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News that Breaks Your Heart

Nehemiah 1 • Day 1

In the opening verses of Nehemiah's memoirs, we see him receiving news that devastates him.

Starting Point: Think of a time when you received news that broke your heart or brought you to tears. What was the news?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 1:1-4

1. Hanani, one of Nehemiah's brothers, returned to Susa after visiting Jerusalem. What questions does Nehemiah ask (v. 2)?
2. What were the conditions of the people in Jerusalem and its walls (v. 1-3)?
3. What were Nehemiah's reactions when he heard the bad news about the Jewish remnant and the Jerusalem walls (v. 4)?
4. What does that tell you about his heart?

5. If you were really honest, what is your normal response when you hear bad news about other believers?

- Too bad for them
- Glad it is not me
- That is hard, but there is nothing I can do
- I must pray for them
- Is there a way I can help?

What does that tell you about the condition of your heart?

6. What broken places around you (perhaps in your family, community, church, world) most grip your heart?

Digging Deeper

7. Nehemiah's concern for the Jews in Jerusalem is a reflection of God's own concern. Write out what God says about His own concern for the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem.

Psalm 147:2-3

Isaiah 44:24-26

Isaiah 49:14-16

8. Nehemiah's concern was focused on the Jews living in Jerusalem. His concern was one that was shared by God. Think of the concerns that most grip your heart. Would those concerns be shared by God?

9. Take some time today to slow down and let your heart feel the pain of one or more of these situations. Talk to God about what is on your heart.

Read the words of the hymn *Let your Heart be Broken* (see Appendix, page 64)

Praying with Confidence

Nehemiah 1 • Day 2

The opening verses of Nehemiah reveal Nehemiah’s heart. He weeps for the trouble and disgrace of his people, and for their broken places. He begins to pray with confidence in God - a God whose love never fails and whose mercies are ready to forgive. In the next two days of study, we’ll look at God’s love and His mercy that is ready to restore.

Starting Point: Is there a person you know who has incredible confidence in prayer? What do you think inspires them?

Today’s Reading: Nehemiah 1:5-11

1. What phrases does Nehemiah use to approach God (v. 5)?
2. Why does Nehemiah ask god to keep His “covenant of love” (v. 5)?
3. Nehemiah knew that God had made His people, Israel, some significant promises. These promises are found in Leviticus 26:27-45. List what God has promised His people.

Promises to Discipline	Promises to Bless

4. As Christians, we also live in a covenant relationship with God. What promises has God made to us?

Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25

Romans 8:31-37

5. Nehemiah realized that God had been faithful to keep His promises. The promises of scattering them among the nations had become a grim reality for the Jews. How does God blend His love for us with His discipline (Hebrews 12:5-6)?

6. Have you ever experienced a sense of being disciplined or “exiled” from God?

7. On what promises of God does Nehemiah fully rely (vv. 8-10)?

8. Restoration of our broken places begins with full reliance on God’s covenant of love as well. What reassurances of God’s great love are found in Lamentations 3:19-23?

9. How confident are you of God’s faithful covenant of love for you?

Not Sure 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Fully Confident

10. Like Nehemiah, spend a few moments in quiet prayer before the Lord. Remind yourself that because of the Lord’s great love He sent Jesus to the cross for your sin (Romans 5:8). Thoughtfully consider in God’s presence His love for you. Everything depends on knowing, deep down, He loves you and wants to restore you.

Praying with Confession

Nehemiah 1 • Day 3

Nehemiah's heart is broken by the report of the broken down walls of Jerusalem. He weeps, mourns and fasts. But that's not all he does. He prays. Today we'll continue to explore this powerful prayer of talking with God about the past and the future...

Starting Point: As a child or teen, how were you taught to pray (if at all) or to confess your sins?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 1:6-11

1. After extolling God for His greatness and entreating Him to listen to his prayer, Nehemiah launches into some serious confession. Why do you think he begins with asking for forgiveness rather than asking for help?
2. Whose sins does Nehemiah confess in verse 6?
3. It may sound strange to hear Nehemiah confess the sins of his "father's house." Why do you think Nehemiah confessed the sins of other people?

Digging Deeper

4. While we are only *guilty* for our own sins, we can be *affected* by the sins of others especially those with whom we are closely connected. Look up the following passages and summarize what you learn about the far-reaching consequences of sin.

Exodus 20:4-5

Jeremiah 32:18

5. How is it still true today that children can suffer the consequences of the sins of their parents or families?

6. The "sins of the fathers" can be repeated if not acknowledged as being wrong. Have you ever stopped and considered how this might contribute to your "blindspots?"

7. In verse 6, Nehemiah humbly confesses the sins of the nation—including his own sins and those of his father's house. Read what God promises in Leviticus 26:40-42 will happen if His people in exile would confess "their sins and the sins of their fathers." How does this passage help you understand Nehemiah's prayer?

8. Confession of sin is still to be a vital part of a believer's life, bringing restoration and blessing. Write out what the following verses say about confessing our sins.

James 5:16

1 John 1:9

9. In order to begin to "rebuild the broken places" we too need to take some time and ask God to take inventory of your life. One of the first steps in any major rebuilding project is bringing things into alignment. We too need to be "straight up" with God.

Pray the prayer that David offered in Psalms 139:23-24.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Confess any sin that God brings to your mind.

Receive His promised forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

Praise Him for His grace, and His covenant of love.

Assessing Your Assets

Nehemiah 1 • Day 4

So far Nehemiah hasn't told us much about himself. He's focused on God and the exiles back in Jerusalem. At the very end of the chapter, he tells us a significant piece of information about himself: "I was cupbearer to the king" (v. 11). Today we will see how God had sovereignly put Nehemiah in a position to do something about the situation that was breaking his heart.

Starting Point: When have you felt that God sovereignly put you in a place where you could be useful to Him?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 1:11

1. Why do think Nehemiah does not tell us at the beginning of his book that he was the "cupbearer to the king?"

Background Info: Historians tell us that the cupbearer in ancient times was a person of considerable influence. Dr. H. G. M. Williamson, lecturer in Hebrew and Aramaic at Cambridge University, writes, "Royal cupbearers in antiquity, in addition to their skill in selecting and serving wine and their duty in tasting it as proof against poison, were also expected to be convivial and tactful companions to the king. Being much in his confidence, they could thus wield considerable influence by way of informal counsel and discussion. . . It may be noted also that the office of cupbearer could be combined with other important offices." (*Word Biblical Commentary, Ezra, Nehemiah*, 174).

2. Nehemiah enjoyed a position of responsibility and privilege in the Persian court. How could his position have caused him to be unconcerned about the plight of the exiles who had returned to Jerusalem? Why did he care?
3. How can your responsibilities and privileges insulate you from caring about the needs of others?

4. What can you do to keep your heart sensitive to the broken places and hurting people around you?

5. Knowing that Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king of Persia sheds light on the final request of Nehemiah's prayer: "Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man." What was Nehemiah asking for?

Insight: We see here how Nehemiah's relationship to the King of Persia made it possible for him to gain the permission and resources necessary to rebuild the broken walls in Jerusalem. God had sovereignly positioned Nehemiah, like he did with Esther, "for such a time as this."

6. It's interesting to note that Nehemiah, who served the King of Persia, refers to himself as God's "servant" (v. 11). How does reveal his ultimate allegiance?

