

# HOW TO LEAD

A Study of the Book of Nehemiah



THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

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Are you a leader? Maybe you haven't thought of yourself as one, but leadership has been defined as influence—the ability to influence others towards a new future or a better way to live. Which means many without the title of “leader” are leaders, and some with the title are not. Nehemiah has been studied for centuries for insights on how to lead others. The book named after him in the Bible recounts God's faithfulness to His people despite their unfaithfulness, but also chronicles Nehemiah's thoughts and actions. Nehemiah built a wall and a city. You may be building a family, a team, a company, or a new dream, and God has wisdom for you within Nehemiah's journals.

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## FROM THE SENIOR PASTOR

Dear Mariners Community,

The biblical account of Nehemiah reminds us of God's faithfulness to His own, as we see God keeping His promises to bring His people back to the land He had promised them.

We also learn how God uses people to accomplish His purposes. Some even call Nehemiah the first leadership book ever written.

For centuries, people have studied the book of Nehemiah for insight from Nehemiah's journals. Nehemiah was not a prophet or a priest—but a marketplace leader—a governmental official who worked for a Persian king. He accomplished what many believed was impossible—the rebuilding of the wall surrounding Jerusalem, the repopulating of the city, and the renewal of joy in God's people.



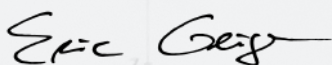
John Maxwell and others have defined leadership as influence. Which means not everyone with a title is a leader, and many are leaders without titles. Leadership being defined as influence means parents, youth soccer coaches, school teachers, tech entrepreneurs, civil servants, politicians, business owners, musicians, medical professionals, nonprofit leaders, counselors, construction foremen, restaurant managers, and the barista who sets the tone for a café all lead in some capacity, whether they realize it or not.

We will be inspired by the leadership fruit in Nehemiah's life, but we will also learn about the roots beneath the surface that produce the fruit. And this will be helpful and encouraging to you as you serve and influence others. Nehemiah was building a wall, then a city. You are building something—a family, a future, a company, a new dream.

This beautiful series magazine, created by our talented Creative Arts Volunteer Team, is designed to help you engage with the Scripture. It's filled with inspiring stories, photography, and artwork as well as additional resources for you to go deeper in your personal study of God's Word—including wisdom from key leaders in different areas of society and business who are followers of Jesus. Use it to take notes during the weekend messages, reflect on what God is teaching you, and dive deeper in community through your Life Group. I invite you to bring it with you each week and use it as a tool to grow in your walk with Jesus.

I look forward to walking through this rich and powerful text with you over the next seven weeks. I pray it encourages you deeply and inspires you to lean fully on Jesus, the One who faithfully leads and guides us in every season.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Geiger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

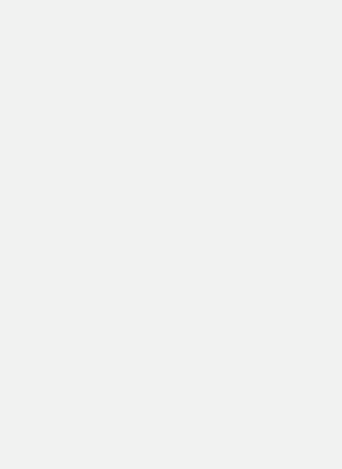
Eric Geiger  
Senior Pastor



# VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTORS









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# FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

The book of Nehemiah is a powerful story of leadership, restoration, and unwavering faith. It invites us into the journey of a man who faces opposition yet responds with courage, prayer, and obedience to God's call to rebuild what had fallen apart.

But Nehemiah is not just about bricks and walls—it's about the heart of a people being drawn back to God. It reminds us that true transformation begins not only with what we do, but with who we are in Him. And through Jesus, who gave His life to restore what sin had broken, we now stand on a firm and finished foundation: loved, chosen, and secure.

Our prayer is that as you reflect on the book of Nehemiah through this magazine, you'll find fresh encouragement for your own calling. Each of us has one life on Earth, and we are designed to build up the Kingdom of God. May these creative pieces deepen your trust in God's strength, stir your faith to lead others with humility, and remind you that even in the process of rebuilding, God is always at work.

With gratitude,  
The Mariners Creative Arts Editorial Team

The background of the page is a light gray geometric pattern. It features a network of thin lines intersecting at various points, some of which are labeled with letters like 'v', 'd', 'k', 'b', 'e', 's', 'q', 'p', 'c', 'u', 'r', 'w', 't', and 'd'. These lines and points form a complex web of triangles and polygons, creating a technical or architectural feel. The main title is overlaid on this pattern.

# How to Use This Series Magazine

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This series magazine was created for you. It's filled with resources, original artwork, stories, and creative written pieces to enhance your personal study of Nehemiah. It's a resource meant to travel. Bring it with you to weekend services to take notes and follow along with messages. Take it to your Life Group gathering to go deeper into God's Word with others. Use it in your own time with the Lord as you process the wisdom and teaching of each message and passage of Scripture. We pray it inspires and encourages you in your own walk with the Lord every day.





### SERMON NOTES

Each week there is space for you to take notes for the weekend message. It's a great way for you to follow along each week of the series and record how God is speaking to you through His Word.

### LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

These lessons are meant to be explored in the context of a Life Group. In Life Groups, we grow in our faith together and experience life as God intended—in community. We encourage you to join a Life Group and dive into each message with others during the week. Visit [marinerschurch.org/joinagroup](http://marinerschurch.org/joinagroup) to learn more.

### DEEPER STUDY

Each week, there are teaching resources designed to help you go deeper into the leadership lessons and truths from Nehemiah.

### CREATIVE ELEMENTS

At the end of each week's content, you'll find creative pieces, including original artwork, photography, personal stories, and creative writing, contributed by our amazing Creative Arts Volunteer Team. Each piece is inspired by the book of Nehemiah and its themes.



**JOIN A GROUP**  
Scan the QR code  
to learn more  
about ways you can  
grow in your faith  
with others!



# The Christian's Unfair Leadership Advantage

*from Eric Geiger*

"Unfair Advantage" is a term sometimes used among marketplace leaders to acknowledge a skill or attribute or discipline a company has that others do not yet have, that cannot be copied or bought. Christian leaders have an advantage because they never lead alone. They are counseled, comforted, and led by God's Spirit. And the advantage is unfair because it was not achieved by grit but received by God's grace.

## **Vision (burden and belief):**

Christians are well-equipped to hold burden and belief simultaneously because our faith recognizes both the pain of a broken world and the promise that God will make all things new.

## **Conviction (clarity and courage):**

Christians can receive wisdom and clarity from God who promises to give generously, and Christians have courage because the One who is within us is greater than the one in the world.



## INTERMINGLING ROOTS

Being shaped by burden *and* belief

Displaying clarity *and* courage

Thinking big *and* acting small

Fighting *and* trusting God is fighting for you

Growing in character *and* commitment *and* competence *and*...

Changing beliefs *and* behaviors

Living with restlessness *and* resting

## FRUIT

Vision

Conviction

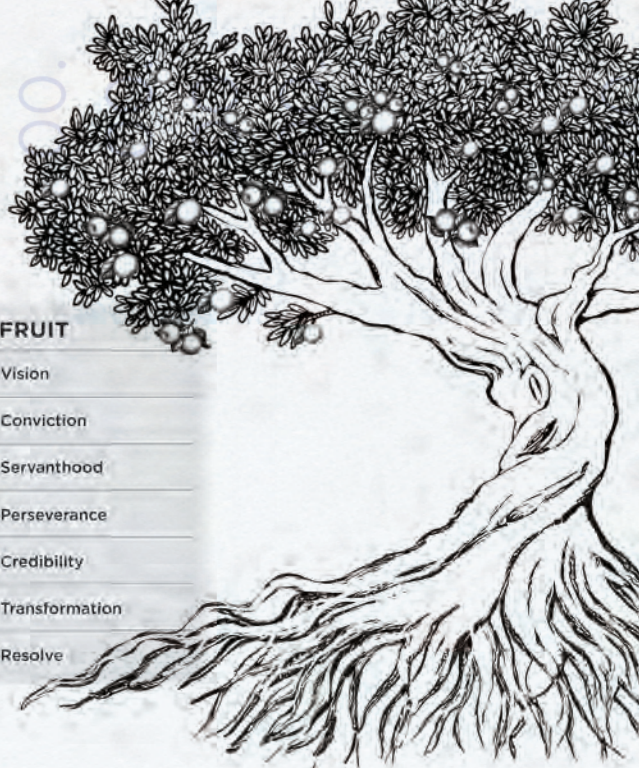
Servanthood

Perseverance

Credibility

Transformation

Resolve



### **Servanthood (thinking big and acting small):**

Christians can think big because our God is able to do more than we ask or imagine, and we act small because Jesus served us and gave us an identity as a servant, not merely our activity.

### **Perseverance (fighting and trusting God is fighting):**

Christians can persevere because God promises to preserve His people. We can endure through trials because we're held by God's power and promised that He works all things together for good for those who love Him.

### **Credibility (character, commitment, competence, capacity, and chemistry):**

Character is the most important attribute of credibility. Christians can and must grow in integrity because our Savior commands us to walk as He walked and He empowers us to do so by His Spirit. God is committed to developing the character of His children.

### **Transformation (changing beliefs and behaviors):**

Christians understand transformation because we've been transformed, from death to life, and are being transformed as we follow our Savior. We know that lasting change is often slow and comes through painful seasons of growth, impacting what we believe and how we live.

### **Resolve (restlessness and rest):**

Christians can live with holy restlessness because we're not satisfied with the status quo in a broken world, yet we can rest because our ultimate identity and security are found in Christ, not in our leadership outcomes. We can pre-decide to persevere because we know our labor in the Lord is never in vain.

The self-sufficient and eternal God lovingly creates a perfect creation with humanity as His crowning work. Falling for Satan's temptation, humanity rebels and sin enters the world bringing death, pain, and strife. Instead of giving up on humanity, God promises that from the womb of a woman will come the One who will crush Satan's head.

**CREATION  
AND FALL**

God pursues Abram (who is renamed Abraham), a man from an idol-worshiping family who has no children with his wife, and promises that he will be the father of many nations. God promises land to Abraham and assures him that all nations will be blessed through his offspring. God continues to be faithful to this family. He restates the promise to Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob (who is renamed Israel). A famine strikes the promised land, so Jacob and the family move to Egypt where one of his sons, Joseph, is already there to provide for them.

**PROMISE AND  
A PEOPLE**

The family becomes a nation while living in Egypt, but also becomes enslaved to the Egyptians. God raises up Moses to lead His people to freedom. During a tenth plague, God strikes dead the firstborn son of everyone living in Egypt, but "passes over" Israel as they put the blood of lambs on their doorposts. After miraculously rescuing His people, God gives His people the law. He also instructs them to build a tabernacle and offer sacrifices so He may dwell among them.

**RESCUE  
AND LAW**

God brings His people, through their leader Joshua, into the promised land. When God's people worship the gods of the nations surrounding them, God disciplines them through the attacks of surrounding nations. God raises up judges (or rulers) to rescue His people and call them to repentance. They beg for a king to be like other nations, and God gives them Saul. God then raises up a new king, David, and promises that his kingdom will never end. The family that turned into a nation is now a kingdom. David's son, Solomon, builds a temple to replace the tabernacle.

**LAND AND  
KINGDOM**

2000 BC

1400 BC

1000 BC

▼ *Nehemiah Timeline*

722 BC

**NORTHERN  
KINGDOM  
FALLS**

2 Kings 17:5-6

605 BC

**FIRST DEPORTATION  
OF SOUTHERN  
KINGDOM TO  
BABYLON**

Daniel 1:1-7

586 BC

**FALL OF  
JERUSALEM  
AND TEMPLE  
TO BABYLON**

2 Kings 25:1-21

539 BC

**BABYLON  
FALLS TO  
CYRUS/PERSIA**

Daniel 5



Solomon takes foreign wives and allows their foreign gods to clutter the land. His son continues the line of rulers and the kingdom is divided into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Prophets confront the people but they persist in their idolatry. The Northern Kingdom falls to Assyria and the Southern Kingdom is carried away into Babylonian captivity. When they are freed, they return to a nation and kingdom far less glorious than before and are still unable to keep their promises.

## EXILE AND RETURN

600 BC

A descendant of Adam, Abraham, and David, Jesus is the One who crushes the head of Satan, will bless all nations, and reigns forever. Jesus, the God-Man, enters humanity through the womb of a virgin, perfectly obeys the law that we could never obey, dies as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for our sins, and rises from the dead, conquering Satan, sin, and death. He inaugurates His eternal Kingdom and secures salvation for His people.

## JESUS

AD

After His ascension to Heaven, Jesus sends the promised Holy Spirit and His disciples turn the world upside down preaching the good news of Jesus.

This good news is known as the gospel. In the midst of intense persecution, the gospel spreads, and Gentiles and Jews form a new people. Churches are planted in cities, and apostles write letters encouraging and instructing the people in the grace of Christ and their response to His grace.

## A NEW PEOPLE

AD 30

A time is coming when God's people—people from every tribe, tongue, and nation who have been rescued by Christ—will enjoy Him and His rule forever in perfect harmony. Satan will be crushed, the effects of sin will be reversed, and all things will be made new.

