

CONVICTION

W E E K 0 2

2 NEHEMIAH SENT TO JERUSALEM

During the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was set before him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had never been sad in his presence, ² so the king said to me, “Why do you look so sad, when you aren’t sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart.”

I was overwhelmed with fear ³ and replied to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should I not be sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins and its gates have been destroyed by fire?”

⁴ Then the king asked me, “What is your request?”

So I prayed to the God of the heavens ⁵ and answered the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor with you, send me to Judah and to the city where my ancestors are buried, so that I may rebuild it.”

⁶ The king, with the queen seated beside him, asked me, “How long will your journey take, and when will you return?” So I gave him a definite time, and it pleased the king to send me.

⁷ I also said to the king, “If it pleases the king, let me have letters written to the governors of the region west of the Euphrates River, so that they will grant me safe passage until I reach Judah. ⁸ And let me have a letter written to Asaph, keeper of the king’s forest, so that he will give me timber to rebuild the gates of the temple’s fortress, the city wall, and the home where I will live.” The king granted my requests, for the gracious hand of my God was on me.

⁹ I went to the governors of the region west of the Euphrates and gave them the king’s letters. The king had also sent officers of the infantry and cavalry with me. ¹⁰ When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard that someone had come to pursue the prosperity of the Israelites, they were greatly displeased.

PREPARING TO REBUILD THE WALLS

¹¹ After I arrived in Jerusalem and had been there three days, ¹² I got up at night and took a few men with me. I didn’t tell anyone what my God had laid on my heart to do for Jerusalem. The only animal I took was the one I was riding. ¹³ I went out at night through the Valley Gate toward the Serpent’s Well and the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that had been broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. ¹⁴ I went on to the Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool, but farther down it became too narrow for my animal to go through.

¹⁵ So I went up at night by way of the valley and inspected the wall. Then heading back, I entered through the Valley Gate and returned. ¹⁶ The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, for I had not yet told the Jews, priests, nobles, officials, or the rest of those who would be doing the work. ¹⁷ So I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates have been burned. Come, let’s rebuild Jerusalem’s wall, so that we will no longer be a disgrace.” ¹⁸ I told them how the gracious hand of my God had been on me, and what the king had said to me.

They said, “Let’s start rebuilding,” and their hands were strengthened to do this good work.

¹⁹ When Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard about this, they mocked and despised us, and said, “What is this you’re doing? Are you rebelling against the king?”

²⁰ I gave them this reply, “The God of the heavens is the one who will grant us success. We, his servants, will start building, but you have no share, right, or historic claim in Jerusalem.”

SERMON NOTES

Dotted lines for sermon notes.

REJECTING FEAR OF MAN...

Confronted with fear of king
Artaxerxes (2:2)

Ridiculed by powerful leaders (4:1-3)

Plans made to fight against
Nehemiah (4:8)

False rumors being spread about
Nehemiah (6:6-8)

Attempts to discredit Nehemiah (6:13)

...FOR FEAR OF GOD

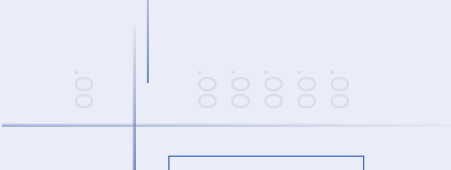
Prayed to God of heaven (2:4)

Asked God to deal with them (4:4)

Prayed to our God (4:9)

Asked God to strengthen him (6:9)

Asked God to deal with them (6:14)



LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

RHYTHM REMINDER



Serve the
Community

LEAN IN

What's your style when facing a difficult project or life situation: overprepare every detail before acting, or jump in and figure it out as you go? _____

LOOK DOWN

What specific requests does Nehemiah make of the king in Nehemiah 2:5–8, and how does the king respond? _____

LOOK OUT

What kinds of fear or risk keep people from doing what's right in public settings today—at school, online, or in culture? _____

LOOK IN

Nehemiah had a clear vision and a deep sense of calling. How clear are you right now on what God is asking of you in this season of life? _____

WEEK 2

IF I HAD MORE TIME

WITH SPECIAL GUEST

RUBEN MENDOZA



**LISTEN TO
THIS WEEK'S
EPISODE
HERE**



Eric: “How have you been able to stand strong through all the ups and downs?”

Ruben: “Resiliency. And consistency. Just keep showing up—even when you don’t win every time. And know that God has you.”

RUBEN MENDOZA is the Founder, President, and Chief Executive Officer of Foundation Building Materials with 25 years of industry experience. Before founding the company in 2011, Ruben served as the Chief Executive Officer of AMS, a leading distributor of building products.

SEEK THE GOOD

A VISION FOR OUTREACH

WEEK 2: THE HEARTBEAT OF OUTREACH

Outreach is more than service; it's about life change—both for those we serve and for us. Jesus modeled a life of compassion, humility, and intentional relationships. As His followers, we are called to reflect these same distinctives.



True Poverty: We are all in need of God's grace. Every act of service begins with the recognition of our shared human brokenness and dependence on Him.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs." — Matthew 5:3

Relational Ministry: Effective ministry happens up close. Transformation begins when we move beyond charity to genuine relationships that honor the Imago Dei in every person.

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." — John 1:14

Servant Leadership: We lead by serving. With humility in our posture and strength in our convictions, we follow Jesus' example of servant-hearted leadership.

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..." — Mark 10:45

Life Change: When we serve others, God reshapes our hearts, aligns our perspectives, and brings us into deeper intimacy with Him.

"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will find it." — Matthew 16:25

Strategic Focus: We are committed to long-term partnerships and sustainable impact, focusing our efforts where God has called us to make the greatest difference.

"Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up." — Galatians 6:9



READY TO SERVE?