7. How does Nehemiah's willingness to leave the palace reveal his character and priorities?

8. How willing are you to lay aside personal privilege and perks to be a "servant" of the Lord in some challenging area of need? Which of the following best reflects your outlook?
 - I've worked to hard to get where I am; I don't want to lose it
 - I'm too swamped with my responsibilities to take on the concerns of others
 - Perhaps God has put me where I am for the benefit of others. I want to be useful to Him
 - I know I am sovereignly positioned by God to be in a place to serve Him

9. Ask God to show you where He has sovereignly positioned you to serve Him or ask Him to open doors of opportunity for you to serve Him.

Choosing to be a Rebuilder

Nehemiah 1 • Day 5

Today, as we finish Nehemiah 1, we'll look back over chapter 1 and see the various factors that God used to move Nehemiah to be a rebuilder. We'll discover that God often uses similar forces to move us to be rebuilders.

Starting Point: What has impressed you the most about Nehemiah's character?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 1:1-11

1. Look back over chapter 1 and identify the factors that God used to move Nehemiah to become a rebuilder of the walls in Jerusalem. Comment on how each of the factors listed played a part in preparing Nehemiah to take on the task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.
 - A. Nehemiah's personal concern for the Jews in Jerusalem
 - B. The new information Nehemiah received from Hanani
 - C. Nehemiah's time spent in humble and honest prayer
 - D. Nehemiah's position as king's cupbearer

Let's explore how God uses those same factors to move us to help rebuild a broken place that is dear to Him.

2. Nehemiah had a deep personal concern for the welfare of the Jews in Jerusalem (2:10). Other Jews in Susa may not have had the same concern or at least the same level of concern. What needs in the lives of others have most captivated your heart? What "broken places" break your heart?

3. Nehemiah was impacted by the information he received from Hanani about Jerusalem. How has information you've received caused your concern for a broken place to grow?

4. Nehemiah spent time talking to God about his concerns for Jerusalem.

How have you prayed about the concern that has gripped your heart?

Has confession or brokenness been a part of your prayer? Why or why not?

Are there promises of Scripture you can claim for this concern? Which ones?

5. Nehemiah realized that God had sovereignly positioned him for involvement in meeting the needs of the remnant in Jerusalem. He had access to the King and could request resources and permission to rebuild the city walls. Take stock of what God has sovereignly made available to you.

How has God sovereignly positioned you to take part in the rebuilding of a broken place?

What do you sense God is asking you to do?

6. Are you willing to be part of the rebuilding process in the broken place God has placed on your heart? Write out a prayer that expresses your heart to God.

Asking with Respect

Nehemiah 2 • Day 1

In the chapter 1 of Nehemiah we read about his powerful prayer life, in chapter 2 we'll see that he has also takes a proactive approach to problems. He is a man who not only prays; he plans! From his life, we can learn to face our challenges and challengers!

Starting Point: Think of a time when you needed to face an employer or a supervisor with a big request. How did you approach the situation and what were the results?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 2:1- 9

1. Nehemiah had prayed to God "give your servant success *today*...by granting him favour in the presence of the king (Nehemiah 1:11). Four months time had elapsed between Nehemiah's prayer and this conversation with the king.

What thoughts or feelings may have crossed Nehemiah's mind during these months?

2. How do you tend to respond to delays in answers to your prayers?

- Keep on praying
- Give up
- Talk to my friends about what I should do
- Other _____

3. The king refers twice to Nehemiah's sadness (2:2). In this culture, sadness in front of a king was not appropriate as it could suggest dissatisfaction with the king. What consequences may Nehemiah have feared in showing his sadness?

Have you ever feared to let your true feelings show?

4. What does Nehemiah's quick prayer before he answers the king demonstrate (2:4)?

Digging Deeper

5. How do the following Scriptures encourage us to pray like Nehemiah?

I Thessalonians 5:17

Ephesians 6:18

6. When the king asks him what he wants, Nehemiah is ready with a well thought through response. He makes his requests with great respect. On the following chart, note the respectful ways he speaks and the requests that He makes (v. 5):

Words of Respect	Words of Request
2: 3	2: 5
2:.5	2:7
2: 7	2:8

7. What lessons can you learn from Nehemiah's approach to the king that can help you in making requests from those with authority?
8. Is there someone from whom you would like to ask a favour? Write out the careful words you could use in this conversation. Ask God to open the door to the conversation as He did with Nehemiah.

Planning with Favour

Nehemiah 2 • Day 2

It's one thing to have a dream....it's another to have a plan. Nehemiah had both. He had a desire to see the walls of Jerusalem rebuilt. Today we'll see how he planned to see that desire accomplished.

Starting Point: Which do you tend to enjoy most: a planning meeting or a prayer meeting?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 2:5-8

1. Nehemiah had prayed it through and "thought it through." What plans had he made (vv. 5-8):
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
2. How does prayer relate to planning? What are the links between the two?
3. Nehemiah had wisely thought through his need for protection as well. Whom did he fear and how does he seek protection (v. 7)?
4. Ezra had also led a group of exiles back to Jerusalem to rebuild Jerusalem's temple. Read Ezra 8:21-23. Why did Ezra not ask for help from the government?

5. Does the fact that Nehemiah requested official protection indicate a lack of trust in God's help? Why or why not?

6. Unlike Ezra, Nehemiah was well connected to the Persian government. So he asks, and he receives a lot of official help. How does this demonstrate that God can work in different ways for different people?

7. What freedom might you need to give to another servant of God who is seeking to serve God in a new way?

Digging Deeper (just use Icon here)

8. Both Ezra and Nehemiah had experienced God's "good hand" at work in their lives. Look up the following verses and record God's gracious goodness.

Ezra 7:6, 28

Ezra 8:18

Ezra 8:31

9. Nehemiah, and Ezra, saw God's hand as the one who blessed them with success. When things go well in your life, to whom do you tend to give the credit?

10. Where have you personally experienced the "good hand of God?" Would you write Him a "thank you note" on the space provided below.

Surveying the Situation

Nehemiah 2 • Day 3

Nehemiah had a huge project before him...the rebuilding of a city in ruins. Today we'll see how he inspected the project and began to formulate a rebuilding plan. There's much to be learned from Nehemiah's example. Take a moment to pray that God would speak to you today.

Starting Point: How do you tend to approach a big project – plan it carefully or just "jump right in" and see what happens?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 2:11-16

1. Nehemiah was a hands-on leader. He didn't delegate the inspection of the situation to someone else. What steps did Nehemiah take to assess the situation that he hoped to change (vv. 11-16)?
2. Study the map of the city on page 63 and note the areas Nehemiah personally inspected. Why do you think he inspected only a part of the wall?

Digging Deeper

3. Isaiah 61: 1-4, written centuries before Nehemiah's time would have been an encouragement to him as he saw the ruins of the city walls? How can these verses encourage us as rebuilders?
4. As Nehemiah inspects the ruined walls, he begins to formulate a rebuilding plan. The Bible says we need to make sure we don't make plans without seeking out God's plans. Read Isaiah 30:1-3. Why is it so important to know our plans follow (not precede) God's plans?

5. In Nehemiah 2:16 we learn that Nehemiah chose not to disclose his plans immediately. What were the benefits of keeping his plans a secret at this time?

6. What insights can you draw from Nehemiah's approach in the following areas:
 - Making a careful assessment of the situation

 - Choosing the right time to disclose your plans

7. Nehemiah took several days to survey the destruction that had come to Jerusalem and the people of God. God had warned the people that this devastation would come if they did not follow His ways. Now it had come. Yet God, in His grace, was providing them an opportunity to rebuild.

God is still a God of grace. Though He allows us to reap the consequences of our actions, He still wants to rebuild our lives and our ministries to His glory. Before we can rebuild, we may need to take time to carefully assess the damages and the changes needed.

