and Jerusalem; prayed
Nehemiah 2	He asked the king and went to Jerusalem; inspected the walls and called people to rebuild
Nehemiah 3	People repaired and rebuilt the wall
Nehemiah 4	Enemies; God frustrated their plan to stop work; wall built to ½ its height
Nehemiah 5	Outcry from within; usury / interest was stopped; Nehemiah's example

So far in Nehemiah the focus has been on rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem.  
Nehemiah faced enemies from without and problems within as he led the Jews to work.  
The Lord put the plan in his heart, and he worked to accomplish it. God gave him success.

### NEHEMIAH 6

How does this chapter relate to Nehemiah 1–5?

The wall was completed in 52 days

in the midst of the enemies' mocking / jeering, threatening, trying to frighten...

#### Verses 1-9

What are these verses about?

When Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem heard that the wall around Jerusalem was rebuilt, they sent messages five times to Nehemiah to take him away from the work.

Since God frustrated their plan to fight against Jerusalem in Nehemiah 4, they focused on one man—the leader of the work.

They tried to get him to come to them, but he didn't leave the work God had given him to do. They were planning this time to do him harm.

How does verse 3 give Nehemiah's thought on what he was doing?

A great work which he was not to leave  
If he left to meet with his enemies, the great work might stop.

What other tactic was in these first verses?

The enemies even sent an open letter to Nehemiah, which would have been an insult. Anyone could read it.

The letter accused the Jews and him of rebellion.

It also accused Nehemiah of appointing / setting up prophets in Jerusalem to proclaim himself king. They threatened to report this to the King of Persia.

Again, the enemies tried to get Nehemiah to leave the work to talk to them about the reports.

What did Nehemiah know? How did he respond?

He recognized that it was another way to frighten him and the workers.

He knew they thought that the work would stop when the workers were discouraged (ESV—their hands dropped).

He responded to the enemies' reports, but he also prayed to the Lord for strength.

How has “fear, afraid” been used previously in Nehemiah?

Nehemiah feared King Artaxerxes, 2:2.  
But he didn't let that stop what the Lord had put into his heart to request of the king.

Nehemiah told the people not to be afraid of their enemies in 4:11-14.  
He reminded them of the great and “awesome”—same Hebrew word as “fear”—Lord, who would fight for them.

Fearing God is also in Nehemiah 5:9 and 15.  
Nehemiah chose to fear the Lord and called the people to do the same.  
Don't fear man, but the Lord God who is great and awesome.

How do the cross-references on fear relate?

Proverbs 29:25 and Isaiah 2:22

Trust the Lord instead of fearing man. Trusting the great and awesome God who fights for His people is the cure for fearing man. Nehemiah before the king is an example, as well as the other mentions of fear in Nehemiah 2–5.

God controls a man’s breath, so there is no need to regard man above God.  
In Nehemiah 6 threats came from men.

Remember and fear the Lord. This is one of many reasons to know who the Lord God is.

Ask your group what they’ve learned about handling fear in their lives.

Verses 10-14

How do these verses relate to verses 1-9?

The enemies continued their fear tactics.

Sanballat and Tobiah hired Shemaiah to prophesy against Nehemiah.

This is another way they tried to frighten him—by Nehemiah hearing a prophecy about someone planning to kill him. Verse 14 says others prophesied to frighten him.

What was Nehemiah’s response to this? What might be the reason he didn’t fall for this trap?

He perceived that this was not of God. He knew he was not to enter the house of God, and God would not send someone to tell Nehemiah to go against His Word.

Numbers 18:1-7

God told Aaron and his sons that they were the only ones to enter the holy of holies inside the veil.

The Levites, who served the priests, were not to enter it.  
If anyone besides a priest entered, he was killed.

He was not a man to flee because of fear. He was a strong leader who trusted the Lord with his life more than he feared man.

Nehemiah prays another straightforward, brief prayer asking God to remember the enemies according to their works. He was not to be reproached / taunted.

Verses 15-16

What are these verses about?

The wall was completed in 52 days.