Scan the QR code and find a serve event that allows you to be part of God's story of redemption in our city.





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Nehemiah Surveys the Problem
Original Artwork by Julie Ellis

by Darlene Welling

Unstoppable: Resilient Risk Takers

"And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, 'Let us rise up and build...'"
(Nehemiah 2:18, ESV)

We trust God, prepare to do our part;
we thank Him for victory from the very start.

Positioned for purpose, with conviction to
courageously act for the welfare of others.

Sunlit favor from the unexpected, we have
God's protection from opposition outside

and mistreatment within our own walls,
the cause to build continues with hope detected

to the end. Yes, God's Mighty intervention
to help us is known to all, something we will

forever recall. Much accomplished and much
done, from various vocations, together we risk

with lives on the line, a life in leadership to
continue the finished work that has long begun.

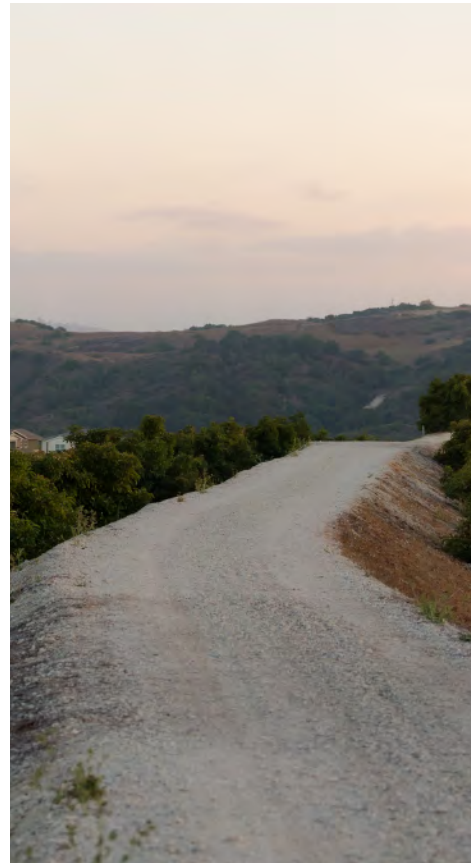
by Jenn McBride

Prophets & Pacers



My teeth were chattering like a jackhammer as I nervously made my way to the marathon start line. Over-caffeinated and shivering in the chill of predawn, I began questioning everything from my life choices (namely this one) to my running shoes. But mostly—as I inhaled the stench from rows of portable toilets—my sanity. Standing shoulder-to-shoulder among “real” runners, I was suddenly overwhelmed with impostor syndrome. While I had put in a ton of training miles, the farthest distance I had covered up to this point was a half marathon—the most recent of all two of them being a full year ago. The reality of being an underprepared, slower-than-average, exhausted mom of three who bought 26.2 miles of fun on sale was setting in fast, unlike my mile pace. Have you ever clicked “add to cart” on a marked-down marathon like it was a Prime Day deal? I have, and let me tell you, buyer’s remorse can pertain to more than an ill-fitting pair of jeans. Before I even set foot on the course, I was nearly consumed with an internal bout of nay-saying. In Nehemiah, Samaritan leader Sanballat harnesses negativity to try to keep the Jews from completing their mission: “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?” (Neh 4:2, NIV)

My legs would certainly be burning, and finishing in a day wasn’t a guarantee for me, either. But I popped in my AirPods and prayed for the Lord to order the steps of my HOKAs. After a few miles, I settled in with a sign-toting pacer. As long as you stick with one of these course commanders, you will complete the race in the time they display. Have you ever noticed that the best leaders are servants who happily settle into the thick of a challenge alongside you? In this particular case, while also selflessly carrying a cumbersome banner emblazoned with a five-hour end goal. In Nehemiah 2:17, the prophet says, “You see the trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates have been burned. Come, let’s rebuild Jerusalem’s wall, so that we will no longer be a disgrace.”



Nehemiah does two things here that display effective leadership. First, he categorizes the city's decimation as a "we" problem. He also doesn't shy away from the challenges his people will face during an arduous rebuilding process. Pacers, too, do what's asked of their followers while calling out obstacles as they arise. On mile 10, for example, we heard, "To your right!" shouted several times as our pack was safely corralled to the edge of the course to make room for the front-runners of the half marathon—a race that started a full hour after ours. Ouch. But thanks to the repeated warning, we at least didn't get plowed over as we were passed. What little was left of my pride somehow survived to mile 15, where Baby Kilimanjaro (AKA the Red Hill Avenue overpass at the 405 Freeway) ominously awaited. "Do whatever you must to make it up top! We'll meet on the other side!" our fearless leader bellowed. This was clearly an epic battle, but we weren't going to accept anything other than our victory, albeit a slow one.

In the Old Testament, Nehemiah utilizes his position and resolve to execute the restoration of Jerusalem's wall. Any task is more bearable with a strong leader—like a

purposeful prophet or pacer—at the helm. You may never be called to physically rebuild a city wall or complete a marathon, but in Hebrews 12, we are encouraged to persevere and run the race of following Jesus without losing heart. I did eventually make it over Baby Kilimanjaro. And as the finish line finally came into view after 11 more daunting miles, I was nearly overcome with both relief and a sense of completion. I imagine entering Heaven will be similar on a much grander scale, as the pain and brokenness of this world immediately pale in comparison to the glory of the Lord. But for now, as a temple of the Holy Spirit, our flesh—like the walls of Jerusalem were housing the Israelites' physical temple—should be cared for and fortified. The endless spiritual parallels running boasts have been as renewing for my mind and faith as the craft has for my body. No matter what assignment to which we are called, may we spend every step spurring one another on to Jesus, our ultimate and final finish line.





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His Plans Still Stand
Original Artwork by Jiyea Kim