Think of the area you would like to be rebuilt with God's help.

Write out your "damage assessment" for this area

What part of the damage is the consequence of sin in your life? Others lives?

What steps or plans for rebuilding is God putting into your mind?

Mobilizing the People to Build

Nehemiah 2 • Day 4

God blessed Nehemiah with a tremendous gift of leadership. After waiting upon God, asking for help from the king, surveying the damage to the wall, the day finally comes when Nehemiah tells others his plans. Nehemiah demonstrates true leadership as the people heartily join him in his vision to rebuild the city walls.

Starting Point: Which do you prefer: to work alone or in a group? What roles do you enjoy?

Read Nehemiah 2:16-20

1. What motivators does Nehemiah use to inspire the people of Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the city (vv. 17-18)?
2. How would the information in verse 18 have instilled confidence in the people?
3. Nehemiah shared how he had seen God work through the king's kind words. How can sharing how God has worked in our lives give confidence and courage to others?
4. The hand of God on our lives doesn't mean we won't have opposition. What reasons did the enemies have to oppose Nehemiah? (v. 10)

5. How would knowing the hand of God was upon his life have given him confidence to continue?

6. When you begin a big project, do you stop to ask yourself if the hand of the Lord has led you to it, or just ask His blessing once you're in it?

Why is it so important to know we have the Lord's hand with us?

7. What can we learn from Nehemiah's example when we try to mobilize others to be involved in a God-sized project?

8. Nehemiah was a leader with confidence. And his confidence was not placed in himself but in God (v. 20). Is there an area, that if God helped you, you would like to mobilize others to join you in pursuing God's glory?
 - A. What is the area?

 - B. Who would you like to join you?

Stop and ask God to help us lead with His strength and confidence. Ask for His good hand to be upon you as you step out for Him.

Facing the Challengers

Nehemiah 2 • Day 5

It's one thing to work with the "wind in our sails." It's quite another to keep going when the wind is against us. Nehemiah stands firm in the midst of incredible opposition.

Starting Point: What inspires you to keep going when you feel criticized?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 2:10, 19-20

1. Every good story has an antagonist; this one has several. List their names and the areas they are from. (You might want to consult a map or concordance.)

Verse	Name	Region or Location
2:10		
2:10		
2:19		

2. Why were these enemies upset?
3. These characters remain the opposition parties throughout our study. What methods do they use in verse 19?
4. Often others just don't like change. They want to keep things the same way they have always been. How did the rebuilding threaten the status quo for this trio of mockers?
5. How might the building program that's on your heart be opposed or criticized?

6. When have you personally tried to move forward and encountered the scrutiny and ridicule of others? Did it stop you from moving forward?

Digging Deeper

7. Summarize with a word or two how each of the following faced the taunts and jeers of their enemies.

David and Goliath: 1 Samuel 17:23-26; 41-47

David and Saul: 1 Samuel 24:8-13

Esther: Esther 2

Jesus: Luke 23:34-37

8. How does Nehemiah respond (v. 20)?
9. How are the following verses an encouragement to us in times of opposition?

Joshua 1:7-9

Ephesians 6:10-18

10. Instead of focusing on the taunts of his enemies, Nehemiah focused on God (and what He had done!) Check the one you tend to focus on:

- The good hand of God on your life
- The opposition to God's plan for your life

11. As we conclude chapter 2 of Nehemiah:

- Do you need a clearer plan?
- Do you need to mobilize others?
- Do you need to stand firm in the face of opposition?

Share this with a friend this week and ask him/her to help you stand firm as you move forward for God.

4. In Nehemiah 1 • Day 2 (page 4), you identified a broken place you would like to see rebuilt with God's help. How could this project be divided into workable sections in order to be completed?

Write out the sections of the project below:

Who are some possible team mates for this rebuilding project?

We often ask family and friends to assist us in a home rebuilding project. When it comes to rebuilding personal areas in our lives, many of us adopt a "do it yourself" approach – keeping the responsibility squarely our own shoulders. However, for greater change in personal areas of our lives, working with others to hold us accountable and speak truth into our lives produces much greater results.

5. How does Proverbs 27:17 encourage us to relate to one another?

6. In the areas of your personal life that need to be rebuilt, who could you work alongside to gain wise counsel, mentoring and accountability?
(Consider a small group, a mentor, or discipleship relationship.)

7. What steps could you take this week to depend on God and others to face personal challenges or implement plans for rebuilding a broken place? When will you begin?

A Little Bit of History

Nehemiah 3 • Day 2

Our family had the privilege of visiting Gettysburg shortly after we moved to the East. Before we left, we watched the movie *Gettysburg*, in order to give our children a feel for this battle. Learning some of the historical background made a big difference when we stood at places like Little Round Top. We all understood the significance of what had happened there.

Today, we'll "visit" the historic site, The Sheep Gate, where the wall building began and ended.

Starting Point: Do you enjoy visiting historical places, why or why not? If so, what kind of historical places interest you?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 3:1-2

1. Why might the priests have had a special interest in rebuilding the wall near the Sheep Gate?

Donald Campbell writes: "Since (this gate) is located not far from the temple and the sheep market, it is commonly believed that animals for sacrifice passed through this gate. This was an area in which the priests had a special interest. Was it not beneath the dignity of the exalted spiritual leader of the nation to clear away the rubble, to carry heavy stones and set them in place in the wall? Apparently, this did not cross the mind of the priests and high priests who set such as striking example for all of the people." (*Nehemiah*, Campbell, pg. 27)

2. How did the religious leaders set an example for the rest of the people?

What implications does this have for spiritual leaders today?

3. Perhaps the priests had another motivation for beginning at the Sheep Gate.

Read Jeremiah 31:38 and compare it with Nehemiah 3:1-2.

Jeremiah prophesied that the Israelites would be exiled and Jerusalem destroyed. He also foretold that this very section of the wall would be rebuilt. How might this have motivated the priest's actions?

Biblical Insight: Here's another possible motivation for beginning at this gate: "This northern section of Jerusalem opened up to the central Benjamin plateau where enemy forces could attack most easily. The rest of the perimeter was protected by the natural valley topography." John MacArthur, *Nehemiah*, page 29.

4. When the priests had rebuilt the Sheep Gate, they dedicated it even before the rest of the wall was complete (v. 1). Why do you think they did this?

Digging Deeper

5. The Sheep Gate is mentioned during the time of Christ. According to John 5:1-9 what significant event took place there?
6. The Old Testament prophet Zechariah wrote that the Jerusalem gates will still exist in the future. Which places are listed as existing in the "New Jerusalem" (Zechariah 14:10)?
7. Knowing this bit of history, what would it mean for you to visit them?
8. We'd love to encourage you to visit Israel. It's impossible to describe all the history that took place there. Isn't it incredible that one day all those who know Jesus will be together in the New Jerusalem? We'll see the gates, and worship together.

Take a few moments to dedicate your day and your life to God today.

Count Me In

Nehemiah 3 • Day 3

In his commentary on Nehemiah, Mark Roberts says the list of names in Nehemiah 3 reminds him of the list of names at a commencement. If you don't know anyone on the list, your interest is minimal. If you have a personal connection, you feel like cheering.

Nehemiah's list of workers is filled with interesting tidbits of information that help us to get to know the characters. These details provide rich insights into the diverse group of people that worked together, as well as lessons on leadership and hard work.

Starting Point: What are the best lessons you've learned on bringing a diverse group of people together to work together on a task?