From the time of beginning the work to the end it only took 52 days. That’s an amazing feat.

During that time, enemies were constantly trying different tactics to stop the work.

You might refer your group to “The Jewish Calendar” as a visual aid at this point.

*NOTE: Elul, on “The Jewish Calendar,” is the 6<sup>th</sup> month of the sacred calendar and 12<sup>th</sup> month of the civil calendar. It corresponds to August–September. It was about 5 months after Nisan, when Nehemiah requested of King Artaxerxes to return and rebuild Jerusalem.*

According to the timeline “The Times of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther,” how long was the wall broken down?

Approximately 141 years

Jerusalem was in reproach / shame for that long.

How did the completion affect the enemies?

They lost their confidence (ESV—afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem), recognizing that the Lord helped accomplish the work.

This is another good thing to remember when faced with fear from enemies.

Ask what your group can apply from these verses?

It is amazing what people can do when they work together to accomplish God’s will.

#### Verses 17-19

Who are these verses about? What is said about him?

Use the family tree in the lesson as a visual aid for this discussion.

Tobiah—the Ammonite, Nehemiah 2:10, 19; 4:3, 7

He was related to the Jews because he and his son married Jewish women.

Nehemiah 7:10 names Arah as one who returned with Zerubbabel from Babylon to Judah. Arah was father to Shecaniah, Tobiah’s father-in-law.

His son Jehohanan married a daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah, named in Nehemiah 3:4 and 30 as one who worked on more than one part of the wall.

He was a man of influence in Judah as many were bound by oath to him. They told Nehemiah of good things Tobiah did.



But this enemy tried to frighten Nehemiah, maybe to maintain his influence among the Jews. Relate this to Nehemiah 2:20—no portion, right, or memorial / claim in Jerusalem.

You might ask what your group thinks about this situation in relation to Nehemiah.

He knew there were enemies among the people of God.  
He had nothing to do with troublemakers, which is what they were.  
He stood for God and did not fear man.

Ask what they noted as a chapter theme on their At a Glance chart.

Wall completed in 52 days

## NEHEMIAH 7

### Verses 1-4

Who did Nehemiah begin with in this organization? What did they do?

He put his brother Hanani and Hananiah, the commander of the fortress (ESV—governor of the castle), in charge of Jerusalem. Hananiah was a faithful man who feared God.

Hanani, Nehemiah’s brother, was the one who took the report about the Jews and Jerusalem to Nehemiah in Susa, 1:1-3.

Nehemiah told them to appoint guards from Jerusalem’s inhabitants.  
“each at his post” (ESV—some at their guard posts)—where the guards were stationed in the city  
“each in front of his own house” (ESV—some in front of their own homes)—they also guarded their homes

The gates were not to be opened until the sun was up and hot.  
Guards were to open, shut, and bolt / bar the doors.

At this point in time, what was the condition of Jerusalem according to verse 4?

The city was large and spacious (ESV—wide and large), but few people lived in it. It seems that most of the people lived in the cities outside of Jerusalem, 7:6 and 73.

### Verse 5

What information does this verse give?

God put in Nehemiah’s heart to assemble the people and to enroll them based on their genealogies. Relate to Nehemiah 2:12.

He found a book that listed the names of those who came up from Babylon with Zerubbabel.

*NOTE: If your group studied Ezra, this might remind them of what they learned then.*

What are verses 6-69?

It's the list of those who returned.

The list contains families, towns, villages, priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, servants.

Verses 70-73

What are these verses about? What is the timing?

Direct your group to look at “The Jewish Calendar” again.

Heads of families and the governor gave to the work, the treasury.

Verse 73 wraps up everything to this point.

By the 7<sup>th</sup> month, all were living in their cities / towns.

The 7<sup>th</sup> month of the sacred calendar is Tishri, which is the month after the wall was completed.

The 7<sup>th</sup> month on the civil calendar is Nisan, which is 7 months after the wall's completion.

*NOTE: Several commentators think that this time was the next month after the wall was finished.*

There were four months between Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1, then another five months to when the wall was complete, then 7:73 was the month after that—a total of ten months.