## A BETTER BEGINNING

538 BC

CYRUS ALLOWS EXILES TO RETURN AND BUILD TEMPLE (ZERUBBABEL LEADS). CITY BUILDING STOPPED

Ezra 1:1-4; Chapter 4

485 BC

EZRA LEADS MORE EXILES TO RETURN UNDER ARTAXERXES OF PERSIA

Ezra 7

445 BC

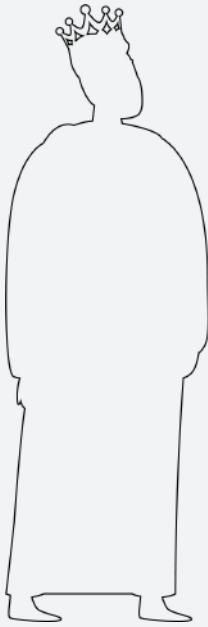
NEHEMIAH HEARS OF THE DISGRACE OF HIS PEOPLE

Nehemiah 1

444 BC

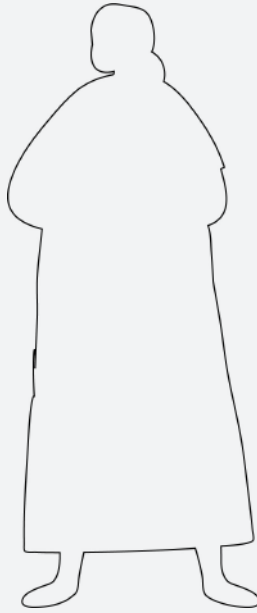
NEHEMIAH GOES TO JERUSALEM TO BUILD THE WALL IN 52 DAYS

Nehemiah 2



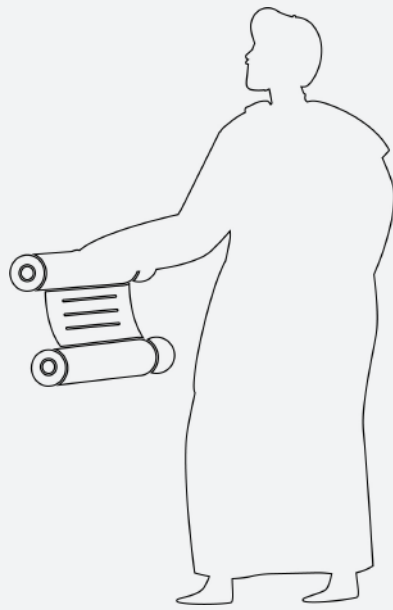
### **ARTAXERXES (THE KING)**

Artaxerxes I was the son of Xerxes/Ahasuerus—the king who made Esther his queen and stopped the Jewish people in Persia from being completely destroyed. Also, the son of the ripped character in the movie 300. According to the Greek historian Diodorus, he became king after killing his brother, who was in line to be king, after being told his brother was the one who killed his father. He played a crucial role in Nehemiah's mission to rebuild Jerusalem. He granted Nehemiah permission to return to Jerusalem, provided him with letters of safe passage, and supplied materials for the reconstruction of the city wall. God is willing and able to use a foreign ruler to fulfill His purposes for His people.



### **HANANI (THE BROTHER)**

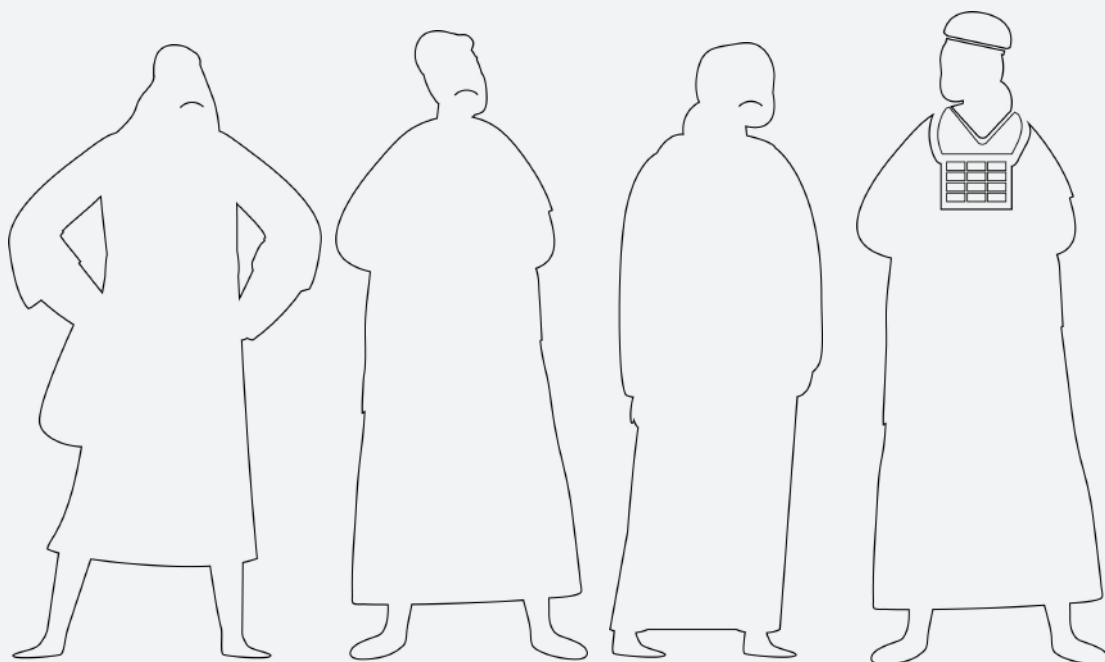
Hanani was Nehemiah's brother and the one who first brought him the devastating news about Jerusalem's broken wall and vulnerable condition. His report deeply moved Nehemiah, prompting him to fast, pray, and ultimately seek permission from Artaxerxes to return and lead the rebuilding effort. Later, Nehemiah appointed Hanani, because he was faithful and trustworthy, as one of the leaders responsible for overseeing Jerusalem.



### **EZRA (THE SCRIBE AND PRIEST)**

Ezra was a priest and scribe who arrived in Jerusalem 13 years before Nehemiah, during the reign of Artaxerxes. He was a devoted teacher of the Law, leading a spiritual revival among the people by reading and explaining God's Word. Ezra partnered with Nehemiah in renewing the people's faith and commitment to God's commands, emphasizing the need for spiritual restoration not just physical rebuilding.





### **SANBALLAT (THE ENEMY)**

Sanballat was the governor of Samaria and a fierce opponent of Nehemiah's efforts to rebuild Jerusalem's wall. He led the external opposition, using mockery, threats, and political schemes to try to stop the work. He hated the thought of Jerusalem becoming prosperous less than 40 miles away from his territory.

### **TOBIAH (THE ENEMY)**

Though his name is Jewish, meaning "God is good," he saw an opportunity for power within the Ammonites, where he became an official. He had deep connections within Jerusalem's elite, marrying into influential Jewish families, allowing him to exert pressure on Nehemiah from within. He mocked the builders, conspired against Nehemiah, and later gained unauthorized access to a temple storeroom.

### **GESHEM (THE ENEMY)**

Geshem was an Arabian leader who joined Sanballat and Tobiah in opposing Nehemiah. He viewed Jerusalem's restoration as a threat to his economic and political influence. He used intimidation and false accusations to try to halt Nehemiah's work, even attempting to lure him into a trap.

### **ELIASHIB**

Eliashib was the high priest and initially played a key role in rebuilding the wall. However, he later compromised by forming alliances with Nehemiah's enemies, particularly Tobiah. Nehemiah's challenges were not only external.

# VISION

W E E K 0 1







## NEHEMIAH 1

# 1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah:

### NEWS FROM JERUSALEM

During the month of Chislev in the twentieth year, when I was in the fortress city of Susa, <sup>2</sup> Hanani, one of my brothers, arrived with men from Judah, and I questioned them about Jerusalem and the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile. <sup>3</sup> They said to me, “The remnant in the province, who survived the exile, are in great trouble and disgrace. Jerusalem’s wall has been broken down, and its gates have been burned.”

### NEHEMIAH’S PRAYER

<sup>4</sup> When I heard these words, I sat down and wept. I mourned for a number of days, fasting and praying before the God of the heavens. <sup>5</sup> I said,

LORD, the God of the heavens, the great and awe-inspiring God who keeps his gracious covenant with those who love him and keep his commands, <sup>6</sup> let your eyes be open and your ears be attentive to hear your servant’s prayer that I now pray to you day and night for your servants, the Israelites. I confess the sins we have committed against you. Both I and my father’s family have sinned. <sup>7</sup> We have acted corruptly toward you and have not kept the commands, statutes, and ordinances you gave your servant Moses. <sup>8</sup> Please remember what you commanded your servant Moses: “If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples. <sup>9</sup> But if you return to me and carefully observe my commands, even though your exiles were banished to the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place where I chose to have my name dwell.” <sup>10</sup> They are your servants and your people. You redeemed them by your great power and strong hand. <sup>11</sup> Please, Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to that of your servants who delight to revere your name. Give your servant success today, and grant him compassion in the presence of this man.

At the time, I was the king’s cupbearer.



## SERMON NOTES

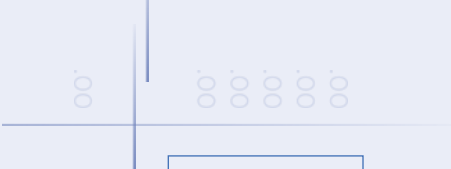
**BURDEN** *without* **BELIEF** = *Hopeless Leadership*

**BELIEF** *without* **BURDEN** = *Purposeless Leadership*

**BURDEN** *with* **BELIEF** = *Visionary Leadership*



	NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER (Nehemiah 1:5-11)	JESUS' MODEL PRAYER (Matthew 6:9-13)
<b><u>P</u>RAISE</b>	Lord, the God of the heavens, the great one awe-inspiring God	Our Father in heaven
<b><u>R</u>EPENT</b>	I confess sins we have committed against you	Forgive us our debts
<b><u>A</u>SK</b>	Please remember what you commanded your servant Moses	Your name honored as holy, Your kingdom come, your will be done. Give us today our daily bread
<b><u>Y</u>IELD</b>	Please, Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant	Deliver us from the evil one



# LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

RHYTHM REMINDER



Prayer

LEAN IN

If you were assigned to rebuild something with no experience, what job would you *definitely* need a YouTube tutorial for? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK DOWN

**Read Nehemiah 1:4-11 (pg. 22).** How would you describe Nehemiah's heart based on what he prays to God in this passage? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK OUT

Who today is taking action like Nehemiah—praying, stepping up, and getting involved when things are falling apart? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK IN

What kinds of brokenness in the world make you feel burdened, like Nehemiah felt about Jerusalem? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



WEEK 1

# IF I HAD MORE TIME



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

WITH SPECIAL GUEST

**JOHN MAXWELL**

“

*I want people who know me but don't know God to want to know God because they know me.*

“

*You can't buy, beg, or borrow vision. It has to come from within.*

**JOHN MAXWELL** is a teaching pastor and leadership expert who has sold more than 30 million books in 50 languages on leadership, team-building, and personal growth. He is the founder of The John Maxwell Company, EQUIP, and The John Maxwell Foundation.

*"Pursue the well-being of the city  
I have sent you to. Pray to the  
LORD on its behalf, for when it  
thrives, you will thrive."*

Jeremiah 29:7



# A VISION FOR OUTREACH

## WEEK 1: A CALL TO SEEK THE GOOD OF OUR CITIES

As followers of Jesus, we are sent into our cities to be His hands and feet—to bring light where there is darkness, hope where there is despair, and restoration where things are broken. Outreach is not a program—it's a calling on every believer to live out the gospel in word and deed.

At Mariners, we respond to this calling by caring for the Quartet of the Vulnerable—the widow, the orphan, the immigrant, and the poor (Zechariah 7:9-10). This biblical framework guides our Local Outreach, ensuring we serve in ways that reflect God's heart for justice, mercy, and compassion.





## HOW WE SERVE: THE QUARTET OF THE VULNERABLE

**Widow:** We care for those who have lost vital support systems—elderly in assisted living, single parents, families affected by incarceration, and military families navigating separation and sacrifice.

*"God in his holy dwelling is a father of the fatherless and a champion of widows."  
— Psalm 68:5*

**Orphan:** Through foster care support, mentorship, and unborn ministries, we stand with vulnerable children and families, offering tangible support that leads to strong families.

*"...Defend the rights of the fatherless. Plead the widow's cause."  
— Isaiah 1:17*

**Immigrant:** We welcome and walk alongside immigrants, refugees, and English language learners, helping them navigate new beginnings with dignity and belonging.

*"You are also to love the resident alien, since you were resident aliens in the land of Egypt."  
— Deuteronomy 10:19*

**Poor:** Through food pantries, thrift stores, homelessness initiatives, and special needs ministries, we meet essential needs while nurturing the spiritual and emotional well-being of those we serve.

*"...if you offer yourself to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted one, then your light will shine in the darkness, and your night will be like noonday."  
— Isaiah 58:10*



## 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.





*by Angelina Joseph*

# God Is on Our Side

With the world changing all around us in form, size, and shape, as followers of Christ, if our faith is not anchored in Him, we will be impacted and find ourselves spreading negativity around us. As a servant leader, Nehemiah trusted God and did not let the opposition, including mockery and discouragement, affect him and the people he was leading. He knew how to rally people to thrive and complete the building of the wall.

Nehemiah's opposition reminded me of one of our international medical outreaches I conducted in another country. Months earlier, we provided the requirements and received the approval to organize the outreach. But three days before the event, when we were in the country, a government official canceled the event without providing a reason.

The decision was disheartening as we did not expect the change at all. At one point, I felt like what we were trying to build in this context of outreach was being halted by the enemy.

Like Nehemiah, I prayed the way I knew how, asking God to overturn the plans of the enemy. Later that day, we discussed the matter with the team, so we prayed, and we expected God to work through the whole situation for His glory. After all, I said to myself, we were His servants and





were commissioned to go to the world and share the gospel. And we trusted that He would work for our good and the good of the people we were serving, regardless of the outcome and whether they decided to let us move forward with the event or not.

The day before the event, I was told the in-country medical board was holding its monthly meeting. I thought this could be my only opportunity to share the vision with them. I prayed for favor to meet at least one of the board members, and I did, putting emphasis on the positive impact the outreach would have on vulnerable people, especially women and children in the city. She attentively listened and promised to discuss the matter at the meeting.

After the meeting, the coordinator called and informed me that the decision the board took to grant us a permit was in our favor. Praise God!