Today's Reading: Review Nehemiah 3:2-5

Each individual working on the wall seemed to know where he or she belonged and what was expected.

1. What organizational steps would have needed to be taken in order for all these people to work "next to" one another?

Do you have clear and specific directions for those who work under your leadership (at home, at work, or in ministry)? How is this helpful for others?

2. What occupations are mentioned among those rebuilding the walls? What lessons can you draw from the fact that people from different vocations were involved?

Digging Deeper

3. Meremoth (3:4) is also mentioned in Ezra 8:33. What had he done to assist Ezra many years earlier and what does this tell you about him?

4. The men of Tekoa, Amos' hometown (12 miles south of Jerusalem), took two sections of the wall (3:5, 27). How do you respond to those who go the extra mile and take a double load?
5. However, the nobles of Tekoa, didn't help at all (v. 5). What part does a submissive spirit play in teamwork?
6. How do you feel about people who refuse to help complete a group project?

Donald Campbell asks: "Are we like the nobles of Tekoa who wanted the benefits of a rebuilt Jerusalem but refused to take an active part themselves in the work of the Lord?" (page 29)

7. Nehemiah went on with his work even though others refused and were uninvolved. What lessons can we learn from his example?
8. If our church is involved in a major project, which words describe me?
 - Supporting with my whole heart
 - Standing on the sidelines
 - Sitting with the critics
9. How is Baruch remembered (v. 20)? How would you like to be remembered?
10. As we close our study today, would you write an encouraging note to someone who is doing a double share of the work in a ministry project. It would really be an encouragement.

Everybody, Everywhere

Nehemiah 3 • Day 4

We used to sing a little song with our children when they were young, "Clean up, clean up, everybody, everywhere. Clean up, clean up, everybody do your share." When we all work together a lot can be accomplished. Nehemiah 3 is filled with lists of people who worked together.

Starting Point: Where have you seen families work together to accomplish a big project?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 3:7-32

1. In verse 7, we note men who made repairs who were under the authority of the governor of the Trans-Euphrates. This governor had been encouraged to support this project by the agreements Nehemiah had made (2:7) and Ezra 6:6-13. In what ways does a ministry or church benefit by seeking legal permits and regional connections in order to complete God's work?
2. In verse 9, Nehemiah notes that the goldsmiths and perfume-makers made significant repairs (v. 8). Since their daily work did not involve heavy lifting, what can we learn from their examples?
3. Many, if not most of the workers, made repairs in front of their own homes (vv.10, 23, 26, 28-30). Why was this a wise arrangement?
4. Sometimes work for God that is "across the world...or across the city" seems more significant than "across the street." What lessons can we learn from these examples of serving one's own family and neighbourhood?

5. Draw a simple map of the homes on your street in relation to where you live. If you can, write the names of the people who live near you. What steps could you take to serve in your neighbourhood?

Randy Frazee, in his book, *The Connecting Church*, challenges believers to begin ministry within their own regions or neighbourhoods. He encourages small groups to connect as families in their regions and then to reach out to their neighbours. A healthier schedule and family life is a result. (see *Make Room for Life*; also by Frazee).

6. Not only can we work for God in our neighbourhoods, we can involve our children and our families. Who helps Shallum in verse 12?

How does this give you the sense that everyone was involved?

7. If you have children, or live near family, how could you be involved together to build the kingdom of God or rebuild a broken place?

8. Today, we've been challenged to seek the kingdom of God through service under authority (the governors or leaders), alongside our family, and near our homes.

Write down one way you will apply what you've learned this week:

A Little Bit Wiser for Lessons Learned

Nehemiah 3 • Day 5

Today we'll summarize the lessons learned from Nehemiah and his work crew. This amazing team completed the walls in 52 days! (Less time than most of us can remodel our kitchen, let alone build a house!) Their walls were so sturdy – they would later walk in groups on top of them.

Starting Point: What has most impressed you with the Nehemiah's building team?

Today's Reading: Review Nehemiah 3

Today we will review the significant principles that can be drawn from Nehemiah 3. We can learn valuable lessons on hard work, teamwork and organization.

1. What principles can you learn from Nehemiah 3 about doing God's work in an orderly and organized manner?
2. How does I Corinthians 14:40 encourage us to do the same?
3. Where could you be more organized or orderly to accomplish God's work?
4. What lessons can you learn from Nehemiah 3 about delegating work and involving others?

5. The Body of Christ is designed to work as "each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:16). What part of the work are you presently doing to build up the church?

If you could do anything, what would you like to do?

Digging deeper

6. Study Exodus 18:1-23 and write down what Moses learned about delegating responsibility.

7. Nehemiah 3 is filled with the names of the honoured faithful, and even some who weren't faithful. What do the following verses teach us about faithful work for the Lord?

I Corinthians 3:12-15

Hebrews 6:10

One final thought as we close this chapter:

Sometimes without having been there, we miss the sweat, perhaps the bruises, aching muscles and tired feet that came with this project. Working hard for Jesus is still hard work. We have the words from I Corinthians 15:58 in a beautiful calligraphy in our home office.

Therefore, My Beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because you know that your toil in the Lord is not in vain.

You'll reap a harvest—Don't give up. God bless you for studying this far!

What differences in this week's study will make in your life? How will you put it into work?

When (Not “If”) Opposition Comes. . .

Nehemiah 4 • Day 1

No rebuilding work for God will go unopposed. That shouldn't surprise us, but it often does. Somehow we think God should shield us from critiques and enemies as we work for him. But Nehemiah's memoirs reveal that God didn't stop opposition. But He did help Nehemiah deal with it. This week we'll learn how to face opposition as we study Nehemiah's example.

Starting Point: Why do you think God doesn't choose to protect His people from facing opposition?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 4:1-3

1. In chapter 2 we learned that Sanballat and Tobiah were angry that Nehemiah had come to “promote the welfare of the Israelites” (2:10). Why might they have wanted to see the city walls remain in ruins?
2. What reasons motivate people today to oppose God's work from going forward?
3. Nehemiah 4:3 mentions that Tobiah was “at his (Sanballat's) side”. Have you ever been opposed, not just by one person, but by those who “took his side”? How did this affect you?
4. In 4:7 we find the circle of critics growing. Who is added to the list of opponents?

Background Info: Sanballat seems to have been the governor of Samaria, the land directly north of Jerusalem. Tobiah was an official of the Ammonites, a people living to the east of Jerusalem. The “Arabs” would have been peoples to the east and the “men of Ashdod” would have been from a city west of Jerusalem.” Nehemiah's enemies literally had him surrounded on all sides!

Digging Deeper

5. The New Testament alerts us to the reality that God's work is actively opposed by a powerful and persistent enemy—Satan. Look up the following passages and note how Satan works through people to oppose God's work in the world.

Luke 22:1-4

Acts 13:6-10

2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15

6. We may be tempted to think that ALL opposition we face when trying to rebuild for God is sent from the Satan, the enemy of our souls. However, that's not always the case. Sometimes those who seem to oppose us are actually trying to help us. Read the following passages and record what you learn about "godly opposition."

Proverbs 27:6

Galatians 2:11

7. How can you tell the difference between opposition that is destructive (from Satan) and opposition that is constructive (from God)?

8. Are you facing any opposition in your efforts to serve the Lord?

- How can you demonstrate a teachable spirit towards "constructive opposition?"
- How can you maintain a steadfast spirit in spite of "destructive opposition?"

Strategic and Subversive Attacks

Nehemiah 4 • Day 2

If you are involved in rebuilding part of the wall, you can expect opposition. And the attacks will not be random. They will be designed to weigh you down and wear you out so that you stop building.

Today, as we study Nehemiah's memoirs, we'll gain insight about some of the strategic and subversive attacks that rebuilders need to prepare to face.

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 4:1-3

1. List all the questions that Sanballat and Tobiah ask in these verses:
2. What is their purpose in asking these questions? (What are they really doing when they ask these "questions?")
3. When you are working as a rebuilder, you may encounter verbal putdowns and insults from others. How do you react when your efforts are ridiculed or belittled?
4. How did Nehemiah respond to the insults of Sanballat and Tobiah? (4:4-6)
5. In 1 Peter 2:23 we're told how Jesus responded to the insults hurled at him. How is his response similar to Nehemiah's?
6. What can you learn from Nehemiah's and Jesus' examples?

Read: Nehemiah 4:7-12

- 7. When their insults don't seem to slow down the rebuilding work, Nehemiah's enemies regroup and re-strategize. What new tactics do they use to try and stop the rebuilding?

- 8. Sanballat and Tobiah are able to "stir up trouble" (v. 8) and instill fear into the hearts of Jews living in the area of Jerusalem. Repeatedly ("ten times") people come to Nehemiah and warn him of an impending attack (read v. 12).

Why is the "threat of attack" an effective way to hinder a rebuilding effort?

How do you respond when others around you get rattled or afraid?

How did Nehemiah respond? (read 13-14)

Digging Deeper

- 9. In Ephesians 6:11 tells us that our enemy, the devil, also strategizes and schemes to bring us down as we seek to follow and serve Christ. Fill in the chart below to identify some of the schemes and tactics Satan uses to oppose God's people and His work?

2 Corinthians 4:4	
2 Corinthians 11:3	
1 Timothy 4:1	
Revelation 12:10	

- 10. In 2 Corinthians 2:11, the apostle Paul says we don't need to be outwitted by Satan because "we are not unaware of his schemes." Review the schemes Nehemiah faced and the schemes Satan often uses against us.

Which of these schemes have you faced recently?

What specific action will you take to keep from being outwitted by Satan's schemes?

Fighting Back in Prayer

Nehemiah 4 • Day 3

Nehemiah faced his share of opposition. So will you as you seek to serve the Lord. Yesterday we looked at the tactics and strategies that can stop those who are rebuilding for God. Today we'll learn from Nehemiah how to effectively overcome opposition.

Starting Point: In the tough times, where do you tend to turn?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 4:1-14

1. What is Nehemiah's first response when he hears the insults of his enemies (vv. 4-5)?

How is this consistent with his first response when he hears the news of the broken walls (1:4-11)?

2. Is prayer your immediate response when you face opposition? Why or why not?
3. Take a closer look at Nehemiah's prayer in 4:4-5. Summarize its content. What's your reaction to his prayer?
4. Nehemiah's words are blunt and honest. His prayer sounds like one of the imprecatory psalms, raw with emotion and fierce with intensity (see Psalm 137). Do you ever pray with this kind of emotion and intensity? Why or why not?

Biblical Insight: Nehemiah's prayer is an example of "pouring out your heart to God" (see Psalm 62:8). God knows what's on our hearts so we can pour it out to him—honestly and openly. As John White says, "While there may be no virtue in demanding some else's damnation, it may be better to open one's angry heart to God than to bury the anger and pretend to be pious. Better to expose it to God, that he may correct and assuage it, than to pray with correct but phony piety" (*Excellence in Leadership*, 71).

5. What does Nehemiah say to his fellow rebuilders that would encourage them to stay connected to the Lord as they worked? (Read 4:14).

6. Take some time right now to stop and “remember the Lord.” Remember what He has done for you. Review the ways He’s delivered you in the past. Reflect on the promises He’s made that can strengthen you. Write out what came to mind.

7. How can constant communion with God strengthen you for the task of being a rebuilder? How can it help you “be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power” (Ephesians 6:10-18)?

8. To help yourself “remember the Lord” as you go through your day today, select one of the following creative reminders.
 - I will put up a Post-it note
 - I will make a new Screen saver
 - I will move a ring to another finger and pray each time I feel it
 - Other _____

9. And as you pray, remember you aren't alone in the battle. List of the names of other rebuilders you could pray for this week:
 - 1.
 - 2.

You might want to give them a call or drop them a note to say you prayed for them; it will strengthen and encourage their hearts!

Preparing to Fight

Nehemiah 4 • Day 4

“We cannot do more *until* we pray, but we can do more *after* we pray.” We don’t know who first made this statement, but Nehemiah agreed with it. When faced with opposition to the rebuilding project, he prayed and then prepared for a fight. Today we’ll learn from his example how we can prepare to fight as we work to rebuild.

Starting Point: Have you ever had to step up and protect a vulnerable person or group of people?

Today’s Reading: Nehemiah 4:7-23

1. Nehemiah not only prays for God’s help, he also prepares to fight with God’s strength. Fill in the chart below, recording the specific actions he takes to protect his people as they rebuild.

4:9	
4:13	
4:16-18	
4:19-20	
4:21-23	

2. What impresses you about the actions Nehemiah took and the preparations he made?

3. Nehemiah calls the rebuilders to “remember the Lord, who is great and awesome and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes” (v. 14). What is the relationship between trusting the Lord and making plans for your own protection?

Biblical Insight: Nehemiah gives us a wonderful example of blending prayer and preparation. Derek Kidner observes, “The partnership of heaven and earth, of trust and good management, is taken for granted as something normal and harmonious.” (*Ezra and Nehemiah*, 91-92).

4. When your efforts to rebuild for God are opposed, are you more prone to emphasize prayer (talking to God) or preparation (taking action)? How can you make sure both are part of your response?
5. Christians are called to “fight the fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12). What will that mean in practical terms as you seek to be a rebuilders for God?
6. List the action steps you will take to protect the rebuilding work God has entrusted to you.
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.

Pray and step forward with God’s help.

Persevering as a Rebuilder

Nehemiah 4 • Day 5

One of the most admirable qualities in Nehemiah's life is his dogged perseverance. In spite of the rubble around him and the rabble against him, he keeps rebuilding. Today we'll be challenged to follow his example in the rebuilding work we have before us.

Starting Point: Are you naturally a persistent, persevering person when challenges and obstacles arise? Give an example.

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 4:6-23

1. In chapter 4 we find many reasons the rebuilding project could have come to a halt. In addition to the persistent opposition from a host of enemies, there was the growing fatigue of the workers.

What does 4:10 tell you about the energy level and emotional state of the workers?

How much of the wall had been completed when the workers began to wear down? (see 4:6)

2. Football coach Vince Lombardi once said, "Fatigue makes cowards of us all." How could the exhaustion of the workers played into the hands of Sanballat and Tobiah?
3. How tired are you at this time? Is it affecting your ability to do the rebuilding work God has set before you? What do you need to do keep your strength refueled?

- Sometimes the rebuilding work has to proceed under less than ideal circumstances. Fill in the following chart, recording the adjustments and sacrifices Nehemiah made to allow the work to continue under difficult conditions.

4:16-18	
4:21	
4:22	
4:23	

- What adjustments and sacrifices might you need to make to help a rebuilding project continue under “less than ideal” circumstances?
- The enemies that opposed the rebuilding of the walls made many threats against the workers. At the end of the day, how many of these threats were actually carried out? What can you learn from this?
- What effect did the perseverance and courage of the workers have on their enemies? (see v. 15)
- How might your perseverance and courage be used to deflate those who oppose God’s work?
- In Colossians 1:11, Paul prays that believers would be “strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience.” Can we encourage you to “keep going” (in this study) and with your rebuilding project? Take some steps forward today in the very area where you feel like quitting.