Ask about a chapter theme for this chapter.

Genealogy found; people lived in their cities

To end your discussion, give time for your group to share what they learned about Nehemiah from Days Four and Five of this lesson.

There are several questions on those days which you might ask.

What has God shown you from this one individual that you can apply to your own life?

What can you learn from Nehemiah that will help you when your enemy comes against you?

## NEHEMIAH LEADER GUIDE Lesson 4

### Lesson emphasis

- Nehemiah 8–10

### REVIEW

Using the At a Glance chart as a visual aid, ask your group what Nehemiah 1–7 is about.

Nehemiah 1–6 Nehemiah led the people to rebuild Jerusalem’s wall in 52 days.

Nehemiah 7 He assembled the people to be enrolled by genealogies.

### NEHEMIAH 8

#### Verses 1-8

What happened in these verses?

All the people of Israel gathered at the square of the Water Gate in Jerusalem.

Ezra the scribe read from the book of the law of Moses on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month.

Who was Ezra? How was he described in Ezra 7:1-10?

He arrived in Jerusalem 13 years before Nehemiah in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of King Artaxerxes. Artaxerxes had also granted him what he requested for his return, because the Lord’s good hand was on Ezra.

a descendant of Aaron the priest  
skilled in the Law of Moses

set his heart to study the Law of the Lord  
practice / do it  
teach it in Israel

Relate what Ezra set his heart to do to your group. What have they set their hearts to do?

Continue in Bible study, apply what’s learned, and share it with others.

How long did Ezra read from the book of the law, and what happened as a result?

From morning until midday

He blessed the Lord.  
The people worshiped the Lord, lifting their hands and bowing low.

You might ask your group if they have seen a time of worship and reverence like this.  
Give a brief time for discussion of any application.

Why did the Levites explain and translate what they read?  
Why might the people not have understood it?

*NOTE: There might have been 30,000–50,000 people present at this reading.*

Maybe as Ezra read, the Levites were translating or explaining the meaning of the Law so that the people understood its relevance to their lives.

Or another possibility is that the people didn't understand Hebrew, the language of the Law.

They had returned to Israel from places like Babylon and Persia where other languages were spoken.

#### Verses 9-12

What happened as a result?

The people were weeping because they understood God's Word. They were grieved.  
Possibly they wept because they were convicted of sin when they heard God's Word.

Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites told the people to stop weeping and mourning.

It was a holy day to the Lord.

They told the people that the joy of the Lord was their strength.

They went away to celebrate a great festival (ESV—make great rejoicing).

According to "The Feasts of Israel" chart, what was significant about the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month?

It was the Feast of Trumpets, a holy convocation.  
Significance is a regathering of Israel in preparation for the day of atonement.

The people of Israel were regathered after the exile.

#### Verses 13-18

When was it?

The 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month

What happened?

The leaders—heads, priests, and Levites—gathered to Ezra so that they gained insight into (ESV—in order to study) the words of the law.

The result: they found out about the Feast of Booths that was to be celebrated in the 7<sup>th</sup> month. So they made proclamation to have the feast.

How is this feast described in the cross-references and on “The Feasts of Israel” chart?

Leviticus 23:33-44; Deuteronomy 16:13-17

The Feast of Booths was to be celebrated in the 7<sup>th</sup> month on the 15<sup>th</sup> day for 7 days.

During the feast, Israel was to live / dwell in booths and rejoice before the Lord.

It was to remember that God brought them out of Egypt into the promised land.

They had lived / dwelt in booths when He delivered them from Egypt.

How does this feast relate to the situation in Israel at Nehemiah’s time?

The people had returned to their land from other countries.

God delivered them from the 70 years of captivity, and they continued to return.

Lead the discussion back to Nehemiah 8. What did the people do?

The entire assembly that had returned from captivity prepared booths and lived in them.

That had not been done in that manner since the days of Joshua.

*NOTE: The people in Joshua’s (ESV—Jeshua) time—900 years in the past—celebrated this feast because they were out of slavery and in their land.*

There was great rejoicing.

Ezra read from the book of the law of God daily; they celebrated the feast and had a solemn assembly according to the ordinance / rule.

Tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart and ask what they noted as a chapter theme for Nehemiah 8.

Ezra read the Law; Feasts of Trumpets and Booths

## NEHEMIAH 9

### Verses 1-4

What happened next? And when?

The 24<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month was two days after the Feast of Booths.

*NOTE: That was a day after the Feast of Booths.*

It was a day of fasting in sackcloth and dirt / earth—signs of mourning and grief.

They separated themselves from all foreigners.

They confessed their sins / made confession and worshiped the Lord for  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the day  
(about 3 hours).

They read from the book of the law for  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the day.

You might ask your group how hearing God's Word should affect their worship, their confession, their lives.

### Verses 5-31

What did the Levites do?

They led the people in blessing and praising the Lord.

What were the blessings and praises about?

It was Israel's history, all that the Lord had done for them since creation.  
The Law of Moses contains the story of creation and some of Israel's history.

Ask your group what they learned about the Lord.

As a visual aid for this part of your discussion, list some of the main points about the Lord.

Glorious and exalted

He alone is Lord.

He made all and gives life to / preserves all.

He chose Abram and made a covenant with him.

The righteous Lord God fulfilled His promise of the land.

He performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh in Egypt.

A pillar of cloud and fire led His people Israel.

God came down from Mt. Sinai and spoke His commandments to them.

He provided / gave bread from heaven and water from a rock.

Then they were to enter the land.

What's the contrast in verse 16?

But the fathers were arrogant, stubborn, and didn't listen or remember God.  
(ESV—fathers acted presumptuously, stiffened their necks and didn't obey)

What else do verses 16-25 say about God and Israel's history?

He's a God of forgiveness  
Gracious and compassionate / merciful  
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness / steadfast love

He didn't forsake them in the wilderness but gave His Spirit to instruct them for 40 years.  
Then He led their sons to enter and possess the land.

What's repeated in verses 26-31?

They were disobedient and rebelled against God.  
They were arrogant / acted presumptuously and didn't listen / obey.

He admonished them by His Spirit and prophets.  
But He didn't make an end of them. He didn't completely forsake them.  
He's the God of grace and compassion / mercy.

#### Verses 32-37

Who and what are these verses are about?

They praised the great, mighty, and awesome God who keeps His covenant.

The Levites—and presumably all the people—acknowledged that their hardship was just.  
It was from God because they hadn't listened to His Word.  
They confessed that He had dealt faithfully but they had acted wickedly—all of them.

None had paid attention to God's commandments or admonitions / warnings or turned from their evil deeds / wicked works.

Because of their sin, these people were still slaves to the kings of Persia whom God had set over them.

The kings took their produce / rich yield and ruled their bodies and their cattle. The people were in distress. The very words Nehemiah had heard in the beginning—that the people were in great distress (ESV—great trouble).

You might ask if this reminds them of Nehemiah's prayer in Nehemiah 1.

Verse 38

What did they do?

Made an agreement (ESV—a covenant) in writing

What is a possible theme for this chapter? Tell your group to look at the At a Glance chart.

24<sup>th</sup> day—read the Law, confessed, worshiped; Levites told Israel’s history

**NEHEMIAH 10**

What is the connection with Nehemiah 9?

Verses 1-27 list the names on this sealed document from 9:38.

Verses 28-31

What are these verses about?

All the people who had knowledge and understanding separated themselves from the people of the lands to the law of God. They took a curse and an oath on themselves to walk in God’s Law.

What are the details of the agreement / covenant?

Keep / observe and observe / do all the commandments, ordinances / rules, and statutes of God  
Not give sons and daughters to the peoples of the land  
Not buy or sell on the Sabbath  
Forego their crops in the 7<sup>th</sup> year and the exaction of debt.

Verses 32-39

What do these verses say was in the agreement?

The people agreed to supply the Levites and priests based on what God said in His Law.  
They would not neglect the house of God.