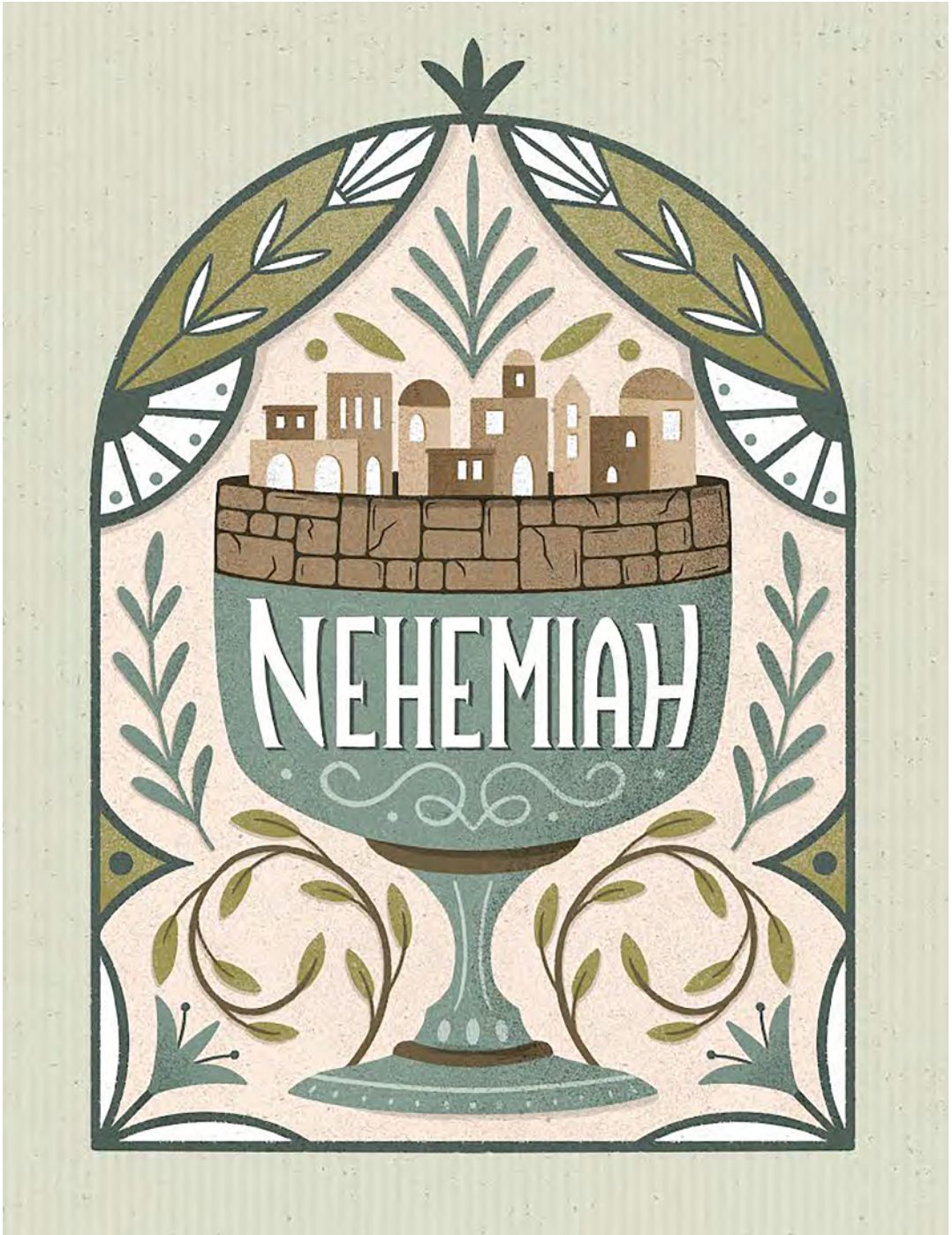
I couldn't keep this great news to myself, so I announced it to my team. Everybody's facial expression changed and became joyful. We were overjoyed and started shouting, "Hallelujah! Thank you, Lord," and hugging each other. It was such a great feeling as the pressure vanished.

Our clinic lasted five days, and every day we prayed together. Every volunteer was assigned a role that suited his or her skills and talents. The work was well done, and the outcome was amazing, as 260 people gave their lives to Christ and over 400 people came for prayer.

My friend, you may have walls that need to be rebuilt in your life, family, relationships, or work...remember this: if you build the foundation of your relationship with God first, He will fight for you. Take heart and do not get discouraged. The God of the universe makes the darkness disappear before your eyes. As the Scripture says in Romans 8:31, "...If God is for us, who is against us?"





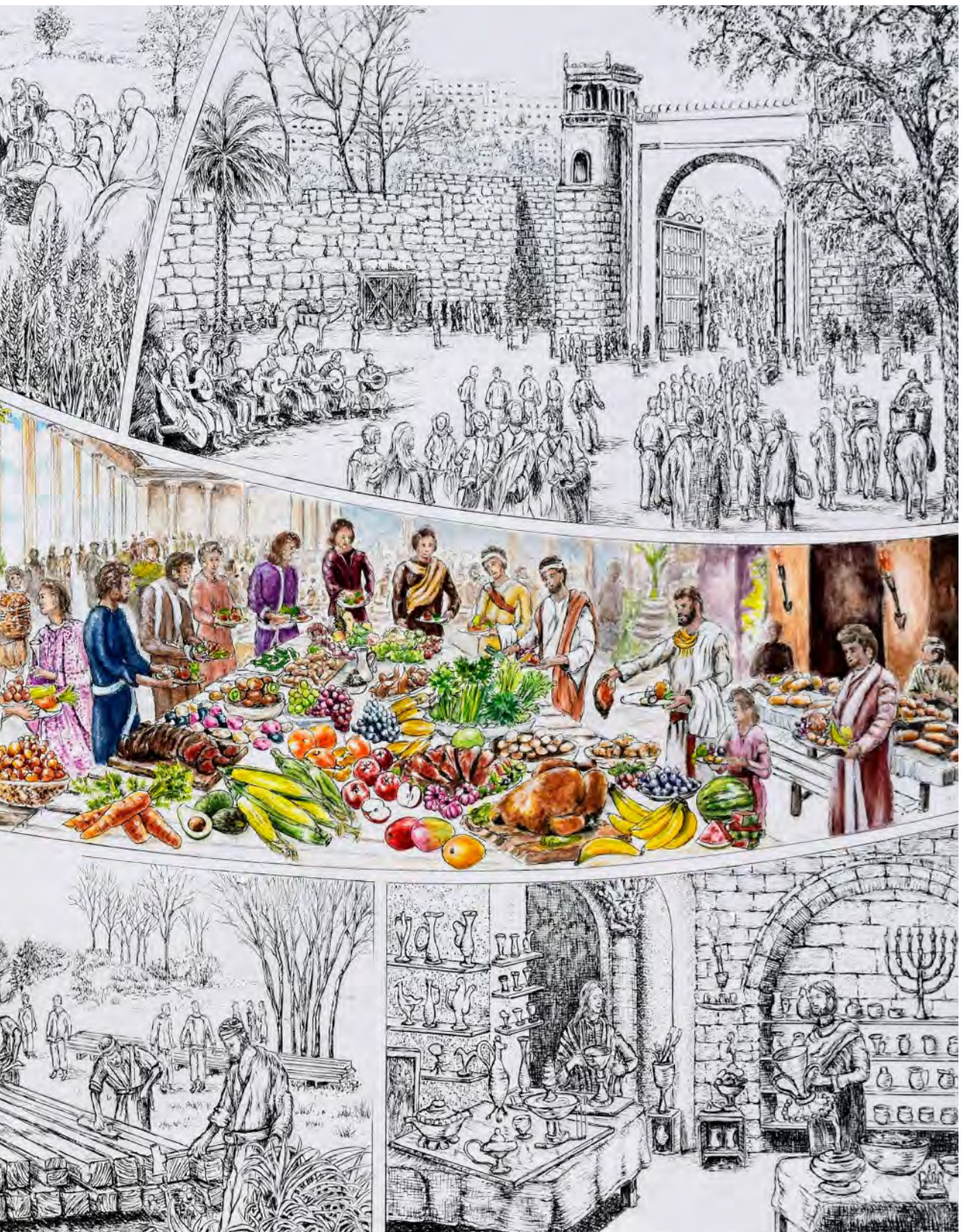


*Cupbearer*  
Original Artwork by Ammie Gomez









Rebuilding the Gates and Walls of Nehemiah - Original Artwork by Bill Lee ▶





▼  
*Nehemiah's Prayer*

Original Artwork by Carla Baker

by Charlotte Baker

# The Light that Overcomes the Flames

*"I said to the king, 'Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?'"*  
(Nehemiah 2:3, ESV)

Into the light, questioned by fear,  
a miraculous King appears to hear.

He hears my prayers through the burning fire,  
that same fire that burned down the walls.

Yet despite the burdens, I still believe  
that there is lightness after the reprieve,

bursting through the cumulus clouds  
the light transforms through the burns.









# 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, <sup>2</sup> 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 <sup>3</sup> 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?”

<sup>4</sup> Then the king asked me, “What is your request?”

So I prayed to the God of the heavens <sup>5</sup> 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.”

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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

<sup>11</sup> After I arrived in Jerusalem and had been there three days, <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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.



<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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.” <sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> 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?”

<sup>20</sup> 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



## **REJECTING FEAR OF MAN...**

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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**

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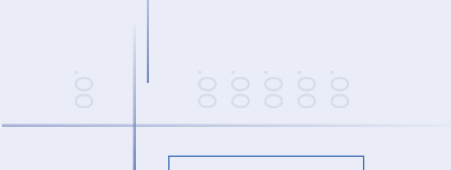
Prayed to God of heaven (2:4)

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.





▼  
*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

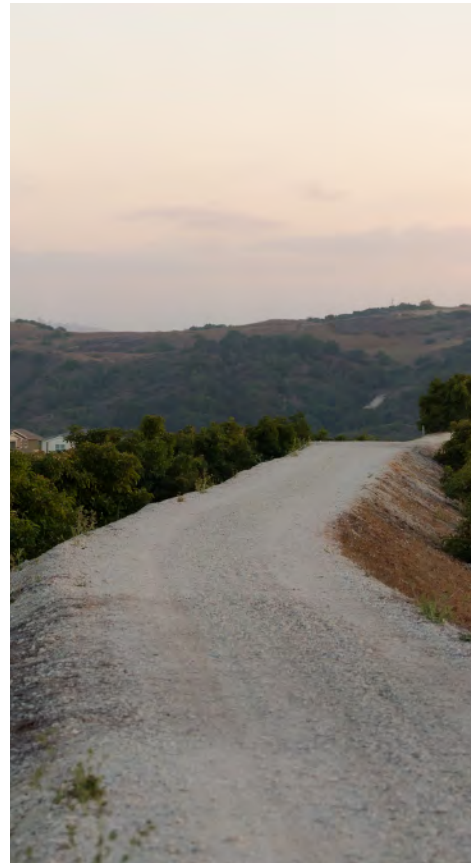
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My teeth were chattering like a jackhammer as I nervously made my way to the marathon start line. Over-caffeinated and shivering in the chill of predawn, I began questioning everything from my life choices (namely this one) to my running shoes. But 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.







▼  
*His Plans Still Stand*  
Original Artwork by Jiyea Kim



# SERVANTHOOD

W E E K 0 3







### 3 REBUILDING THE WALLS

The high priest Eliashib and his fellow priests began rebuilding the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and installed its doors. After building the wall to the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel, they dedicated it. <sup>2</sup> The men of Jericho built next to Eliashib, and next to them Zaccur son of Imri built.

#### FISH GATE

<sup>3</sup> The sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate. They built it with beams and installed its doors, bolts, and bars. <sup>4</sup> Next to them Meremoth son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz, made repairs. Beside them Meshullam son of Berechiah, son of Meshezabel, made repairs. Next to them Zadok son of Baana made repairs. <sup>5</sup> Beside them the Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not lift a finger to help their supervisors.

#### OLD GATE, BROAD WALL, AND TOWER OF THE OVENS

<sup>6</sup> Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate. They built it with beams and installed its doors, bolts, and bars. <sup>7</sup> Next to them the repairs were done by Melatiah the Gibeonite, Jadon the Meronothite, and the men of Gibeon and Mizpah, who were under the authority of the governor of the region west of the Euphrates River. <sup>8</sup> After him Uzziel son of Harhaiah, the goldsmith, made repairs, and next to him Hananiah son of the perfumer made repairs. They restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

<sup>9</sup> Next to them Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs. <sup>10</sup> After them Jedaiah son of Harumaph made repairs across from his house. Next to him Hattush the son of Hashabneiah made repairs. <sup>11</sup> Malchijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-moab made repairs to another section, as well as to the Tower of the Ovens. <sup>12</sup> Beside him Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs—he and his daughters.

#### VALLEY GATE, DUNG GATE, AND FOUNTAIN GATE

<sup>13</sup> Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They rebuilt it and installed its doors, bolts, and bars, and repaired five hundred yards of the wall to the Dung Gate. <sup>14</sup> Malchijah son of Rechab, ruler of the district of Beth-haccherem, repaired the Dung Gate. He rebuilt it and installed its doors, bolts, and bars.

<sup>15</sup> Shallun son of Col-hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate. He rebuilt it and roofed it. Then he installed its doors, bolts, and bars. He also made repairs to the wall of the Pool of Shelah near the king's garden, as far as the stairs that descend from the city of David.



<sup>16</sup> After him Nehemiah son of Azbuk, ruler of half the district of Beth-zur, made repairs up to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool and the House of the Warriors. <sup>17</sup> Next to him the Levites made repairs under Rehum son of Bani. Beside him Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, made repairs for his district. <sup>18</sup> After him their fellow Levites made repairs under Binnui son of Henadad, ruler of half the district of Keilah. <sup>19</sup> Next to him Ezer son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, made repairs to another section opposite the ascent to the armory at the Angle.

**THE ANGLE, WATER GATE, AND TOWER ON OPHEL**

<sup>20</sup> After him Baruch son of Zabbai diligently repaired another section, from the Angle to the door of the house of the high priest Eliashib. <sup>21</sup> Beside him Meremoth son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz, made repairs to another section, from the door of Eliashib's house to the end of his house. <sup>22</sup> And next to him the priests from the surrounding area made repairs.