Live by the words: “Never, never, never give up!” Pray and keep going one more day.

Problems Within the Walls

Nehemiah 5 • Day 1

Sometimes the biggest challenges rebuilders encounter come from “within the walls” rather than “outside the walls.” In the previous chapter, we saw Nehemiah deal with severe external threats, now in chapter 5 we’ll watch him face two serious internal problems: conflict (1-13) and compromise (14-18). There are some important lessons in this chapter that you won’t want to miss.

Starting Point: When have you seen a good work slowed down or completely stopped by internal problems? What happened? (If sharing in a group, please keep confidences.)

Today’s Reading: Nehemiah 5:1-13

1. In the opening verses this chapter, we learn that trouble is building among the wall builders. How does verse 1 make it clear that this is an “internal problem”?
2. In verses 2-4 we read about three groups of workers who have a complaint to lodge against their “Jewish brothers.” Fill in the chart to summarize the complaint of each group.

Group 1 (v. 2)	
Group 2 (v. 3)	
Group 3 (v. 4)	

3. One reason some workers were financially strapped was because of a “famine” that was ruining crop production (5:3). How might the rebuilding of the wall caused added financial hardship for the workers?
4. What “costs” (financial, physical, emotional, etc.) have you experienced in seeking to be a rebuilder for the Lord? How can hardships create tension and trouble that could threaten the progress of the work?

Biblical Insight: Another reason for the financial hardships among the workers related to the heavy debt load they were under. Some of the workers had to “borrow money” (v. 4) to pay their taxes to the Persian king. Sadly, the wealthy Jews making the loans were “exacting usury” from the workers (v. 7). The Hebrew word translated “usury” refers to “interest” (either normal or excessive interest).

Digging Deeper

5. Read Leviticus 25:35-38 and Deuteronomy 23:19-20 and answer the following questions related to Old Testament regulations on borrowing and lending.

Yes No Could a Jew make a loan to another Jew?
Yes No Could a Jew charge interest on a loan to another Jew?
Yes No Could a Jew charge interest on a loan to a non-Jew?

6. When Nehemiah hears the charges made by the workers, he was “very angry” (v. 6).

Why was he so angry? (see v. 7)

Was his anger justified? Why or why not?

7. While we are told to be “slow to anger” (James 1:19), there is a place for righteous anger. Look up the following passages and indicate what made Jesus angry?

Mark 3:1-5

John 2:13-17

8. Both Nehemiah and Jesus got angry when people were unconcerned about others’ needs or disobedient to God’s Word. Answer the following questions about what makes you angry

True False I never or rarely get angry about anything
True False I am angry much of the time
True False I get angry when my needs are unmet or my plans are frustrated
True False I feel angry when I see other people being treated poorly
True False I get angry when God’s Word is disobeyed

9. Unless we are angry for the right reasons and unless we handle anger a righteous way, our effectiveness as rebuilders for God will be greatly hindered. Let’s close today’s lesson by memorizing Ephesians 4:26-27. (You can do it!). Pray that God would help you learn to process anger in a godly way.

“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry and do not give the devil a foothold.” Ephesians 4:26-27

Clearing Up Internal Conflict

Nehemiah 5 • Day 2

Internal conflict can ruin a rebuilding project. No wonder Nehemiah was so concerned when he heard the outcry of his workers against their Jewish brothers. He was angered by the lack of compassion and the disregard of God's Law. But Nehemiah didn't just get mad, he got busy. With courage and humility, he confronted the situation and proposed a solution. Nehemiah provides us with a healthy example to follow when we face interpersonal conflicts in our rebuilding projects.

Starting Point: How do you tend to respond when there is interpersonal conflict in your family or among ministry team members?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 5:6-13

1. Yesterday, we watched Nehemiah get "very angry" when he heard that some wealthy Jews were charging interest ("usury") on loans to those rebuilding the walls. But instead of responding rashly, Nehemiah "pondered" the situation in his mind (v. 7). Another translation of verse 7 says, "I consulted with myself." (NASB).

How does this indicate Nehemiah got his emotions under control before taking action?

How do you seek to get your emotions under control before addressing a difficult or delicate situation?

2. What steps does Nehemiah take to confront the problem? (see vv. 6-11).
3. In verse 9, Nehemiah gives the wealthy nobles two reasons to do the right thing. What are the two reasons?
 - A.
 - B.

4. How could we appeal to these same two reasons when seeking to resolve conflict among people in our families or on our ministry teams?

5. In what ways does the response of the people indicate they were teachable and humble? (see v. 12)

6. Have you ever been confronted by someone who pointed out an area where you were not following God's Word? How did you respond?

7. Nehemiah wants to make sure that the nobles make good on their promise to stop exacting usury and to return the land that the workers had mortgaged. He has the nobles take an "oath to do what they had promised" (5:12). Why do you think Nehemiah took additional this step?

8. Verse 13 reports the happy news that the "the people did as they had promised."

How would this resolution have helped the momentum of the rebuilding?

How do our rebuilding efforts gain momentum when internal conflict is resolved in a godly way?

9. Are there any internal conflicts hindering your efforts to be a rebuilder? What steps will you take to bring your situation in line with God's Word and challenge yourself and others to live by it? Write them down and ask God to grant you success.

The Temptation to Compromise

Nehemiah 5 • Day 3

One of the dangers Nehemiah faced in rebuilding the walls was the possibility of falling. Not a physical fall, but a moral and spiritual fall. Those of us engaged in rebuilding a broken place for God face the same danger. If we give way to compromise, we'll take a tumble and our efforts to rebuild could collapse. Today (and tomorrow) we'll see how Nehemiah's life serves as a stellar example of how to resist compromise and retain integrity.

Starting Point: Can you think of an example where a personal compromise brought down someone who was engaged in a great work for God? What happened?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 5:14-18

1. What appointed position did Nehemiah hold while he was in Jerusalem? (v. 14).

Biblical Background: Verses 14-18 cover a twelve-year period during which Nehemiah served as governor of Judah. This time span is much greater than the several months it took to rebuild the walls. Nehemiah includes a summary of his actions during his term as governor to illustrate the way he maintained his personal integrity while holding a position of trust.

2. How did Nehemiah act differently than the governors (v. 15-18)?

Nehemiah	Other Governors

3. People tend to rationalize before they compromise. What rationalizations could Nehemiah have made if had wanted to enrich himself when serving as the governor of Judah?

4. While most of us don't have a high profile position of power like Nehemiah, we may hold some position of trust. What positions or roles do you hold in the following arenas?

Family:

Workplace:

Ministry/Church:

5. How might you be tempted to use your position to benefit yourself? What rationalizations could you make to justify your actions?
6. If Nehemiah had misused his position and taken advantage of others, how might this have adversely affected the morale of the workers rebuilding the wall?
7. How do you think Nehemiah's example of personal integrity positively motivated those who worked with him in rebuilding the walls?
8. Take some time and take personal inventory:

How would you rate your integrity in the use of power/authority?

How would you rate your integrity in the area of money/finances?

How is your personal integrity impacting your effectiveness in serving the Lord?

What specific steps would God have you do to strengthen or sustain your integrity?

Character

Nehemiah 5 • Day 4

People follow leaders they trust. And trust is based on character. While your competency as a rebuilders is important, your character is essential. Today we'll revisit Nehemiah 5:14-18 and learn what made Nehemiah a man of stellar character. There's a lot we can learn from his example.

