

10

SESSION TEN

The Rebuilding of the Wall

SESSION SUMMARY

Nehemiah tells a story of restoration and reorganization: God restored His people to the promised land and reorganized them as His covenant people. As Nehemiah's story continued, God's people faced conflict from the outside and inside. However, because they persevered in repentance and faith, they accomplished God's will despite their circumstances. The Book of Nehemiah demonstrates that God calls us to do the right thing, in the right way, and then give Him the glory for success. We also learn that God is glorified not only in our fulfillment of a task, but also in the way we fulfill that task.

SCRIPTURE

Nehemiah 4:7-14; 5:1-13; 6:15-16

THE POINT

God calls us to do the right thing in the right way.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

In the biblical storyline, we often see that God's kingdom agenda contradicts the kingdoms of this world.

It's true that there are certain instances when the ways of this world align with God's plan. But most of the time, God's agenda stands in stark contrast to the patterns and demands of the culture we find ourselves in. Remember the words of Jesus: His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36).

How should Christians respond when they find themselves in situations that call for acts of faith that seem impossible in light of their circumstances? This section of Nehemiah reminds us of the priority of prayer and the responsibility of wise action.

- **How do you determine what course of action is "wisest" when you are faced with a difficult choice?**

Option 2

Disobedience does not always mean choosing to do something that is obviously wrong. Sometimes, disobedience is more about compromise. We obey in some areas, and compromise in others, or we choose which laws or parts of laws we want to obey—neither option is true obedience.

- **When have you compromised what you believed or what you knew you were supposed to do? Describe that situation.**
- **What would wholehearted obedience have looked like in that situation?**

The Israelites obeyed God by rebuilding the wall, but their fields and families suffered from neglect. They were obeying God in one respect, but they were going about it in the wrong way, resulting in disobedience and their need to repent. Likewise, we must consider in our own lives the importance of not only doing the right thing, but doing the right thing in the way God desires.

- **When it comes to obeying God, why do you think the way we do something is just as important as doing the thing we are commanded to do?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

God calls us to do the right thing in the right way.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God** - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Nehemiah** - Jewish leader who played a central role in the rebuilding of the city wall

PLOT

Nehemiah tells a story of restoration and reorganization: God restored the Israelites to the promised land and reorganized them as His covenant people. As Nehemiah's story continued, God's people faced conflict from the outside and inside. However, because they persevered in repentance and faith, they accomplished God's will despite their circumstances.

TIMELINE

THE WALL IS REBUILT

God restores the surrounding wall.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE WORD

The people gather to hear God's Word.

SHALLOW WORSHIP

The people fail to give God their very best.

NEHEMIAH CALLED THE PEOPLE TO ACT WISELY

The initial request to rebuild the city was endorsed by the king, and carried out under his protection and support. But the question was, would they achieve this ambitious plan? In this section of Scripture, the likelihood of achieving their goal became grim, at least by human standards.

But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night. In Judah it was said, “The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.” And our enemies said, “They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.” At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, “You must return to us.” So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.” (Neh. 4:7-14)

God's people were confronted with additional difficulties. First, God's people were despised by Sanballat and his associates—the men who were set on stopping God's people from building the wall.

Second, the foundations of the wall were in ruins. God's enemies mocked the Israelites, pointing out that the wall's foundations were rubbish, and a mere fox could knock down their feeble work. By all human standards, the possibility of achieving their goal did not look good.

The primary reason Sanballat and his associates were so adamant about stopping this work was because they were seeking their own good at the expense of God's people. Once the walls were built and God's people could begin living under His law with one another, it would be very hard for the enemies of God to exploit the Israelites.

The good news is that while the enemies of God's people plotted together to stop their task (4:8), God's people stood confident in the face of conflict. The Israelites armed themselves with prayer and persevered in obedience. Simply put, in the face of opposition, God's people guarded one another and continued building the wall.

Nehemiah was sure of God's protection and provision in this task. He called the people to not be afraid but to remember their God, how great and awesome He was, and to fight for sake of their families and their homes. Nehemiah's trust was founded on his knowledge of God, who would fight for them, just as He had done in generations past (4:14,20).

- **What are the “wise” aspects you see in Nehemiah’s response to the opposition he faced? What would have been an unwise response?**
(p. 72, PSG)

THE PEOPLE OVERCAME OBSTACLES AND GAVE GOD GLORY FOR THE SUCCESS

Even after the Israelites resumed building and were encouraged by Nehemiah, they still faced opposition. The enemies of God were not only angry that Nehemiah had come, but they were also angry about the wall being rebuilt. The rebuilding of the wall was part of the plan to create a community environment for the protection of God's people, and an environment where God's laws could be enforced and His justice upheld.