<sup>23</sup> After them Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs opposite their house. Beside them Azariah son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah, made repairs beside his house. <sup>24</sup> After him Binnui son of Henadad made repairs to another section, from the house of Azariah to the Angle and the corner. <sup>25</sup> Palal son of Uzai made repairs opposite the Angle and tower that juts out from the king's upper palace, by the courtyard of the guard. Beside him Pedaiah son of Parosh <sup>26</sup> and the temple servants living on Ophel made repairs opposite the Water Gate toward the east and the tower that juts out. <sup>27</sup> Next to him the Tekoites made repairs to another section from a point opposite the great tower that juts out, as far as the wall of Ophel.

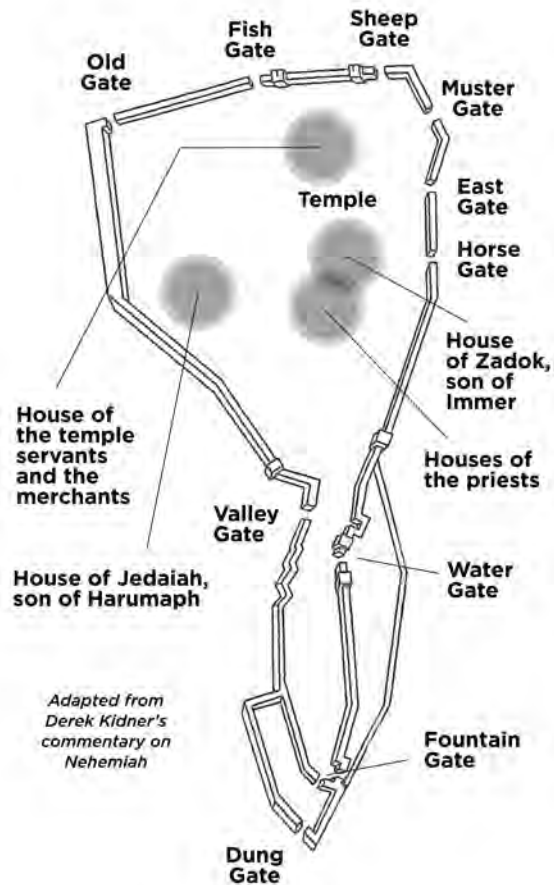
**HORSE GATE, INSPECTION GATE, AND SHEEP GATE**

<sup>28</sup> Each of the priests made repairs above the Horse Gate, each opposite his own house. <sup>29</sup> After them Zadok son of Immer made repairs opposite his house. And beside him Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, guard of the East Gate, made repairs. <sup>30</sup> Next to him Hananiah son of Shelemiah and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph made repairs to another section.

After them Meshullam son of Berechiah made repairs opposite his room. <sup>31</sup> Next to him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs to the house of the temple servants and the merchants, opposite the Inspection Gate, and as far as the upstairs room on the corner. <sup>32</sup> The goldsmiths and merchants made repairs between the upstairs room on the corner and the Sheep Gate.

## SERMON NOTES





## THINK BIG

*Serve God*  
*Serve the vision*  
*Serve the future*

AND  
 AND  
 AND

## ACT SMALL

*Serve people*  
*Serve the team*  
*Serve today*



# LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

RHYTHM REMINDER



Serve the  
Community

LEAN IN

What's one way you've seen someone "lead by serving" that made a lasting impression on you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK DOWN

In Nehemiah 3, a lot of different people and roles are listed. Why do you think the author takes time to list all the names and roles? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK OUT

How do people in our culture define greatness—and how is servant leadership a radical contrast? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK IN

When you think about servant leadership, does it feel natural, challenging, or draining for you? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



WEEK 3

# IF I HAD MORE TIME

WITH SPECIAL GUEST

**CHERYL BACHELDER**



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



*Success didn't teach me much—but a good smack in the head, a good failure, will leave you with some very memorable lessons.”*

**CHERYL BACHELDER** was the CEO of Popeyes Industry during the turnaround years. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for Chick-fil-A and as a board member of WorkMatters, a ministry focused on helping Christian leaders discover the sacredness of their work. She also authored the leadership book *Dare to Serve*.

# Burden, Belief, and Rebuilding a Life in Christ

Once, Preston found himself incarcerated and hopeless. His life was seemingly shattered; he could not secure a job and lost many of his friends. Yet today, after being released by the grace of God, he serves with the prison ministry at Mariners.

"I was arrested, falsely accused of a crime, and was looking at 130 years in prison and half a million dollars in fines," Preston says of what transpired when he was living in Minnesota 10 years ago.

"It was the worst; a place of complete hopelessness and condemnation," Preston recalls of his time behind bars.

"Whatever you see in the movies, it's way worse. People fight over toilet paper rolls because they want to use them for pillows. I saw people dying within a few feet of me. I was in tiny holding cells. Finally, I was placed in a cell with 15 people. My first night, I didn't sleep because the guy in the cot next to me was twisting, contorting, and groaning like he was possessed. But God used that guy, who was going through withdrawals, to mold my heart where I would really care about the lost and broken in this world."

Prosecutors decided not to charge Preston with any crime and his arrest was expunged from his record. He felt led to serve incarcerated people and their families,

and now helps lead Hope Events four times a year (Mother's Day, Father's Day, Easter, and Christmas) with Mariners through a partnership with Prison Fellowship. During these outreaches, prisoners pray with volunteers, worship together, and hear the good news of Jesus. At the end of each worship service, prisoners have the opportunity to say "I Believe" and put their trust in Jesus. Just as Nehemiah was deeply burdened for Jerusalem and his people, Preston serves with the Prison Ministry to share God's love and point people to the hope found only in Jesus. "In the darkest times, I thought life was over, and I wanted to die. That's when I got closer to God," he recollects.

With the story of his own incarceration and God's ability to rebuild a rich, fruitful life from rubble, he encourages those he serves to look to the Lord rather than their circumstances. "My chains broke; my spirit did not. I only became stronger. And I only became stronger because I became closer to God. And both He and I refuse to let my pain go to waste. You can either have your pain and suffering break you without God, or you can have your pain and suffering make you unbreakable with God. The choice is yours."





Yachad

Original Artwork by Cedric Dennis

*by Michele Wilbert*

# What Nehemiah Teaches Us About Serving



COVID eliminated any type of hurry in my life. Suddenly, no more meetings to attend, sports practices to shuttle my son to and from, or even school. The only problem was that I could not unhurry my mind. Suddenly, I had all this time to think.

My life had been so full for so long that I barely remembered what daydreaming or thinking was like unless it was scheduled. It was great until all these ideas decided to fill my head each night at 1a. I prayed, I praised, I made notes on my phone, and wondered what God was asking me to do in this season. I pleaded with God to show me. How was I going to continue to serve God?

Our family started watching Mariners Online. We jumped into a Rooted group, took Deep Dive courses, and I joined an online Bible study.







We felt connected, but I didn't love that we were primarily consuming and not serving. One Saturday, our family took a fly-fishing class for the day to escape the heat and boredom after weeks of not doing much. On the walk down to the river, my senses came alive to the smells of the trees, the sounds of the birds, and the cool water around my feet. Following the directions of our instructor, my mind was fully engaged with what I needed to do in that moment to cast. I was aware of my surroundings, the flow of the river, and what my hands needed to do to complete a proper cast.

With the rhythmic motion of casting, hours had gone by without realization, and my hurried mind quieted. I was still. I was listening. No longer bombarding God with all my questions, my heart rested right where I was in that river. In that quiet way the Spirit often speaks to us, I knew God was asking me to serve right where I was—online. But wait, God, how?

In the book of Nehemiah, God gives us a glimpse of a leader who served right where God had placed him. Nehemiah was concerned for the people of Jerusalem. Without a city wall, they were not protected. Nehemiah recognized a need. Nehemiah wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed. He went to God first. He then met with the king and was given favor to rebuild the wall.

In Nehemiah chapter three, it details each person's name and the repairs that are made outside their own homes. Four times we read that some people worked on the section of the wall that was "opposite" or "in front of" their own houses (v. 10, 28-30). I wonder if Nehemiah knew that they would take even greater care of rebuilding the wall because it was outside of their own homes? People used whatever their skills were, like goldsmiths and merchants, and entire families worked together to repair the wall.

One way God gives me great joy is when I am able to connect women to opportunities to use their gifts and to serve right where they are in their particular season of life. I love those conversations, and they seem to go something like this: "Maybe one day I could do that," or "I think I am a little too old to do that," or the most common is, "I really don't think I am qualified." We don't always see an invitation over for coffee as serving God, but sometimes serving God is simply doing that. Somehow in the season of COVID, I needed Nehemiah's reminder myself. In the past, I have missed opportunities to serve God because I thought I needed to go somewhere else for God or I needed to make a bigger impact. When a need came up to serve online even though I didn't feel qualified, I already knew God was asking me to serve right where He had placed me in that season, alongside women He had connected with me online.

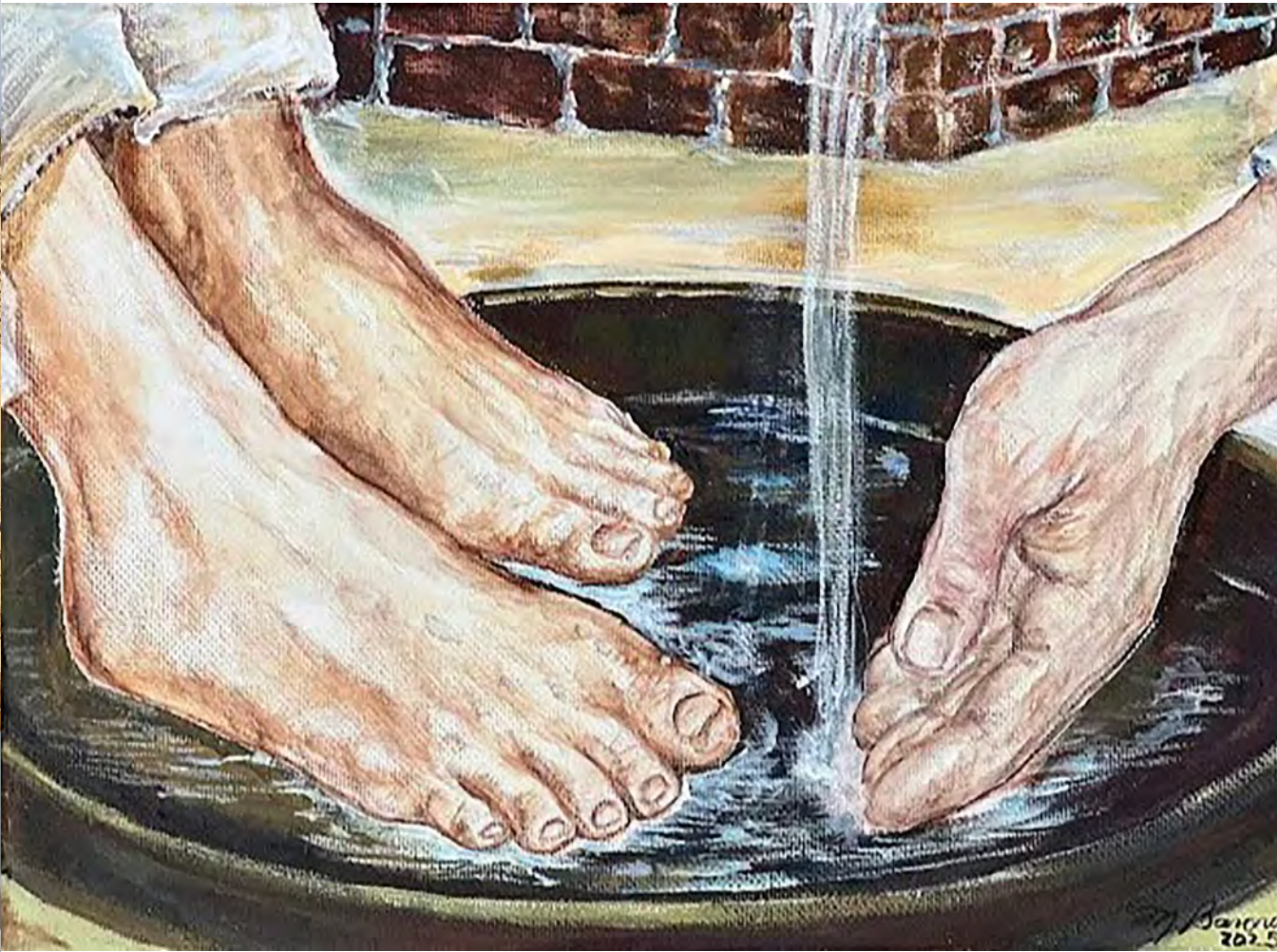
A.W. Tozer writes this about God:

*"God is always nearer than you can imagine Him to be. God is so near that your thoughts are not as near as God; your breath is not as near as God; your very soul is not as near to you as God is."*

If the all-knowing, almighty, all-sufficient, powerful God we serve is right here with us, why wouldn't I want to join Him? As we abide in Him and walk closely with Him, we get the joy of serving God, taking the gospel wherever He has placed us.









# PERSEVERANCE

W E E K 0 4







### 4 PROGRESS IN SPITE OF OPPOSITION

When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious. He mocked the Jews <sup>2</sup> before his colleagues and the powerful men of Samaria and said, “What are these pathetic Jews doing? Can they restore it by themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they ever finish it? Can they bring these burnt stones back to life from the mounds of rubble?” <sup>3</sup> Then Tobiah the Ammonite, who was beside him, said, “Indeed, even if a fox climbed up what they are building, he would break down their stone wall!”

<sup>4</sup> Listen, our God, for we are despised. Make their insults return on their own heads and let them be taken as plunder to a land of captivity. <sup>5</sup> Do not cover their guilt or let their sin be erased from your sight, because they have angered the builders.

<sup>6</sup> So we rebuilt the wall until the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had the will to keep working.

<sup>7</sup> When Sanballat, Tobiah, and the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites heard that the repair to the walls of Jerusalem was progressing and that the gaps were being closed, they became furious. <sup>8</sup> They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and throw it into confusion. <sup>9</sup> So we prayed to our God and stationed a guard because of them day and night.

<sup>10</sup> In Judah, it was said:

The strength of the laborer fails,  
since there is so much rubble.  
We will never be able  
to rebuild the wall.

<sup>11</sup> And our enemies said, “They won’t realize it until we’re among them and can kill them and stop the work.” <sup>12</sup> When the Jews who lived nearby arrived, they said to us time and again, “Everywhere you turn, they attack us.” <sup>13</sup> So I stationed people behind the lowest sections of the wall, at the vulnerable areas. I stationed them by families with their swords, spears, and bows. <sup>14</sup> After I made an inspection, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the great and awe-inspiring Lord, and fight for your countrymen, your sons and daughters, your wives and homes.”



## SWORD AND TROWEL

<sup>15</sup> When our enemies heard that we knew their scheme and that God had frustrated it, every one of us returned to his own work on the wall. <sup>16</sup> From that day on, half of my men did the work while the other half held spears, shields, bows, and armor. The officers supported all the people of Judah, <sup>17</sup> who were rebuilding the wall. The laborers who carried the loads worked with one hand and held a weapon with the other. <sup>18</sup> Each of the builders had his sword strapped around his waist while he was building, and the one who sounded the ram's horn was beside me. <sup>19</sup> Then I said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, "The work is enormous and spread out, and we are separated far from one another along the wall. <sup>20</sup> Wherever you hear the sound of the ram's horn, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us!" <sup>21</sup> So we continued the work, while half of the men were holding spears from daybreak until the stars came out. <sup>22</sup> At that time, I also said to the people, "Let everyone and his servant spend the night inside Jerusalem, so that they can stand guard by night and work by day." <sup>23</sup> And I, my brothers, my servants, and the men of the guard with me never took off our clothes. Each carried his weapon, even when washing.

## 5 SOCIAL INJUSTICE

There was a widespread outcry from the people and their wives against their Jewish countrymen. <sup>2</sup> Some were saying, "We, our sons, and our daughters are numerous. Let us get grain so that we can eat and live." <sup>3</sup> Others were saying, "We are mortgaging our fields, vineyards, and homes to get grain during the famine." <sup>4</sup> Still others were saying, "We have borrowed money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. <sup>5</sup> We and our children are just like our countrymen and their children, yet we are subjecting our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters are already enslaved, but we are powerless because our fields and vineyards belong to others."

<sup>6</sup> I became extremely angry when I heard their outcry and these complaints. <sup>7</sup> After seriously considering the matter, I accused the nobles and officials, saying to them, "Each of you is charging his countrymen interest." So I called a large assembly against them <sup>8</sup> and said, "We have done our best to buy back our Jewish countrymen who were sold to foreigners, but now you sell your own countrymen, and we have to buy them back." They remained silent and could not say a word. <sup>9</sup> Then I said, "What you are doing isn't right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God and not invite the reproach of our foreign

## NEHEMIAH 5

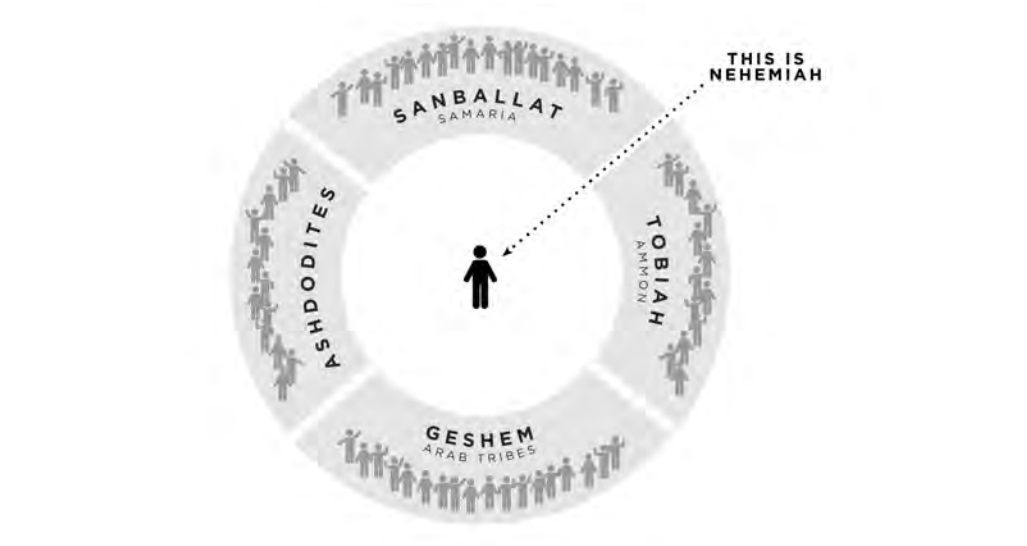
enemies? <sup>10</sup> Even I, as well as my brothers and my servants, have been lending them money and grain. Please, let's stop charging this interest. <sup>11</sup> Return their fields, vineyards, olive groves, and houses to them immediately, along with the percentage of the money, grain, new wine, and fresh oil that you have been assessing them."

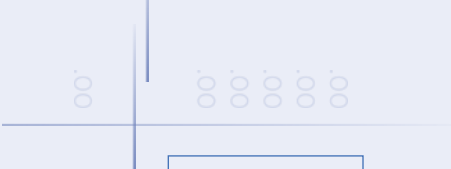
<sup>12</sup> They responded, "We will return these things and require nothing more from them. We will do as you say."

So I summoned the priests and made everyone take an oath to do this. <sup>13</sup> I also shook the folds of my robe and said, "May God likewise shake from his house and property everyone who doesn't keep this promise. May he be shaken out and have nothing!"

The whole assembly said, "Amen," and they praised the LORD. Then the people did as they had promised.







# LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

RHYTHM REMINDER



Share Your Story

LEAN IN

What's something in life that's been way harder than you thought but worth the perseverance? What makes it worth it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK DOWN

What types of opposition did Nehemiah and the people face in chapters 4 and 5—both from enemies and from within their own community? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK OUT

What would it look like for Christians to be known not just for fighting battles, but for trusting God to fight for them? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK IN

Where do you need to persevere right now—either in trusting God or confronting something difficult with grace and courage? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



WEEK 4

# IF I HAD MORE TIME

WITH SPECIAL GUEST

**ROB PELINKA**



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



***Leadership  
is earned. It's  
not something  
that's given.***

**ROB PELINKA** is the President of Basketball Operations and General Manager of the Los Angeles Lakers. He gained prominence as a sports agent, representing top NBA talent, including Kobe Bryant, and founding the Landmark Sports Agency.







by Alexandra Lindenberg

# My Heavenly Father

This past spring, I was fortunate enough to study abroad in the beautiful city of Glasgow, Scotland. Surrounded by cathedrals that are hundreds of years old, and highlands rich in the country's bloody history for independence, God took me by the hand and walked with me into a wilderness season. Within this bittersweet solitude, God sat with me every morning as I cracked open my first study Bible and learned His Word, starting from the book of Genesis.

One early morning, I began to read the story of Isaac. In this specific chapter, Abraham sent his oldest servant to his homeland to find a wife for his son Isaac. At first, the servant was filled with doubt at this task, but Abraham promised that the Lord would send an angel ahead of the servant to help fulfill this calling. True to His word, the Lord was with the old servant and unveiled who Isaac's wife should be.

At his success, the servant worshiped the Lord and proclaimed "Praise the LORD, the God of my master, Abraham! The LORD has shown unfailing love and faithfulness to my master, for he has led me straight to my master's relatives" (Genesis 24:27, NLT).

Like Abraham and Isaac, many Christians around me often testified to a calling on their life brought by God, but what was mine? Did I even have one?

Closing my eyes, I spoke aloud to the Lord, hungering to know what He wished from me.

*God* (because I couldn't stomach ever using the word "Father" again),

*Please show me what You are calling me to do this season* (because I was lost).

*Unveil how You wish for me to serve You.*

As my prayer ended, I felt my heart grow overwhelmed by a feeling I'd come to recognize—the warm and joyful moment when the Holy Spirit nestles deep into



*Our God Will Fight For Us*  
Original Artwork by Ann Hu

my heart like a dove when its nest finally becomes home. Filled with the command to share God's Word, I picked up my phone and began texting my mother, sister, and family friends about how grateful I was for them—I began to share all that I'd learned that morning from Genesis 24. As I was exiting a specific text chain, my finger hovered over a single contact—a single word.

Pa—a nickname I'd produced for my father amidst a season of peace in our relationship.

Contempt crept into my heart.

I loved my father, the man whose connection to me went as deep as blood and DNA. The man who raised me and took care of me all my life. But, perhaps like some in the world, my father was also the reason my heart carried scars and childhood heartache lingered at harsh words and triggering statements.

Most of my childhood, all I could remember was competing for my father's conditional love, which was won only by things he considered acceptable. Most of the time, that love and praise were dished out sparingly when I laid down my own

happiness for his own. So, of course, in that moment, I could not help but hesitate—I could not help but let the vengeful part of myself think that my own father was undeserving of knowing the goodness I had found in Christ.

All at once, tears welled in my eyes as I felt something shift in my heart. I knew what God had called for me to do in this season. I'd heard His words so clearly in my heart.

I sensed Him saying, *"The reason your relationship with your earthly father is unstable is because you have not invited Me into it. Go and make this relationship anew with Me at the center. Go and make this relationship better, and do not worry about any injustices of the past, for I will stand beside you."*

I began to weep at my desk because God had heard, secretly, what my heart cried for when I was unable to produce the right words aloud in prayer.

Before God's conviction, I was unable to invite God into my relationship with my father because I felt there was no such thing as a "new beginning" for us—there





had been too many injustices that hadn't been answered and there were too many voices in my head (and all around me) that told me it would be better to sever ties with my father rather than rebuild them.

In the Bible, Nehemiah faced many external and internal conflicts as he completed the wall around Jerusalem. Many wished for his downfall and even his own people—the people of Judah—began to doubt their ability to finish it (Nehemiah 4). Instead of turning his gaze to the world, Nehemiah called upon the Lord. God answered, "Don't be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes!" (Nehemiah 4:14, NLT).

Like Nehemiah, I began to bring my troubles to the Lord, calling upon Him for guidance as I began to fulfill that season's calling. And every time, at the sound of God's voice, any wound that had been left unsealed faded, and I let go of my anger. I knew He would fight for me. For so long, as I'd grown in my spiritual journey with God,

I struggled to understand why I needed to recognize Him as "Father"—how could I when my only experience with the word "father" had hurt me?

But, on that quiet morning in Scotland, God's words echoing in my heart washed away the childhood grief and sorrow I'd carried with me like a scar. His unconditional love and grace filled me and brought me to tears. He'd shown me His unwavering presence in the face of an abundance of trials that lie ahead, for God's calling would not be easy, nor would it be painless, but my Heavenly Father would fight for me.



by Wes Blake

# The Power of Perseverance

*Dedicated to my  
Re:Generation  
brothers*

*Re:Generation is a  
Bible-based care and  
recovery ministry  
that includes both  
daily curriculum and  
weekly group-based  
support. It's currently  
offered at our Irvine  
congregation and is  
launching soon at our  
other locations.*

Keep going all the way,  
even if the rugged road is hard.

Even when it gets rough,  
just keep going.

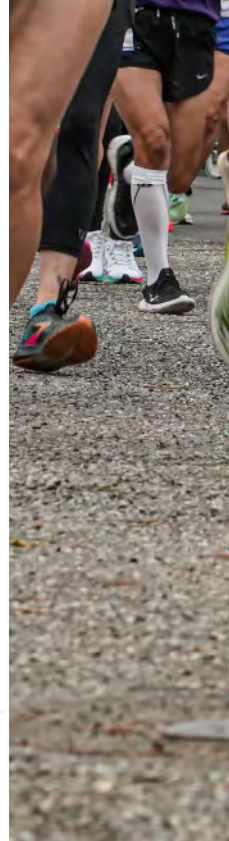
Don't give up hope now,  
you've gotten this far.

You've traveled down many paths  
and fallen so many times.

But you've always managed to  
pick yourself back up again and again.

So don't give up now,  
you will make it through.

The light is within your grasp,  
keep climbing up







over many jagged mountains  
that stand in the way

of where you're meant to be;  
don't lose your grip

and plummet to your undoing,  
you've made it up this high.

Keep on rising until  
you reach the indigo sky

and finally feel at peace,  
so don't lose faith.

You will keep rising higher and higher  
with the endurance hidden inside you.

Keep breaking free  
from the stubborn chains

that have held you down  
from all that you can be.

Keep breaking through the walls  
that stand in your way.

You have the strength  
even if you feel weak and unworthy.

You will keep going the distance  
and still rise above it all.

In God's eyes, you are more than enough,  
and you will keep on going

with the power of perseverance.

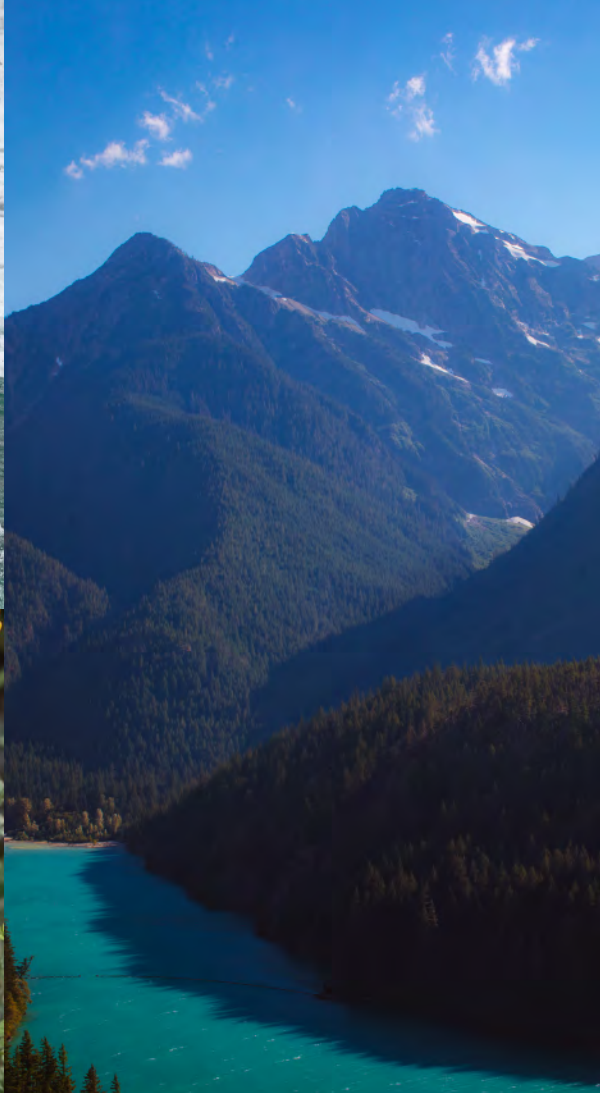


*Nehemiah 4:17-18*

*42*

▼  
*Building and Defending*  
Original Artwork by Jacqueline Lee







# CREDIBILITY

W E E K 0 5







## NEHEMIAH 5

### GOOD AND BAD GOVERNORS

<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, from the day King Artaxerxes appointed me to be their governor in the land of Judah—from the twentieth year until his thirty-second year, twelve years—I and my associates never ate from the food allotted to the governor. <sup>15</sup> The governors who preceded me had heavily burdened the people, taking from them food and wine as well as a pound of silver. Their subordinates also oppressed the people, but because of the fear of God, I didn't do this. <sup>16</sup> Instead, I devoted myself to the construction of this wall, and all my subordinates were gathered there for the work. We didn't buy any land.