Starting Point: Think of a Christian who you would classify as a stellar leader. Describe this person's character.

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 5:14-18

1. Before Nehemiah, the previous governors of Judah and their assistants placed heavy burdens on Jewish population and "lorded it over the people" (v. 15). Nehemiah acted differently. Instead of focusing on what he should get, he focused on getting the work done. What was Nehemiah's motivation for acting differently than previous leaders (v. 15)?
2. Having a "reverence for God" ("fear of God") keeps a person from misusing authority or compromising integrity. What do you learn about the "fear of the Lord" in the following verses?

Proverbs 8:13	
Proverbs 9:10	
Proverbs 15:33	

3. How would you describe your reverence for God?
 - Non-existent
 - Shallow or marginal
 - Growing
 - Strong
4. To have a stellar character as a rebuilders, you'll want to develop a strong reverence for God. What will it take for you to grow in this area?

Read Nehemiah 5:17-18

5. As Jerusalem's governor Nehemiah regularly hosted large gatherings.

How many officials and visitors did Nehemiah regularly feed?

What challenges would he have faced in hosting such large gatherings?

6. Because the people of Jerusalem were already financially strapped, Nehemiah did not "demand the food allotted to the governor" (v. 18). He personally absorbed some (or all) of the cost. What does this tell you about his character?

7. What does 1 Peter 4:9 say God wants from us when it comes to showing hospitality towards other believers? How willing are you to absorb the costs (time, money, energy) when it comes to hospitality?

8. We tend to remember Nehemiah as a capable leader who led the rebuilding of the Jerusalem walls. We can overlook the fact that what made him a great leader was the caliber of his character. He was marked by integrity that came from his reverence for God. He was also known for his generosity that came from his concern for people. Take some time to reflect on the following two questions:

Am I known as having integrity that comes from my reverence for God?

Am I known for showing generosity because of my concern for people?

What steps do I need to take to have total integrity or lavish generosity?

What could I do today?

When Attacks Get Personal

Nehemiah 6 • Day 1

The Opposition in Nehemiah just doesn't quit. Sanballat and Tobiah are back, along with a few friends. When they heard the only thing remaining was to put the gates in place, these "wall opponents" again attempted to halt the work. Their schemes involved both those outside and inside the walls.

This time, their sole object of attack was Nehemiah himself. How should a leader respond to the personal attacks of his enemies? Today we'll find out.

Starting Point: When have you felt *personally* attacked? How did you respond?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 6:1-4

1. In this chapter, Nehemiah's enemies use varying tactics that increase in intensity. Their first subtle scheme appeared to be just a friendly request. What was it (v. 2)?
2. Nehemiah suspected foul play. The plain of Ono was 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem, near the border of Samaria, Sanballat's home province. Why would Sanballat and his friends want to meet with Nehemiah several days' journey from Jerusalem?
3. According to verse 4, how did Nehemiah's enemies show their persistent opposition to the rebuilding work?
4. Sanballat and Tobiah repeatedly insist that Nehemiah come to the Plain of Ono. How could Sanballat and Tobiah have responded differently if they truly wanted to make peace with Nehemiah?

5. While we never fully know the motives of others, how can we determine whether someone is out to hinder us or help us? (How did Nehemiah know Sanballat was "scheming to harm" him?)

6. Nehemiah avoided being drawn into an unsafe situation. When should we agree to meet with someone who seems antagonistic and when should we avoid getting together?

7. Look closely at verse 3. What reason did Nehemiah give for declining Sanballat's invitation to meet? Why was this a wise way to answer?

8. What insights from Nehemiah's example can you find for remaining at the work God has called you to do?

9. Pray through Romans 12:9-21. Ask God for strength to love your enemies, seek peace so far as it depends upon you, and keep on building.

* A wonderful book on Christian peacemaking is *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande.

You've Got Mail

Nehemiah 6 • Day 2

After four unsuccessful attempts by Nehemiah's enemies, they turn up the heat.

Starting Point: When someone is upset with you, would you prefer they sent you a letter or that they came and talked with you? Why?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 6:5-9

1. Nehemiah's enemies send him a fifth message, this time an open letter. Why would Nehemiah's enemies have used an "unsealed" letter (v. 5-7)?
2. How do you think Nehemiah felt in hearing these accusatory words?
3. Have you ever felt that someone openly presented an accusation against you to others? How did you feel?
4. Some people say we should never defend ourselves. How does Nehemiah respond (v. 8)?
5. Nehemiah makes a short and concise response.

What benefits are there to a "brief press report"? (v. 8)

How counsel does Proverbs 10:19 give for a situation like this?

Have you ever witnessed a similar response by a wise public leader in our day?

6. Nehemiah understands that his enemies were seeking to "frighten" and distract him from God's work. How does Nehemiah pray (v. 9)?

7. Has there been a time in your life (past or present) when you were seeking to move forward with God's work in your life but others tried to pull you back to the status quo?

How could Nehemiah's example help you?

8. Even though he appeared outwardly calm, how does Nehemiah's response at the end of verse 9 show his inner disposition?

9. Prayer is a powerful response to our inner anxiety. What situation could you pour out before God. Choose one of the following Psalms as a basis for your prayers. Ask God to "strengthen your hands."

Psalm 7

Psalm 27

Psalm 31:19 reminds us that God has good in store for us. Keep pressing on to the end of this study and the completion of the "wall" He is restoring through you!

On and On...

Nehemiah 6 • Day 3

With two plots foiled, Nehemiah's enemies try a third strategy.

Starting Point: Have you ever faced a conflict that seems to have no end?

Today, we'll learn the power of standing on the truth of God's Word.

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 6:10-14

1. Nehemiah's challengers didn't quit. What does Shemaiah suggest (v. 10)?

Biblical Insight: Shemaiah, was actually within the city walls. He must have been a friend or coworker of Nehemiah's, because Nehemiah trusted him enough to visit him at his initial request.

2. How does Shemaiah use a scare tactic to entice Nehemiah to come into the Holy Place in the Temple (v. 10)?
3. What warnings are given in Numbers 18:7 concerning the Holy Place (Sanctuary)?
4. How did Nehemiah realize the Lord had not sent Shemaiah (v. 12)?

Biblical Insight: Nehemiah realizes that had he fallen for this scheme, he would have violated God's Word and discredited his character. Knowing God's Word well was his defence.

5. Jesus also used the Scriptures to foil the plans of the enemy, Satan (Matthew 4:1-11) Are you able to evaluate the enemies schemes in light of the Scriptures?

Biblical Insight: If a "friend" or an enemy ever asks you to do something that goes contrary to the word of God, it isn't from the Lord! You can know this for sure and count on it to be true. You aren't required to go along with it in the name of "making peace" or "keeping the peace." We can stand up the schemes of the enemy with the wisdom found in the Word of God!

Read Nehemiah 6:17-19

Nehemiah's best defence was carrying on with the work of God.... Even after this great accomplishment, letters to discredit him continue. The enemy just keeps "pressing in."

6. Why did the nobles of Judah write to Tobiah (vv. 17-18)? How were they related to one another?

7. It's one thing to deal with an opponent one-to-one. How does conflict often escalate as family members and relatives "take sides?"

8. Nehemiah grows in spiritual stature as we watch him quietly keep working in spite of all that is said about him and done to him. Is there some situation where you need to keep rebuilding in spite of the critics*?

Is there any way that you've been convicted as being part of a team of people who may have discouraged a spiritual leader? Would you stop and pray for your pastor, or leader?