Now there arose a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers. For there were those who said, “With our sons and our daughters, we are many. So let us get grain, that we may eat and keep alive.” There were also those who said, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses to get grain because of the famine.” And there were those who said, “We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our fields and our vineyards. Now our flesh is as the flesh of our brothers, our children are as their children. Yet we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but it is not in our power to help it, for other men have our fields and our vineyards.” I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. I took counsel with myself, and I brought charges against the nobles and the officials. I said to them, “You are exacting interest, each from his brother.” And I held a great assembly against them and said to them, “We, as far as we are able, have bought back our Jewish brothers who have been sold to the nations, but you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us!” They were silent and could not find a word to say. So I said, “The thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies? Moreover, I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Let us abandon this exacting of interest. Return to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the percentage of money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them.” Then they said, “We will restore these and require nothing from them. We will do as you say.” And I called the priests and made them swear to do as they had

promised. I also shook out the fold of my garment and said, “So may God shake out every man from his house and from his labor who does not keep this promise. So may he be shaken out and emptied.” And all the assembly said “Amen” and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised. (Neh. 5:1-13)

While God's people focused on the work of the wall, they had apparently neglected their fields. In light of this neglect, they hired others to work their fields in exchange for grain. Moreover, while there was famine because of the neglect, the king did not suspend the taxes they owed. Because of this situation, God's people were selling their children into debt-slavery. During this time, God's people also neglected the poor and compromised their ability to provide for themselves.

Nehemiah became angry, and rightly so. Not only had they placed their children and the poor in a terrible position, they were also charging interest against one another (5:6-8). Jews charging other Jews interest was strictly forbidden in the Law of Moses. Still, despite the threats from both the inside and out, God worked in His people to accomplish His task in miraculous time.

So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God. (Neh. 6:15-16)

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Social Concern (p. 74, PSG)

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth. (Micah 6:8; Eph. 6:5-9; 1 Thess. 3:12).

TIMELINE

*Beginning Spring 2017

FROM ABRAHAM TO JESUS

The arrival of the Promised One.

MARY PRAISES GOD

God works in the heart and life of Mary.

GOD WITH US

The good news of Jesus' Incarnation

This story is a clear reminder that God's people should not underestimate what God can accomplish through them if they trust in Him and persevere in obedience.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Nehemiah's exhortation to not fear, and to trust and obey, stands as a comforting testimony to Christian's today. Nehemiah presented a situation where the nations gathered against God's people, and thus against their God. This reminds us of Psalm 4:1-4, in which God's enemies vainly plotted against the Almighty.

We must also not forget that God's Son faced certain opposition, just like the Israelites faced opposition from Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites. In fact, the Scriptures remind us that Jesus was also despised and rejected by men (Isa. 53:3; 1 Pet. 2:23). Like Nehemiah and the Israelites, Jesus remained steadfast and obedient, even through death (Phil. 2:8). Furthermore, Jesus was victorious (1 Cor. 15:55-57). As we reflect on the gospel, we should be reminded that God fought for us through Christ. We are called to battle on even as we are despised and rejected, remembering our great and awe-inspiring God.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Fear is a strong force that often keeps us from fulfilling God's will for our lives. What are some specific ways that we, the people of God, can fight fear with faith? Answers will vary.**
- **Why is it important that we keep a close watch on our own lives as we seek to be obedient to the will and commands of God? Answers will vary.**
- **When we are confronted with our own shortfalls and sins, there are two responses: to repent and turn, or to react with resistance. How does the gospel empower us toward the first response? The gospel empowers us to humble ourselves, admit our wrongs, and seek forgiveness at the throne of grace, knowing it is only through humble submission to Jesus we can be forgiven.**
- **When have you seen God do something so amazing that you realized "only God could have done this?" Answers will vary.**

HIS STORY
God's Story of
Redemption,
through His Son,
Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY
Where your story
meets His.

YOUR MISSION

10-15 MINUTES

HEAD

We, like the Israelites in this passage, can never fully live up to God's law. Even though the Israelites were fully focused on accomplishing God's will in building the wall, they compromised in other areas. As they compromised in other areas, the entire work of building the wall was compromised. The good news is, when Nehemiah confronted their sin, they repented and sought to make right their wrongs (5:12-13). Just as the Israelites repented after Nehemiah's convicting call, we should also repent when confronted with compromise in our own lives.

- **What are some areas of compromise in your own life where repentance is needed?**
Answers will vary.
- **What are some ways to identify any blind spots of sin that you may not be aware of?**
Asking a godly and trusted friend if they see anything in your life you are not able to see, self-reflection on your life, taking stock of any heart idols that may be present, and so forth.

HEART

Throughout this story Nehemiah reminded the people that God was with them. Nehemiah also declared that God would not only give them the ability to accomplish this task, but that He would also make them prosper. Moreover, Nehemiah knew that God would not only frustrate their enemies, He would also fight for His people. All of these truths climax in the triumphant declaration, even by their enemies, that God had accomplished this work.

- **In light of His promises to the Israelites despite their compromises, what does this story teach you about God's character?** *In essence, it shows us once again that God is good and faithful to keep His promises.*
- **Why should this strengthen your own belief in God's promises to you found in Scripture?**
Answers will vary.

HANDS

This story challenges believers to attempt great things *for* God while at the same time expecting great things *from* God. Keeping these two notions together is important in light of the fact that great things done for the sake of the Kingdom won't come about while Christians are sitting comfortably on the sidelines, unwilling to participate. No, God calls us to act, serve, and take risks, all while acknowledging our complete and utter dependence upon Him to accomplish His purposes.

- **How does this story challenge the perception that Christianity is merely a set of beliefs to be held and not a life to be lived?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Why is it important to give God glory for the success we experience?** *Answers will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPWIN17Dan)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at
GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit
MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject