

A dynamic splash of blue water with various shades of blue and white, creating a sense of movement and freshness. The splash is centered at the top of the page.

NEHEMIAH

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Welcome to the book of Nehemiah!

As you launch into your study in the book of Nehemiah, meditate on the contents of the book represented in the overview chart below. What are the three major movements in Nehemiah? Notice the progression of events. An important emphasis in Nehemiah is found as we consider the main character. You will want to scrutinize Nehemiah's actions and reactions as the message of the book unfolds. Some initial character observations can be found in 1:4, 7, 11; 2:4, 12, 18; 5:14, 16; 6:8, 9. The "reconstruction" of the Jerusalem walls will give you many principles of building in your own life of faith. As Ezra called the people to return, reform, and rebuild the Temple, Nehemiah sees the need to fortify the walls that surround the temple and the city. Check out the words of Ezekiel in 22:30.

NEHEMIAH			Renew/Rebuild		
Nehemiah Arrives		Walls Restored		People Revived	
2:11,12		6:15,16		8:3,17,18	
1-2		3-6		7-13	

"I also applied myself to the work on this wall." 5:16

Take this opportunity to examine each of the references in the overview chart. These reveal the main thrust of the corresponding section. What have you learned thus far in Nehemiah? A key verse of Nehemiah is found in 5:16 and reveals Nehemiah's dedication to the work of rebuilding. Look for principles of rebuilding and reviving that you can bring into your own life as you read.

Ezra begins re-establishment of God-pleasing temple worship and closes with a re-commitment to living consistent with God's standards (10:19). Nehemiah opens with a renewed interest in Jerusalem (1:2) and closes with a request to be remembered for good (13:31).

Open your heart as you read.

Do you feel you are "standing in the gap?" (Ezekiel 22:30) The building up of the walls (the spiritual Body of Christ and the faith of individual Christ-followers) is to be an important aspect of our lives. Consider your building ways as you evaluate your own spiritual work of your life!

AUTHOR

"The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hachaliah" (1:1) is the clear testimony of the book. This is not the Nehemiah who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon under Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2; Nehemiah 7:7), but an eminent Jew of that name, which means "Jehovah Comforts," a fitting name for the one Jehovah would use to bring comfort to His people through the rebuilding of the walls of the Holy City.

DATE

The events of the book cover a period of 20 years from 445 to 425 B.C. in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus of Persia. Although the book may have been written in parts as the events occurred, it seems to have been written as a retrospective. Hence, a date shortly after Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem to initiate the final reforms. 425 B.C. seems the best estimate for the writing of this book.

OTHER BACKGROUND

The main theme is "rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem" (cf. 1:3; 2:13, 15, 17; 4:6; 6:15; 12:27). The words "wall" or walls are used 32 times in the narrative, while "build" is used 23 times. The book has two major sections in it. In the first part the emphasis is on Reconstructing the Walls (chapters 1-7). In the second, the emphasis is on the Re-instructing of the People (chapters 8-13). The walls need reconstructing because a country without defenses cannot hope to survive. The people needed re-instructing in heart and mind because a people without the truth cannot hope to stand. Nehemiah's dream of rebuilding the walls spreads like a contagious disease. A united people rise up with trowel in hand to begin the work of repairing the eight gates and more than two miles of walls surrounding the city. Nehemiah's strategy is simple: to give each person a vested interest in the work. To insure both speed and quality of work, he assigns each worker the portion of wall nearest his own home. It's difficult to do a sloppy job when you know that if enemies break a defective wall, the first people jeopardized will be your own family. The result of such sound, godly leadership and management is found in Nehemiah's own words,

Why study the book of Nehemiah?

1. The man Nehemiah furnishes us a first rate character study of a godly manager or leader. He stands out as a man of prayer, a man of faith, a man of courage, a man of action. Few Bible characters can match the management skills of Nehemiah. Nehemiah wisely divided the work responsibility among many small groups, employed all available workers, provided incentives for doing a good job, and gave adequate recognition for each person involved (chapter 3). These management principles of authority, incentive, delegation of responsibility, and recognition can help multiply your time and talents at work, school, church, or home. Why not apply one to a particular area at your job this week? They really work!

2. This book also gives direction and encouragement to kingdom builders who lack big smiles, stained glass voices, crystal cathedrals, and 200 voice choirs for backup. Body members in the church are reassured that leadership abilities are not always measured flashy backup, and that leadership abilities are not always measured by the self-confidence of high-powered personalities. As Christians, we can follow the example of the man Nehemiah: the man with a boss who is not a believer, the man who sorrows over the despicable condition of many of God's people, the man who is criticized and discouraged, who faces financial hardship, who must resolve strained relationships, who must persevere toward important goals, and who emerges on top of it all!



Nehemiah Chapter Chart

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Setting the stage for Nehemiah!

Read Chapters 1-2

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
1		
2		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What were the reasons behind the response of Nehemiah to the condition of Jerusalem?
2. What did Nehemiah's response specifically include?
3. What heart components made up the prayer of Nehemiah?
4. How did Nehemiah show his reliance upon God in these first two chapters?
5. What was Nehemiah's approach to inspecting the walls of Jerusalem and why did he use it?

What about today?

1. How would you describe your feelings about the condition of the spiritual walls of the church today? The walls of your own life?
2. In comparison to Nehemiah, how would you describe your own reliance upon God?
3. Inspect your own spiritual walls. In what ways do they need either minor or major repair?
4. The New Testament is filled with "one another" commands. Take the time to consider each one and apply it to your part in building the walls of God!

My thoughts about my spiritual needs for repair and my involvement in building the household of God:

The Work on the Wall Begins!

Read Chapters 3-4

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
3		
4		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What is the recurring phrase in 3:2,4,5? What does it reveal about the planning of Nehemiah? (Also note a repeated phrase in 3:28 - 31)!
2. The building process is addressed in two ways. What are they? What was the response of the Jews?
3. Who was credited with frustrating the plan for rebuilding?
4. What was the dual role each man fulfilled in chapter 4? Why was it necessary?
5. What were the specific steps that Nehemiah implemented to protect the city?

What about today?

1. We see the necessity of building in front of our portion of the wall. What do you see as ways you can "take up the sword"? Labor on the walls?
2. Paul said in Romans that "if God is for us, who can be against us?" How is this portrayed in this section and how have you seen it as true in your own life?
3. Do you consider yourself a contributor to building for God? In what ways?
4. In what ways has your building process attacked?

My thoughts on the condition of the walls in front of my own household:

The Work Opposed & Completed!

Read Chapters 5-6

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
5		
6		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. Here are at least four additional ways opposition was mounted against the work.
What were they?
2. With whom did Nehemiah consult in dealing with the first problem?
What were the ruler's and the noble's responses?
3. What do we learn about Nehemiah's relationship with the people as their governor?
4. How was Nehemiah able to perceive the treachery of Shemaiah?

What about today?

1. Note the short time it took for such a monumental task (6:15). What was the response of Israel's enemies? In what ways do you see God working miraculously in your life of building?
2. If we desire to follow God we will undergo persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). Have you undergone any similar types of opposition as you have sought to follow Christ? Describe it.

My thoughts on overcoming wall-building opposition:

Registration & Reading!

Read Chapters 7-8

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
7		
8		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What did Nehemiah look for in others to determine their usefulness for service?
2. Why did God think it necessary to have Nehemiah register the people?
3. What was the result of not having an ancestral registration? Why?
4. What do we learn from the response of the people to the Word about our own attitude concerning God's Word?

What about today?

1. In what ways do you feel you measure up as a profitable servant in light of the standards of Nehemiah?
2. Evaluate your own response to God's Word. In what ways do you see callousness to the truth? Submission to truth?
3. In what ways do you see Hebrews 4:12, 13 in operation in your life?

My thoughts on what makes me useful for service:

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
9		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What are the prominent and recurring words in this chapter?
2. What is recorded as the response of the Jewish "fathers" to the Word of the Lord?
(list specifics)
3. What is given as the key reason behind the root problem?
4. How did these Jews attempt to exceed their father's spirituality?

What about today?

1. These are vivid examples of past resistance to the Word and the result upon succeeding generations. How does this correlate with the passage found in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13? In what ways does it illuminate your own spiritual heritage?
2. What weight do you place upon obeying the voice of the Lord?

My thoughts about the ways I seem to resist the Word of the Lord:

The ways I choose to respond to the Word of God:

Covenant Renewal!

Read Chapters 10-11

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
10		
11		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What were the specific responsibilities of the covenant? A covenant is a solemn agreement between two parties.
2. Why was it necessary to cast lots to determine who would live in Jerusalem?

What about today?

1. Think of some specific responsibilities today's Christ-followers have to our covenant with God. Use the data from this section as a basis for your answers.
2. How serious were the people about returning to God and His ways? Sincerity is important, but a person may be very sincere - yet sincerely wrong.

Malachi prophesied only decades after these events. Look at his message and what the concept of returning to God meant to this group of people. What should "return" mean to us?

My thoughts about my own need for covenant renewal:

Walls Rededicated - People Revived!

Read Chapters 12-13

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
12		
13		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What specific things were planned for rededication of the wall?
2. What were the specific reforms of the people?
3. What problems were soon encountered?
4. What significance do you see in 13:14, 22, 31?
5. What does the profaning of the Sabbath reveal? Why the strong response of Nehemiah to the traders and merchants?

What about today?

1. Once again we see the depraved nature of mankind. We can not afford to place confidence in our natural inclinations!
2. In what ways do we profane God's Sabbath today? Read Hebrews 4 concerning the Sabbath rest of the people of God!
3. How concerned are you about purity in your own body? Your own family? The group of people with whom I gather to honor God?

CONCLUSION

Ezra dealt with the rebuilding of the Temple. Nehemiah desired the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. Both were concerned about repentance, revival, and renewal in the hearts of the people of God! In what ways are the Church's walls in disrepair today?

What can you do to encourage and challenge yourself and others in the manner of Nehemiah?

The words of Ezekiel 22:30 echo in the ears of every disciple that chooses to live in a life pleasing to God!