These words have been a great encouragement to us when facing criticism.

It's Not The Critic Who Counts

by Theodore Roosevelt

It's not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or when the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions and spends himself in a worth cause; who at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who at the worst if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat.

Wall Done!

Nehemiah 6 • Day 4

Job well done. That's a reason to celebrate. And that's what Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem did when they completed their massive rebuilding project. Today we'll rejoice with them and reflect on the joy that comes to those who rebuild with God.

Starting Point: Think of a major project you've taken on? How did you feel when it was successfully completed?

Today's Reading: Nehemiah 6:15-16

1. The broken down walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt and restored in just 52 days. What an incredible accomplishment! What emotions do you imagine Nehemiah and the other rebuilders felt when the last stone was put in place?
2. How do you think the "nobles of Tekoa" (see Nehemiah 3:5) felt when the wall was completed?
3. How could we wind up with regrets if we fail to take part in God's work?
4. How did the enemies of the Jews feel when they saw the walls restored? (see Nehemiah 6:16).

How is this a picture of the truth of Psalm 107:42?

5. Nehemiah's example shows that sometimes the most effective response to critics is to keep building, trusting God's help to bring completion and give vindication. How can you apply this lesson to the rebuilding work you are doing?

Digging

6. Verse 16 states that the enemies of the Jews realized the rebuilding of the walls had been “done with the help of our God.” List at least five ways God helped this project come to a successful completion. (Review your previous lessons if you need reminders)

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

Read: Nehemiah 6:17-19

7. Nehemiah’s memoirs reveal that the completion of the wall didn’t lead to the cessation of all opposition. Tobiah continues to stir up trouble and intimidate Nehemiah. Why is it important to remember that some critics won’t easily go away?
8. When wall was completed, Nehemiah gathered the people of Judah together for a great celebration. He led them in a dedication service that was literally a very moving experience. As you wrap up today’s study, read Nehemiah 12:27-43 and imagine the joy the people felt as they walked the walls and sang their praises to God.
9. The Old Testament is filled with examples of celebrating God’s goodness. How could you celebrate and dedicate your rebuilding efforts to the Lord?

Keep Building!

Nehemiah 6 • Day 5

Today we want to prayerfully review what we've learned in this study of Nehemiah and identify the changes

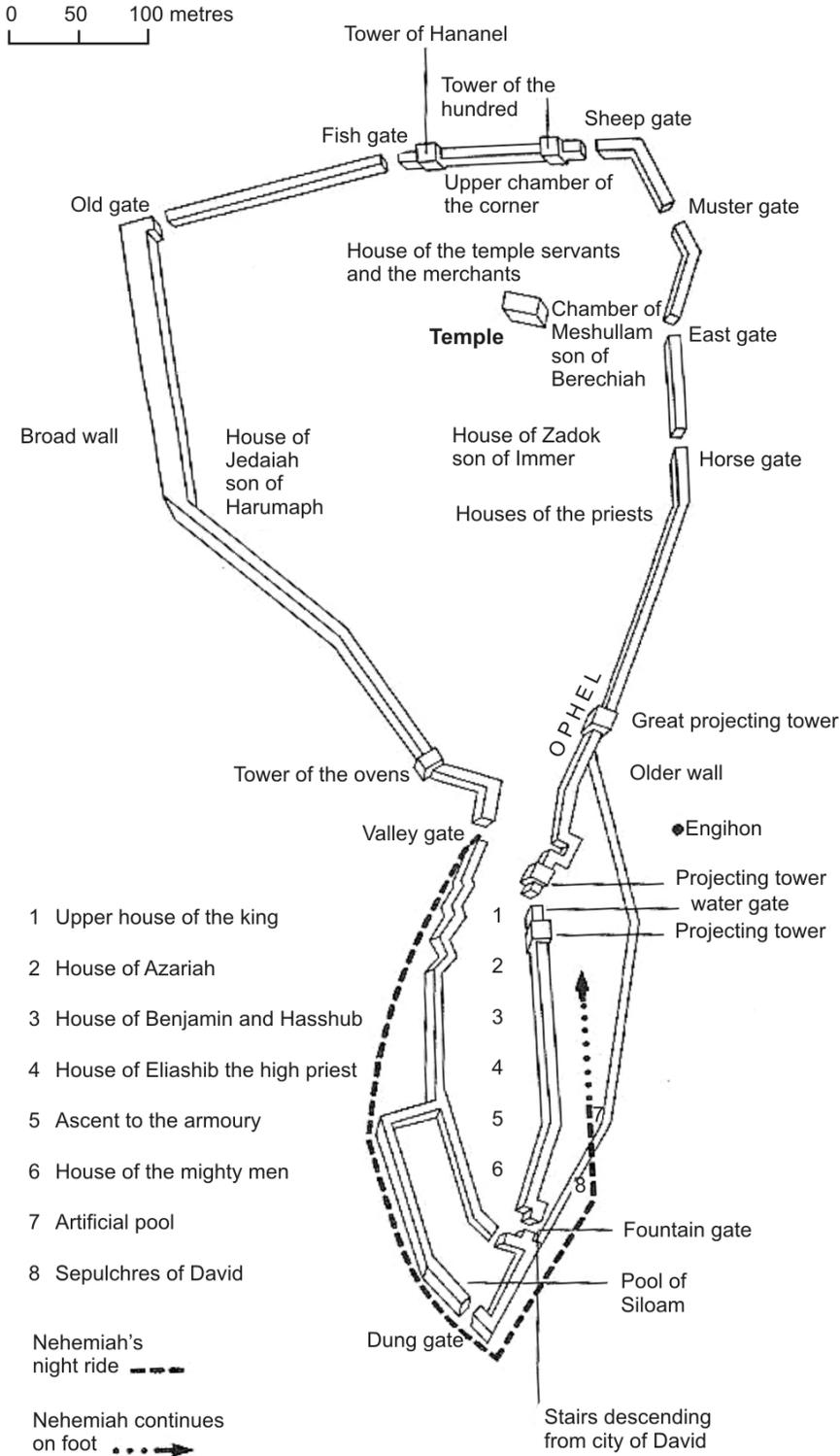
Starting Point: What rebuilding project has God given you to do at this time in your life? What is your "piece of the wall?"

Today's Reading: ??

1. What lessons from Nehemiah's example do you want to follow as you seek to be a rebuilder for the Lord? List them below.
2. List the names of one or two people with whom you have or will share your plans?
 - A.
 - B.
3. How will you invite these people to help you put into practice the truths you have learned?
4. What are some of the challenges or criticisms that could interfere with your rebuilding project?

**Nehemiah
Building the Broken Places
Appendix**

Map of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's Time



Let Your Heart Be Broken

Words and music by Bryan Jeffrey Leech, 1975

Let your heart be broken
For a world in need:
Feed the mouths that hunger,
Soothe the wounds that bleed,
Give the cup of water
And the loaf of bread
Be the hands of Jesus,
Serving in His stead.

Blest to be a blessing,
Privileged to care,
Challenged by the need
Apparent everywhere.
Where mankind is wanting,
Fill the vacant place.
Be the means through which the
Lord reveals His grace.

Add to your believing
Deeds that prove it true,
Knowing Christ as Savior,
Make Him Master, too.
Follow in His footsteps,
Go where He has trod;
In the world's great trouble
Risk yourself for God.

Let your heart be tender
And your vision clear;
See mankind as God sees,
Serve Him far and near.
Let your heart be broken
By a brother's pain;
Share your rich resources,
Give and give again.