<sup>17</sup> There were 150 Jews and officials, as well as guests from the surrounding nations at my table. <sup>18</sup> Each day, one ox, six choice sheep, and some fowl were prepared for me. An abundance of all kinds of wine was provided every ten days. But I didn't demand the food allotted to the governor, because the burden on the people was so heavy.

<sup>19</sup> Remember me favorably, my God, for all that I have done for this people.

### 6 ATTEMPTS TO DISCOURAGE THE BUILDERS

When Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall and that no gap was left in it—though at that time I had not installed the doors in the city gates—<sup>2</sup> Sanballat and Geshem sent me a message: “Come, let's meet together in the villages of the Ono Valley.” They were planning to harm me.

<sup>3</sup> So I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing important work and cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?” <sup>4</sup> Four times they sent me the same proposal, and I gave them the same reply.

<sup>5</sup> Sanballat sent me this same message a fifth time by his aide, who had an open letter in his hand. <sup>6</sup> In it was written:

It is reported among the nations—and Geshem agrees—that you and the Jews plan to rebel. This is the reason you are building the wall. According to these reports, you are to become their king <sup>7</sup> and have even set up the prophets in Jerusalem to proclaim on your behalf, “There is a king in Judah.” These rumors will be heard by the king. So come, let's confer together.



<sup>8</sup> Then I replied to him, “There is nothing to these rumors you are spreading; you are inventing them in your own mind.” <sup>9</sup> For they were all trying to intimidate us, saying, “They will drop their hands from the work, and it will never be finished.”

But now, my God, strengthen my hands.

#### ATTEMPTS TO INTIMIDATE NEHEMIAH

<sup>10</sup> I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was restricted to his house. He said:

Let’s meet at the house of God,  
inside the temple.  
Let’s shut the temple doors  
because they’re coming to kill you.  
They’re coming to kill you tonight!

<sup>11</sup> But I said, “Should a man like me run away? How can someone like me enter the temple and live? I will not go.” <sup>12</sup> I realized that God had not sent him, because of the prophecy he spoke against me. Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. <sup>13</sup> He was hired, so that I would be intimidated, do as he suggested, sin, and get a bad reputation, in order that they could discredit me.

<sup>14</sup> My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat for what they have done, and also the prophetess Noadiah and the other prophets who wanted to intimidate me.

#### THE WALL COMPLETED

<sup>15</sup> The wall was completed in fifty-two days, on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul.

<sup>16</sup> When all our enemies heard this, all the surrounding nations were intimidated and lost their confidence, for they realized that this task had been accomplished by our God.

<sup>17</sup> During those days, the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah’s letters came to them. <sup>18</sup> For many in Judah were bound by oath to him, since he was a son-in-law of Shecaniah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah. <sup>19</sup> These nobles kept mentioning Tobiah’s good deeds to me, and they reported my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me.

### 7 THE EXILES RETURN

When the wall had been rebuilt and I had the doors installed, the gatekeepers, singers, and Levites were appointed. <sup>2</sup> Then I put my brother Hanani in charge of Jerusalem, along with Hananiah, commander of the fortress, because he was a faithful man who feared God more than most. <sup>3</sup> I said to them, “Do not open the gates of Jerusalem until the sun is hot, and let the doors be shut and securely fastened while the guards are on duty. Station the citizens of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some at their homes.”

<sup>4</sup> The city was large and spacious, but there were few people in it, and no houses had been built yet. <sup>5</sup> Then my God put it into my mind to assemble the nobles, the officials, and the people to be registered by genealogy. I found the genealogical record of those who came back first, and I found the following written in it:

<sup>6</sup> These are the people of the province who went up among the captive exiles deported by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Each of them returned to Jerusalem and Judah, to his own town. <sup>7</sup> They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah.

The number of the Israelite men included

<sup>8</sup> Parosh’s descendants 2,172

<sup>9</sup> Shephatiah’s descendants 372

<sup>10</sup> Arah’s descendants 652

<sup>11</sup> Pahath-moab’s descendants:

Jeshua’s and Joab’s descendants 2,818

<sup>12</sup> Elam’s descendants 1,254

<sup>13</sup> Zattu’s descendants 845

<sup>14</sup> Zaccai’s descendants 760

<sup>15</sup> Binnui’s descendants 648

<sup>16</sup> Bebai’s descendants 628

<sup>17</sup> Azgad’s descendants 2,322

<sup>18</sup> Adonikam’s descendants 667

<sup>19</sup> Bigvai’s descendants 2,067

<sup>20</sup> Adin’s descendants 655



- <sup>21</sup> Ater's descendants: of Hezekiah 98
- <sup>22</sup> Hashum's descendants 328
- <sup>23</sup> Bezai's descendants 324
- <sup>24</sup> Hariph's descendants 112
- <sup>25</sup> Gibeon's descendants 95
- <sup>26</sup> Bethlehem's and Netophah's men 188
- <sup>27</sup> Anathoth's men 128
- <sup>28</sup> Beth-azmaveth's men 42
- <sup>29</sup> Kiriath-jearim's, Chephirah's, and Beeroth's men 743
- <sup>30</sup> Ramah's and Geba's men 621
- <sup>31</sup> Michmas's men 122
- <sup>32</sup> Bethel's and Ai's men 123
- <sup>33</sup> the other Nebo's men 52
- <sup>34</sup> the other Elam's people 1,254
- <sup>35</sup> Harim's people 320
- <sup>36</sup> Jericho's people 345
- <sup>37</sup> Lod's, Hadid's, and Ono's people 721
- <sup>38</sup> Senaah's people 3,930.

<sup>39</sup> The priests included

Jedaiah's descendants of the house of Jeshua 973

<sup>40</sup> Immer's descendants 1,052

<sup>41</sup> Pashhur's descendants 1,247

<sup>42</sup> Harim's descendants 1,017.

<sup>43</sup> The Levites included

Jeshua's descendants: of Kadmiel

Hodevah's descendants 74.

<sup>44</sup> The singers included

Asaph's descendants 148.

## NEHEMIAH 7

<sup>45</sup> The gatekeepers included

Shallum's descendants, Ater's descendants,  
Talmon's descendants, Akkub's descendants,  
Hatita's descendants, Shobai's descendants 138.

<sup>46</sup> The temple servants included

Ziha's descendants, Hasupha's descendants,  
Tabbaoth's descendants, <sup>47</sup> Keros's descendants,  
Sia's descendants, Padon's descendants,  
<sup>48</sup> Lebanah's descendants, Hagabah's descendants,  
Shalmai's descendants, <sup>49</sup> Hanan's descendants,  
Giddel's descendants, Gahar's descendants,  
<sup>50</sup> Reaiah's descendants, Rezin's descendants,  
Nekoda's descendants, <sup>51</sup> Gazzam's descendants,  
Uzza's descendants, Paseah's descendants,  
<sup>52</sup> Besai's descendants, Meunim's descendants,  
Nephishesim's descendants, <sup>53</sup> Bakbuk's descendants,  
Hakupha's descendants, Harhur's descendants,  
<sup>54</sup> Bazlith's descendants, Mehida's descendants,  
Harsha's descendants, <sup>55</sup> Barkos's descendants,  
Sisera's descendants, Temah's descendants,  
<sup>56</sup> Neziah's descendants, Hatipha's descendants.

<sup>57</sup> The descendants of Solomon's servants included

Sotai's descendants, Sophereth's descendants,  
Perida's descendants, <sup>58</sup> Jaala's descendants,  
Darkon's descendants, Giddel's descendants,  
<sup>59</sup> Shephatiah's descendants, Hattil's descendants,  
Pochereth-hazzebaim's descendants, Amon's descendants.



<sup>60</sup> All the temple servants and the descendants of Solomon's servants 392.

<sup>61</sup> The following are those who came from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but were unable to prove that their ancestral families and their lineage were Israelite:

<sup>62</sup> Delaiah's descendants,

Tobiah's descendants,

and Nekoda's descendants 642

<sup>63</sup> and from the priests: the descendants of Hobaiah, the descendants of Hakkoz, and the descendants of Barzillai—who had taken a wife from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and who bore their name. <sup>64</sup> These searched for their entries in the genealogical records, but they could not be found, so they were disqualified from the priesthood. <sup>65</sup> The governor ordered them not to eat the most holy things until there was a priest who could consult the Urim and Thummim.

<sup>66</sup> The whole combined assembly numbered 42,360

<sup>67</sup> not including their 7,337 male and female servants,  
as well as their 245 male and female singers.

<sup>68</sup> They had 736 horses, 245 mules,

<sup>69</sup> 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

<sup>70</sup> Some of the family heads contributed to the project. The governor gave 1,000 gold coins, 50 bowls, and 530 priestly garments to the treasury. <sup>71</sup> Some of the family heads gave 20,000 gold coins and 2,200 silver minas to the treasury for the project. <sup>72</sup> The rest of the people gave 20,000 gold coins, 2,000 silver minas, and 67 priestly garments. <sup>73</sup> The priests, Levites, gatekeepers, temple singers, some of the people, temple servants, and all Israel settled in their towns.

#### PUBLIC READING OF THE LAW

When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns,

SERMON NOTES

Dotted lines for sermon notes.







# LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

RHYTHM REMINDER



Worship

LEAN IN

What are some key qualities that make for the best leaders? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK DOWN

**Read Nehemiah 6 (pg. 88-89).** How do Nehemiah's enemies try to discredit him, distract him, or intimidate him in that chapter? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK OUT

What are some ways that Christian leaders can build credibility among those who follow them? How do Christian leaders lose credibility? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK IN

Nehemiah prayed, worked, and stayed focused in the face of opposition. Where in your life do you need to keep moving forward despite distractions or criticism?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



WEEK 5

# IF I HAD MORE TIME

WITH SPECIAL GUEST

**JOEL KLATT**



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



***Great leaders  
are authentic,  
clear, and  
consistent.  
If you lack one,  
you erode trust.***

**JOEL KLATT** is the lead college football and NFL draft analyst for FOX Sports. He hosts *The Joel Klatt Show* podcast and is a former standout quarterback at the University of Colorado.







Unwavering

Original Artwork by Chloe Nguyen

by Sam Davidson

# Obedience in Uncertainty

When Nehemiah answered God's call to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, he did so despite resistance. He pushed through threats, discouragement, and doubts, just as believers today continue to face spiritual and practical obstacles when walking in God's purpose for their lives. Anay Jimenez, High School Ministry (HSM) Coordinator at Mariners Irvine, shares how saying "yes" to God's call, even in the midst of fear and uncertainty, led her to a role where she makes a meaningful impact in the lives of high school students.

**Q: When did you feel a strong conviction to follow a certain path, and how did you originally respond to that calling?**

There have been different points in time when I've felt God's calling and faced some sort of obstacle during and/or thereafter. The most recent is joining the staff at Mariners. Even when a friend told me she was moving into a new role from her position as HSM coordinator, it didn't necessarily click like, "Oh, there's an opportunity here." Instead, time kept on, and I continued to serve as a volunteer with HSM. But increasingly, I continued to feel this knock on my heart that God was calling me to apply. I would talk to my husband about it, and he was so supportive.





**Q: What major obstacles or opposition did you face while trying to follow God's commands?**

As time continued and we kept talking and praying about it, there was this essence of discouragement. Unfortunate events would take place: my car broke down; there was an issue where we had to relocate to a nearby hotel; and my dog got a horrible hotspot on his face. There were things that really challenged me and threatened to keep me from applying. But even then, I continued to serve and think of the possibility of more. And on top of it all, the thing that really could have stopped me was that I was afraid. I was afraid of being rejected by people I was currently serving alongside and who would later become colleagues. I was scared to try and fail.

**Q: How did people in your life either support or resist your obedience to God's calling, and how did that impact your journey?**

I talked with a friend and leader and shared how I wanted to join staff, and she ended up talking to a staff member. I prayed, applied, and during the interview process, I was promoted at my previous job, which made me doubt what I was doing, stepping into something else, something different. But praying through it all and talking with my husband, family, and friends, I just couldn't shake this call to be here.

**Q: Were there external and/or internal voices that tried to tear you down or caused doubt in your conviction?**

Some days I still feel afraid of failing—of not being enough. Those lies the enemy tells us are loud and prevalent. There are lies I hear that say, "I'm undeserving, ill-equipped, imperfect, and different in a way that is bad." And some days I believe it. No one would ever say these things to me, but sometimes, this internal voice says, "This isn't enough; you're not enough."

**Q: How do you handle discouragement, fear, or the temptation to give up?**

When I find myself deeply discouraged in dark moments, I lean on my God, who sent His Son to die for my sins. Who said He knows I'm imperfect and broken, and that's why I need Him. Who has made me righteous and blameless before the Father. Who says I'm enough simply because He loves me and has deemed it so. I lean on my community; the people who help me hear the truth when the lies are too loud. I'm grateful for the Lord, and I give myself to Him in service of our church. And I hope my team, who I'm with day in and day out, sees my devotion to them, too.