Ask about a theme for Nehemiah 10.

Sealed document—separated to the Law of God

What is the time of Nehemiah 8–10?

The 7<sup>th</sup> month

8:2                    1<sup>st</sup> day of 7<sup>th</sup> month

8:13-14            2<sup>nd</sup> day of 7<sup>th</sup> month

9:1                    24<sup>th</sup> day of this month

Chapter 10 is a continuation of chapter 9.



What is the continuation of thought from Nehemiah 8 through 10?

Nehemiah 8 Ezra the priest and scribe read from the book of the Law.  
They celebrated the Feasts of Trumpets and Booths in the 7<sup>th</sup> month.

Nehemiah 9 The Levites led in praise and worship of the Lord.

Nehemiah 10 They all made an agreement / covenant, a sealed document, to keep God's Law. Then they began doing what the Law said.

Ask your group what application from these chapters God brought to their minds and hearts.  
Give time for discussion of it.



## NEHEMIAH LEADER GUIDE Lesson 5

### Lesson emphasis

- Nehemiah 11–13
- Priests and Levites

### REVIEW

To begin this last discussion you can ask what your group learned from studying Nehemiah. Or you might end the discussion this way.

Use the At a Glance chart as a visual aid for this part of your discussion.

What is the main division in the book? What is each segment about?

Nehemiah 1–6	Rebuilding Jerusalem’s wall
Nehemiah 7–10	Reorganizing Jerusalem’s people, based on God’s Law

### NEHEMIAH 11

#### Verses 1-2

How was Jerusalem repopulated?

The leaders lived in Jerusalem  
Lots were cast to bring into the city 1/10 of the people living in cities around Jerusalem.

Some even volunteered to live in the city.

#### Verses 3-24

What do these verses consist of? What are the divisions?

This lists the people who moved into Jerusalem and lived there.

The divisions were Judah, Benjamin, priests, Levites, gatekeepers, and the rest.

*NOTE: Some in your group might remember that Judah and Benjamin were the two tribes who made up the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Jerusalem was its capital and the temple was its center of worship. Priests and Levites who lived in the Northern Kingdom also came to live in Judah (2 Chronicles 9:31–11:17). The Babylonians took the people of Judah captive. These verses are about the descendants of those tribes.*

Verses 25-36

Who and where do these verses tell about?

This names the people who lived in Judah other than in Jerusalem.  
The places named were around Jerusalem.

Tell your group to look at their At a Glance chart and ask what they recorded as a theme for Nehemiah 11.

Leaders and 1/10 of people lived in Jerusalem

**NEHEMIAH 12**

What are the main divisions in this chapter?

The priests and Levites from Zerubbabel's time to Nehemiah's time, verses 1-26

The dedication of the wall, verses 27-43

Verses 1-21

What is the significance of these verses?

This is a list of priests and Levites who came to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel and Jeshua.

*NOTE: Zerubbabel was the first governor of Judah. He led the first group of captives to return from Babylon to Jerusalem after the 70 years of exile. Jeshua was the priest who returned with Zerubbabel.*

Jeshua was also Eliashib's—high priest of Nehemiah's time, 12:10—grandfather.

Joiakim the priest was Jeshua's son and Eliashib's father.

These verses also list the names of priests during the time of Joiakim.  
It was important for purity that proper records of the priest's lineage be kept.

Relate this to Nehemiah 7:61-65.

Verses 22-26

Who is this list about and what did they do?

This is a list of the Levites who were registered during the time Eliashib was high priest.

*NOTE: This registry of Levites was kept up to the days of Darius the Persian, probably a later Persian king. This registry seemed to be going forward from Eliashib's days to that of his son, grandson, great-grandson. Darius II the Persian reigned from 423 to 404 B.C. He was the king after Artaxerxes.*

Verse 24 begins the description of what the Levites were to do.

- praise and give thanks as prescribed by King David
- gatekeepers at the storehouses of the gates

At this point in your discussion, direct your group to the chart about the priests and Levites at the end of the lesson. Use this as a visual aid to discuss what they learned about the priests and Levites in Nehemiah and the other passages they studied in this lesson.

Who were the Levites?

The family tree from the lesson is another good visual aid to discuss this.

Genesis 29:30-34

Levi was one of Jacob's—Israel—12 sons, his 3<sup>rd</sup> son.

His descendants became known as the tribe of Levi or Levites.

1 Chronicles 6:1-3

Aaron, Moses, and Miriam were Levi's great-grandchildren.

What is the difference between a priest and a Levite?

Exodus 28:1

Aaron was chosen by the Lord as the first priest, and only his descendants are priests.

Numbers 1:47-53

Others from the tribe of Levi are Levites.

What were the main duties of the priests?

Basically, the priest performed the offerings and sacrifices in the temple.

They were closer to the presence of the Lord than anyone else as they served in the temple.

Malachi 2:4-9

A priest should preserve knowledge and men should seek him for instruction.

Priests are messengers of the Lord of hosts.

What were the main duties of the Levites?

Numbers 1:47-53

When the tabernacle, the portable dwelling of the Lord, was in existence, the Levites were over the tabernacle and its furnishings. They were to carry the tabernacle and furnishings just as the Lord commanded. They were to set up camp around the tabernacle, between the tabernacle and the people, so that God's wrath would not be on the congregation.

Numbers 18:21-24 and 2 Chronicles 8:14-15

They assisted the sons of Aaron, the priests, in the temple service.

The tithe from Israel was for them, their wages since they had no inheritance.

*NOTE: The permanent temple, built by Solomon and rebuilt during Zerubbabel's time, took the place of the tabernacle as God's house.*

1 Chronicles 23:27-32

Purification

Thanksgiving and praise

Offer burnt offerings

These tasks show how carefully God ordered things. These things honored Him, caused His people to revere His name, showed Him to the nations around them.

According to Nehemiah 12:24, who assigned praise and thanksgiving to the Levites and made the divisions?

David did, the King of Israel who was a man of God.

Who else was a musician greatly used by the Lord? Discuss the cross-references.

1 Chronicles 16:1-7 and 25:1, 2, 6

Asaph lived during David's time.

He also wrote some of the Psalms.

Ezra 3:10-11

David assigned Asaph's sons much of the worship in the temple.

Lead your discussion back to Nehemiah 12.

Verses 27-43

Tell your group to look at the diagram of the city gates as a visual aid here.

What happened?

This is the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem. The people sought out the Levites from the villages, districts, and fields around Jerusalem to bring them to Jerusalem in order to celebrate the dedication with gladness, hymns, thanksgiving, and songs.

The priests and Levites purified themselves, the people, the gates, and the wall.

Nehemiah had two choirs walk along the walls until they met at the temple. They had trumpets, the musical instruments of David, and singers. They offered great sacrifices and rejoiced because God had given them great joy. The rejoicing was so loud it was heard from far away.

Give your group time to discuss this celebration and make application for their lives.  
How important is worship and praise to the Christian life?

Verses 44-47

Who was appointed that day and for what?

Men were appointed over the chambers for storage of the contributions, first fruits, tithes.

They were appointed to gather in the portions required by law for the priests and Levites. The Levites were supported by the people's tithes, and they tithed to support the priests.

In the days of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, the Levites and priests, singers, and gatekeepers received tithes and contributions from all Israel.

Ask how important singing and praising the Lord is. How does singing and praising the Lord benefit you, benefit the body?

What is a theme for this chapter?

Priests and Levites; wall dedication

**NEHEMIAH 13**

Verses 1-3

How do these verses continue from chapter 12?

“On that day”

When the people heard the law read, they did what it said—they excluded the Ammonites and Moabites from the assembly of God.

Deuteronomy 23:3-5 might be what they read that day.

*NOTE: Commentators disagree on the timing of these verses. It seems possible that this incident happened on the same day as 12:44-47. Or others think it was after 13:4-14.*

Verses 4-9

What happened in these verses and how does it relate to verses 1-3?