# What is God Calling You to Do?

We are all blessed with a calling. We may not always feel qualified or worthy, but we are exactly what God is looking for. For such a time as this.

When Nehemiah heard of the pitiful condition of Jerusalem's broken walls, burned gates, and disgraced people, he wept. Nehemiah was in the right place at the right time. His position as a cupbearer, confidant, and advisor to the king set the stage for his God-given mission.

Being a man of godly character, he sought the Lord in prayer and fasting before he approached the king for assistance. Nehemiah knew the magnitude of the challenge required more than human planning; it demanded divine intervention. Though he had a secure position, Nehemiah risked everything to help a distraught and rebellious people. He found favor with the pagan king, who financed the entire operation. His dogged determination and resilience not only shaped the physical condition of the wall but also the spiritual restoration of a people.

As children of the Most High, are we willing to leave our comfort zone to help restore and rebuild broken lives?

Like Nehemiah, are we seeking divine guidance first, in all our decisions and endeavors, or are we taking matters into our hands?

Like Nehemiah, I had to relocate to find my true purpose. When I landed my dream job, prayer continued to be my driving force. Before I entered the workplace, I prepared myself mentally and spiritually.

On a given day, I met people from different backgrounds and different parts of the world. Some were rich and famous, but were still searching for the truth. Some were hurting for various reasons, and some had little purpose or joy. I was burdened for them. I knew I may never see them again, so I took action. I did exactly what God wanted me to do. After work, I hustled to the Christian bookstore, purchased resources filled with godly wisdom, at my own expense, and delivered them to them.





Commitment,  
Burden, Growth  
Original Artwork  
by Byul Chung

No one knew of my mission. For 16 years, God used me at a secular corporation to do His divine will. Had I not prepared myself, I would not have seen these opportunities.

Being faithful where you are planted will prepare you for greater things. Years later, God used me again when I joined the Prayer Team at Mariners. The joy of the Lord has always been my strength.

No calling comes without sacrifice or challenges. Nehemiah faced external threats and internal strife, yet he remained faithful through adversity and opposition.

What is God calling you to do?

You are chosen to bring honor to Him and others. Like Nehemiah, have a clear vision, plan strategically, and work hard. Trials will come to distract and deter you, but remain focused and faithful—because God is with you.



# TRANSFORMATION

W E E K 0 6







## NEHEMIAH 8

**8** all the people gathered together at the square in front of the Water Gate. They asked the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses that the LORD had given Israel. <sup>2</sup> On the first day of the seventh month, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly of men, women, and all who could listen with understanding. <sup>3</sup> While he was facing the square in front of the Water Gate, he read out of it from daybreak until noon before the men, the women, and those who could understand. All the people listened attentively to the book of the law. <sup>4</sup> The scribe Ezra stood on a high wooden platform made for this purpose. Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah stood beside him on his right; to his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hash-baddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam. <sup>5</sup> Ezra opened the book in full view of all the people, since he was elevated above everyone. As he opened it, all the people stood up. <sup>6</sup> Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and with their hands uplifted all the people said, “Amen, Amen!” Then they knelt low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

<sup>7</sup> Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah, who were Levites, explained the law to the people as they stood in their places. <sup>8</sup> They read out of the book of the law of God, translating and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was read. <sup>9</sup> Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to all of them, “This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law. <sup>10</sup> Then he said to them, “Go and eat what is rich, drink what is sweet, and send portions to those who have nothing prepared, since today is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, because the joy of the Lord is your strength.” <sup>11</sup> And the Levites quieted all the people, saying, “Be still, since today is holy. Don’t grieve.” <sup>12</sup> Then all the people began to eat and drink, send portions, and have a great celebration, because they had understood the words that were explained to them.

### FESTIVAL OF SHELTERS OBSERVED

<sup>13</sup> On the second day, the family heads of all the people, along with the priests and Levites, assembled before the scribe Ezra to study the words of the law. <sup>14</sup> They found written in the law how the LORD had commanded through Moses that the Israelites should dwell in shelters during the festival of the seventh month. <sup>15</sup> So they proclaimed and spread this news throughout their towns and in Jerusalem, saying, “Go out to the hill country and bring back branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make shelters, just as it is written.” <sup>16</sup> The people went out, brought back branches, and made



shelters for themselves on each of their rooftops and courtyards, the court of the house of God, the square by the Water Gate, and the square by the Ephraim Gate. <sup>17</sup> The whole community that had returned from exile made shelters and lived in them. The Israelites had not celebrated like this from the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day. And there was tremendous joy. <sup>18</sup> Ezra read out of the book of the law of God every day, from the first day to the last. The Israelites celebrated the festival for seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the ordinance.

## 9 NATIONAL CONFESSION OF SIN

On the twenty-fourth day of this month the Israelites assembled; they were fasting, wearing sackcloth, and had put dust on their heads. <sup>2</sup> Those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all foreigners, and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their ancestors. <sup>3</sup> While they stood in their places, they read from the book of the law of the LORD their God for a fourth of the day and spent another fourth of the day in confession and worship of the LORD their God. <sup>4</sup> Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani stood on the raised platform built for the Levites and cried out loudly to the LORD their God. <sup>5</sup> Then the Levites—Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah—said, “Stand up. Blessed be the LORD your God from everlasting to everlasting.”

Blessed be your glorious name,  
and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise.

- <sup>6</sup> You, LORD, are the only God.  
You created the heavens,  
the highest heavens with all their stars,  
the earth and all that is on it,  
the seas and all that is in them.  
You give life to all of them,  
and all the stars of heaven worship you.

- <sup>7</sup> You, the LORD,  
are the God who chose Abram  
and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans,  
and changed his name to Abraham.

## NEHEMIAH 9

- <sup>8</sup> You found his heart faithful in your sight,  
and made a covenant with him  
to give the land of the Canaanites,  
Hethites, Amorites, Perizzites,  
Jebusites, and Girgashites—  
to give it to his descendants.  
You have fulfilled your promise,  
for you are righteous.
- <sup>9</sup> You saw the oppression of our ancestors in Egypt  
and heard their cry at the Red Sea.
- <sup>10</sup> You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh,  
all his officials, and all the people of his land,  
for you knew how arrogantly they treated our ancestors.  
You made a name for yourself  
that endures to this day.
- <sup>11</sup> You divided the sea before them,  
and they crossed through it on dry ground.  
You hurled their pursuers into the depths  
like a stone into raging water.
- <sup>12</sup> You led them with a pillar of cloud by day,  
and with a pillar of fire by night,  
to illuminate the way they should go.
- <sup>13</sup> You came down on Mount Sinai,  
and spoke to them from heaven.  
You gave them impartial ordinances, reliable instructions,  
and good statutes and commands.
- <sup>14</sup> You revealed your holy Sabbath to them,  
and gave them commands, statutes, and instruction  
through your servant Moses.
- <sup>15</sup> You provided bread from heaven for their hunger;  
you brought them water from the rock for their thirst.  
You told them to go in and possess the land  
you had sworn to give them.



- <sup>16</sup> But our ancestors acted arrogantly;  
they became stiff-necked and did not listen to your commands.
- <sup>17</sup> They refused to listen  
and did not remember your wonders  
you performed among them.  
They became stiff-necked and appointed a leader  
to return to their slavery in Egypt.  
But you are a forgiving God,  
gracious and compassionate,  
slow to anger and abounding in faithful love,  
and you did not abandon them.
- <sup>18</sup> Even after they had cast an image of a calf  
for themselves and said,  
“This is your god who brought you out of Egypt,”  
and they had committed terrible blasphemies,
- <sup>19</sup> you did not abandon them in the wilderness  
because of your great compassion.  
During the day the pillar of cloud  
never turned away from them,  
guiding them on their journey.  
And during the night the pillar of fire  
illuminated the way they should go.
- <sup>20</sup> You sent your good Spirit to instruct them.  
You did not withhold your manna from their mouths,  
and you gave them water for their thirst.
- <sup>21</sup> You provided for them in the wilderness forty years,  
and they lacked nothing.  
Their clothes did not wear out,  
and their feet did not swell.
- <sup>22</sup> You gave them kingdoms and peoples  
and established boundaries for them.  
They took possession  
of the land of King Sihon of Heshbon  
and of the land of King Og of Bashan.

## NEHEMIAH 9

- <sup>23</sup> You multiplied their descendants  
like the stars of the sky  
and brought them to the land  
you told their ancestors to go in and possess.
- <sup>24</sup> So their descendants went in and possessed the land:  
You subdued the Canaanites who inhabited the land before them  
and handed their kings and the surrounding peoples over to them,  
to do as they pleased with them.
- <sup>25</sup> They captured fortified cities and fertile land  
and took possession of well-supplied houses,  
cisterns cut out of rock, vineyards,  
olive groves, and fruit trees in abundance.  
They ate, were filled,  
became prosperous, and delighted in your great goodness.
- <sup>26</sup> But they were disobedient and rebelled against you.  
They flung your law behind their backs  
and killed your prophets  
who warned them  
in order to turn them back to you.  
They committed terrible blasphemies.
- <sup>27</sup> So you handed them over to their enemies,  
who oppressed them.  
In their time of distress, they cried out to you,  
and you heard from heaven.  
In your abundant compassion  
you gave them deliverers, who rescued them  
from the power of their enemies.
- <sup>28</sup> But as soon as they had relief,  
they again did what was evil in your sight.  
So you abandoned them to the power of their enemies,  
who dominated them.  
When they cried out to you again,  
you heard from heaven and rescued them  
many times in your compassion.



- 29 You warned them to turn back to your law,  
but they acted arrogantly  
and would not obey your commands.  
They sinned against your ordinances,  
which a person will live by if he does them.  
They stubbornly resisted,  
stiffened their necks, and would not obey.
- 30 You were patient with them for many years,  
and your Spirit warned them through your prophets,  
but they would not listen.  
Therefore, you handed them over to the surrounding peoples.
- 31 However, in your abundant compassion,  
you did not destroy them or abandon them,  
for you are a gracious and compassionate God.
- 32 So now, our God—the great, mighty,  
and awe-inspiring God who keeps his gracious covenant—  
do not view lightly all the hardships that have afflicted us,  
our kings and leaders,  
our priests and prophets,  
our ancestors and all your people,  
from the days of the Assyrian kings until today.
- 33 You are righteous concerning all that has happened to us,  
because you have acted faithfully,  
while we have acted wickedly.
- 34 Our kings, leaders, priests, and ancestors  
did not obey your law  
or listen to your commands  
and warnings you gave them.
- 35 When they were in their kingdom,  
with your abundant goodness that you gave them,  
and in the spacious and fertile land you set before them,  
they would not serve you or turn from their wicked ways.

## NEHEMIAH 10

- <sup>36</sup> Here we are today,  
slaves in the land you gave our ancestors  
so that they could enjoy its fruit and its goodness.  
Here we are—slaves in it!
- <sup>37</sup> Its abundant harvest goes to the kings  
you have set over us,  
because of our sins.  
They rule over our bodies  
and our livestock as they please.  
We are in great distress.

### ISRAEL'S VOW OF FAITHFULNESS

<sup>38</sup> In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement in writing on a sealed document containing the names of our leaders, Levites, and priests.

- 10** Those whose seals were on the document were the governor Nehemiah son of Hacaliah, and Zedekiah,
- <sup>2</sup> Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,
- <sup>3</sup> Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah,
- <sup>4</sup> Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,
- <sup>5</sup> Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,
- <sup>6</sup> Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,
- <sup>7</sup> Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,
- <sup>8</sup> Maaziah, Bilgai, and Shemaiah.  
These were the priests.
- <sup>9</sup> The Levites were  
Jeshua son of Azaniah,  
Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel,
- <sup>10</sup> and their brothers  
Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,
- <sup>11</sup> Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah,
- <sup>12</sup> Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,
- <sup>13</sup> Hodiah, Bani, and Beninu.



- <sup>14</sup> The heads of the people were  
 Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani,  
<sup>15</sup> Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,  
<sup>16</sup> Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,  
<sup>17</sup> Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur,  
<sup>18</sup> Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai,  
<sup>19</sup> Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,  
<sup>20</sup> Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,  
<sup>21</sup> Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua,  
<sup>22</sup> Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,  
<sup>23</sup> Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub,  
<sup>24</sup> Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek,  
<sup>25</sup> Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,  
<sup>26</sup> Ahijah, Hanan, Anan,  
<sup>27</sup> Malluch, Harim, Baanah.

<sup>28</sup> The rest of the people—the priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, and temple servants, along with their wives, sons, and daughters, everyone who is able to understand and who has separated themselves from the surrounding peoples to obey the law of God—  
<sup>29</sup> join with their noble brothers and commit themselves with a sworn oath to follow the law of God given through God’s servant Moses and to obey carefully all the commands, ordinances, and statutes of the LORD our Lord.

#### DETAILS OF THE VOW

<sup>30</sup> We will not give our daughters in marriage to the surrounding peoples and will not take their daughters as wives for our sons.

<sup>31</sup> When the surrounding peoples bring merchandise or any kind of grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or a holy day. We will also leave the land uncultivated in the seventh year and will cancel every debt.

<sup>32</sup> We will impose the following commands on ourselves:

To give an eighth of an ounce of silver yearly for the service of the house of our God:  
<sup>33</sup> the bread displayed before the LORD, the daily grain offering, the regular burnt

offering, the Sabbath and New Moon offerings, the appointed festivals, the holy things, the sin offerings to atone for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God.

<sup>34</sup> We have cast lots among the priests, Levites, and people for the donation of wood by our ancestral families at the appointed times each year. They are to bring the wood to our God's house to burn on the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the law.

<sup>35</sup> We will bring the firstfruits of our land and of every fruit tree to the LORD's house year by year. <sup>36</sup> We will also bring the firstborn of our sons and our livestock, as prescribed by the law, and will bring the firstborn of our herds and flocks to the house of our God, to the priests who serve in our God's house. <sup>37</sup> We will bring a loaf from our first batch of dough to the priests at the storerooms of the house of our God. We will also bring the firstfruits of our grain offerings, of every fruit tree, and of the new wine and fresh oil. A tenth of our land's produce belongs to the Levites, for the Levites are to collect the one-tenth offering in all our agricultural towns. <sup>38</sup> A priest from Aaron's descendants is to accompany the Levites when they collect the tenth, and the Levites are to take a tenth of this offering to the storerooms of the treasury in the house of our God. <sup>39</sup> For the Israelites and the Levites are to bring the contributions of grain, new wine, and fresh oil to the storerooms where the articles of the sanctuary are kept and where the priests who minister are, along with the gatekeepers and singers. We will not neglect the house of our God.