Before the day in verses 1-3, Eliashib the priest had given a room in the temple court to Tobiah the Ammonite. It was during the time that Nehemiah was not in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah was governor of Judah for 12 years and lived in Jerusalem.

Then he returned to Susa for a length of time in the 32<sup>nd</sup> year of King Artaxerxes king of Babylon.

*NOTE: It seems that when a king conquered a previous kingdom, he might also be referred to as king of that kingdom.*

Then Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem.

When he returned and discovered what Eliashib had done, he called it evil. He threw Tobiah's things out of the room and had it cleansed and proper storage restored.

#### Verses 10-14

What other problems did Nehemiah discover when he returned to Jerusalem, and what did he do?

The Levites' portions had not been given to them, and they had left Jerusalem.

Nehemiah reprimanded the officials, restored them to their posts, and reinstated the tithe.

The question in verse 11 contradicts the vow made in Nehemiah 10:39

How does the cross-reference in Malachi 3:7-12 relate?

God said His people were robbing Him by withholding the tithes and offerings they should have been giving to Him. They were doing business, but not contributing to the Lord.

Lead the discussion back to Nehemiah 13.  
What did Nehemiah ask God in verse 14?

He asked God to remember him for his loyal deeds for God's house.

#### Verses 15-22

What was the problem and solution?

People were doing business on the Sabbath.

Nehemiah admonished the people regarding the Sabbath and closed the city gates on the Sabbath.

He commanded the Levites to purify themselves as gatekeepers to sanctify the Sabbath.

Ask your group how the end of verse 22 compares with verse 14.

Again, Nehemiah asked God to remember and to have compassion on him.  
His request was based on God's lovingkindness.

Although the people turned back when he was gone, he'd still done the right thing before he left Jerusalem and after he returned.



Nehemiah didn't stop doing what was right.  
When there were enemies from without  
When there were problems within  
When the problems continued

You might ask your group if they stop or continue doing the right thing when no one appreciates it. Why?

Verses 23-29

What was the problem in these verses? How did Nehemiah handle it?

The problem was another broken oath from chapter 10.

Some of the Jews had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.  
The children could not speak the language of the land of Judah.

He contended with them and made them swear not to do this great evil again.

He used King Solomon as an example. There was no king as wise and magnificent as Solomon. But Solomon, whom God loved, sinned because of foreign women.

The family of Eliashib the high priest was involved in this matter also.  
The son of Joiada, grandson of Eliashib, married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite.

So, Nehemiah drove away Joiada's son.

What was Nehemiah's prayer this time? Also, ask about the cross-reference.

Remember them—they defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and Levites.

Malachi 3:16-18

A book of remembrance was written for those who fear and esteem God's name.

You can ask why people forget oaths they make to the Lord.

Verses 30-31

What did Nehemiah do?

This is a summary of what Nehemiah did for their spiritual welfare.

He purified / cleansed Israel from everything foreign and again appointed / established duties for the priests and Levites.

He arranged for the appointed times for wood and first fruits.

Again, he asked God to remember him for good.

Ask what your group noted on their At a Glance chart as a possible theme for Nehemiah 13.

Nehemiah cleansed, reprimanded, admonished—remember Me, O my God

Then ask what they learned from the cross-references on purification.

Ezra 6:20 and 2 Chronicles 29:3-6, 8-9

The priests and Levites were to be purified for their duties in the Lord's house.  
In Hezekiah's first year as King of Judah, they had to cleanse the temple.

Malachi 3:1-3

When the Lord comes to His temple, He will refine and purify the sons of Levi, so they may present offerings to the Lord in righteousness.

1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-12

Believers, made a holy nation through Jesus, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood for offering up spiritual sacrifices.

2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1

Believers should not be bound together with unbelievers.  
These have nothing in common.  
Believers are the temple of the living God.  
They are to cleanse themselves of all defilement of flesh and spirit.

1 John 3:1-3

Everyone who fixes their hope on Him purifies himself as He is pure.

To end your discussion, ask your group what they learned for their lives from this study of Nehemiah.