## 11 RESETTLING JERUSALEM

Now the leaders of the people stayed in Jerusalem, and the rest of the people cast lots for one out of ten to come and live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the other nine-tenths remained in their towns. <sup>2</sup> The people blessed all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> These are the heads of the province who stayed in Jerusalem (but in the villages of Judah each lived on his own property in their towns—the Israelites, priests, Levites, temple servants, and descendants of Solomon's servants— <sup>4</sup> while some of the descendants of Judah and Benjamin settled in Jerusalem):

Judah's descendants:

Athaiah son of Uziah, son of Zechariah, son of Amariah, son of Shephatiah, son of Mahalalel, of Perez's descendants; <sup>5</sup> and Maaseiah son of Baruch, son of Col-hozeh,

son of Hazaiah, son of Adaiah, son of Joiarib, son of Zechariah, a descendant of the Shilonite. <sup>6</sup> The total number of Perez's descendants, who settled in Jerusalem, was 468 capable men.

<sup>7</sup> These were Benjamin's descendants:

Sallu son of Meshullam, son of Joed, son of Pedaiah, son of Kolaiah, son of Maaseiah, son of Ithiel, son of Jeshaiah, <sup>8</sup> and after him Gabbai and Sallai: 928. <sup>9</sup> Joel son of Zichri was the officer over them, and Judah son of Hassenuah was second in command over the city.

<sup>10</sup> The priests:

Jedaiah son of Joiarib, Jachin, and <sup>11</sup> Seraiah son of Hilkiyah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, the chief official of God's temple, <sup>12</sup> and their relatives who did the work at the temple: 822. Adaiah son of Jeroham, son of Pelaliah, son of Amzi, son of Zechariah, son of Pashhur, son of Malchijah <sup>13</sup> and his relatives, the heads of families: 242. Amashsai son of Azarel, son of Ahzai, son of Meshillemoth, son of Immer, <sup>14</sup> and their relatives, capable men: 128. Zabdiel son of Haggadolim, was their chief.

<sup>15</sup> The Levites:

Shemaiah son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, son of Bunni; <sup>16</sup> and Shabbethai and Jozabad, from the heads of the Levites, who supervised the work outside the house of God; <sup>17</sup> Mattaniah son of Mica, son of Zabdi, son of Asaph, the one who began the thanksgiving in prayer; Bakbukiah, second among his relatives; and Abda son of Shammua, son of Galal, son of Jeduthun. <sup>18</sup> All the Levites in the holy city: 284.

<sup>19</sup> The gatekeepers:

Akkub, Talmon, and their relatives, who guarded the city gates: 172.

<sup>20</sup> The rest of Israel, the priests, and the Levites were in all the villages of Judah, each on his own inherited property. <sup>21</sup> The temple servants lived on Ophel; Ziha and Gishpa supervised the temple servants.



## NEHEMIAH 12

### THE LEVITES AND PRIESTS

<sup>22</sup> The leader of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi son of Bani, son of Hashabiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Mica, of the descendants of Asaph, who were singers for the service of God's house. <sup>23</sup> There was, in fact, a command of the king regarding them, and an ordinance regulating the singers' daily tasks. <sup>24</sup> Pethahiah son of Meshezabel, of the descendants of Zerah son of Judah, was the king's agent in every matter concerning the people.

<sup>25</sup> As for the farming settlements with their fields:

Some of Judah's descendants lived in Kiriath-arba  
and Dibon and their surrounding villages, and Jekabzeel and its settlements;

<sup>26</sup> in Jeshua, Moladah, Beth-pelet,

<sup>27</sup> Hazar-shual, and Beer-sheba and its surrounding villages;

<sup>28</sup> in Ziklag and Meconah and its surrounding villages;

<sup>29</sup> in En-rimmon, Zorah, Jarmuth, and

<sup>30</sup> Zanoah and Adullam with their settlements;

in Lachish with its fields and Azekah and its surrounding villages.

So they settled from Beer-sheba to Hinnom Valley.

<sup>31</sup> Benjamin's descendants:

from Geba, Michmash, Aija,

and Bethel and its surrounding villages,

<sup>32</sup> Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah,

<sup>33</sup> Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim,

<sup>34</sup> Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat,

<sup>35</sup> Lod, and Ono, in Craftsmen's Valley.

<sup>36</sup> Some of the Judean divisions of Levites were in Benjamin.

**12** These are the priests and Levites who went up with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and with Jeshua:

Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,

<sup>2</sup> Amariah, Malluch, Hattush,

<sup>3</sup> Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,

<sup>4</sup> Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah,

<sup>5</sup> Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah,

<sup>6</sup> Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah,

<sup>7</sup> Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, Jedaiah.

These were the heads of the priests and their relatives in the days of Jeshua.

<sup>8</sup> The Levites:

Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel,

Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah—

he and his relatives were in charge of the songs of praise.

<sup>9</sup> Bakbukiah, Unni, and their relatives stood opposite them in the services.

<sup>10</sup> Jeshua fathered Joiakim,

Joiakim fathered Eliashib,

Eliashib fathered Joiada,

<sup>11</sup> Joiada fathered Jonathan,

and Jonathan fathered Jaddua.

<sup>12</sup> In the days of Joiakim, the heads of the priestly families were

Meraiah of Seraiah,

Hananiah of Jeremiah,

<sup>13</sup> Meshullam of Ezra,

Jehohanan of Amariah,

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan of Malluchi,

Joseph of Shebaniah,

<sup>15</sup> Adna of Harim,

Helkai of Meraioth,

<sup>16</sup> Zechariah of Iddo,

Meshullam of Ginnethon,

<sup>17</sup> Zichri of Abijah,

Piltai of Moadiah, of Miniamin,

<sup>18</sup> Shammua of Bilgah,

## NEHEMIAH 12

Jehonathan	of Shemaiah,
<sup>19</sup> Mattenai	of Joiarib,
Uzzi	of Jedaiah,
<sup>20</sup> Kallai	of Sallai,
Eber	of Amok,
<sup>21</sup> Hashabiah	of Hilkiah,
and Nethanel	of Jedaiah.

<sup>22</sup> In the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua, the heads of the families of the Levites and priests were recorded while Darius the Persian ruled. <sup>23</sup> Levi's descendants, the family heads, were recorded in the Book of the Historical Events during the days of Johanan son of Eliashib. <sup>24</sup> The heads of the Levites—Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua son of Kadmiel, along with their relatives opposite them—gave praise and thanks, division by division, as David the man of God had prescribed. <sup>25</sup> This included Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, and Obadiah. Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers who guarded the store-rooms at the city gates. <sup>26</sup> These served in the days of Joiakim son of Jeshua, son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and Ezra the priest and scribe.

### DEDICATION OF THE WALL

<sup>27</sup> At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, they sent for the Levites wherever they lived and brought them to Jerusalem to celebrate the joyous dedication with thanksgiving and singing accompanied by cymbals, harps, and lyres. <sup>28</sup> The singers gathered from the region around Jerusalem, from the settlements of the Netophathites, <sup>29</sup> from Beth-gilgal, and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth, for they had built settlements for themselves around Jerusalem. <sup>30</sup> After the priests and Levites had purified themselves, they purified the people, the city gates, and the wall.

<sup>31</sup> Then I brought the leaders of Judah up on top of the wall, and I appointed two large processions that gave thanks. One went to the right on the wall, toward the Dung Gate. <sup>32</sup> Hoshaiiah and half the leaders of Judah followed, <sup>33</sup> along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, <sup>34</sup> Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah, <sup>35</sup> and some of the priests' sons with trumpets, and Zechariah son of Jonathan, son of Shemaiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Micaiah, son of Zaccur, son of Asaph followed <sup>36</sup> as well as his relatives—Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David, the man of God. Ezra the scribe went in front of them. <sup>37</sup> At the Fountain Gate they climbed the steps



of the city of David on the ascent of the wall and went above the house of David to the Water Gate on the east.

<sup>38</sup> The second thanksgiving procession went to the left, and I followed it with half the people along the top of the wall, past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall, <sup>39</sup> above the Ephraim Gate, and by the Old Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, and the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep Gate. They stopped at the Gate of the Guard. <sup>40</sup> The two thanksgiving processions stood in the house of God. So did I and half of the officials accompanying me, <sup>41</sup> as well as the priests:

Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin,  
Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah,  
and Hananiah, with trumpets;  
<sup>42</sup> and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar,  
Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer.

Then the singers sang, with Jezrahiah as the leader. <sup>43</sup> On that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced because God had given them great joy. The women and children also celebrated, and Jerusalem's rejoicing was heard far away.

#### SUPPORT OF THE LEVITES' MINISTRY

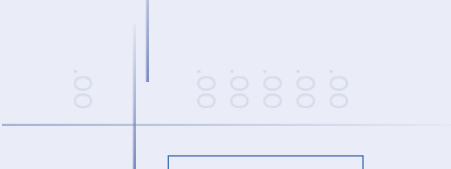
<sup>44</sup> On that same day men were placed in charge of the rooms that housed the supplies, contributions, firstfruits, and tenths. The legally required portions for the priests and Levites were gathered from the village fields, because Judah was grateful to the priests and Levites who were serving. <sup>45</sup> They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, along with the singers and gatekeepers, as David and his son Solomon had prescribed. <sup>46</sup> For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there were heads of the singers and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. <sup>47</sup> So in the days of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, all Israel contributed the daily portions for the singers and gatekeepers. They also set aside daily portions for the Levites, and the Levites set aside daily portions for Aaron's descendants.

SERMON NOTES

Dotted lines for sermon notes.

## SERMON NOTES





# LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

RHYTHM REMINDER



Sacrificial  
Generosity

LEAN IN

What's one habit or belief you've changed recently—big or small? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK DOWN

**Read Nehemiah 8 (pg. 106-107).** In this chapter, how do the people respond when Ezra reads the law out loud? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK OUT

What kinds of messages are people being told today about who they are—and how do those messages shape behavior? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LOOK IN

Is it harder for you to change a belief or a behavior? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

WEEK 6

# IF I HAD MORE TIME



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

WITH SPECIAL GUEST

**STEVE GRAVES**



*Too small of a  
vision—that's  
the mistake I see  
leaders make  
most often.*

**STEVE GRAVES** is a strategist, CEO advisor, author, and served as a Leadership Coach for Eric during his 7 years as Senior Vice President at Lifeway Christian Resources. He has authored twenty books and worked with thousands of leaders, weaving themes of strategy, leadership, and faith to help people flourish in their lives and work.

by Sam Davidson

# Forgiveness in the Face of Fear



Forgiveness can feel like rebuilding a wall that someone else tore down. The call to forgive those who have hurt and betrayed me, as expressed in Colossians 3:13, has often seemed like a more daunting task than rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in the book of Nehemiah.

In the Old Testament, God called Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, all the while knowing that it was not a simple task. Nehemiah consistently faced opposition from surrounding enemies, fellow Jews, and his own internal fears. Similarly, I have found that God's commands, especially regarding forgiveness, are not easy to obey. Jesus Himself is well acquainted with the cost and pain of forgiveness, yet still demands that His children "be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ" (Ephesians 4:32).

Throughout my life, I have consistently struggled with forgiveness, and the reality of sin means that there is always hurt to let go of and more pain to forgive. Society and my





own deceitful heart have reinforced the message that holding grudges is a successful form of self-defense and a way to "keep peace." But after years of refusing to forgive and clutching onto a desire for revenge, I realized that there was no peace while I remained in debt to my own pain.

The Bible has made it abundantly clear that forgiveness is the only way to the Prince of Peace. Jesus chose to forgive the ones who put Him to death. Jesus chose to forgive me. And yet I have struggled to let go of the most mild of offenses compared to crucifixion, for the simple reason of fear. Fear of further hurt, fear of losing the "moral upper hand," fear of losing my justification for anger, and fear of reopening wounds, which were hastily stitched closed before they could be properly cleansed.

Logically, forgiveness is an easy choice. If Jesus, my perfect Savior, can forgive the people who crucified Him, then I, a sinful



*The Book of the  
Law is Read*

Original Artwork by Bill  
West & the Men of Man  
Camp 2025

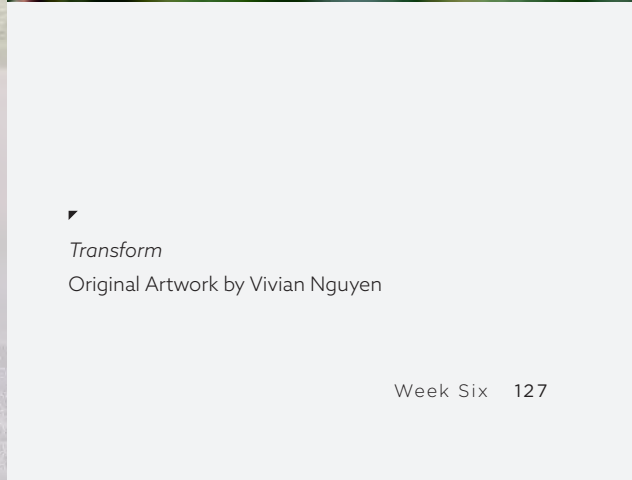


being, can forgive those who are no worse than myself. Spiritually, however, freedom of the heart requires a Redeemer, a Healer, and His “perfect love that drives out fear” (1 John 4:18). My fear and inability to forgive wasn’t the end of my story because I had a Savior who poured out His love for me on the cross so that I didn’t have to hold on to the pain of my past.

I couldn’t have forgiven on my own, just as Nehemiah couldn’t have rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem on his own. God didn’t issue His commands because He believed that we could succeed according to our own strength, but because He knew we are “able to do all things through Him who strengthens [us]” (Philippians 4:13). The things that we are unable to do on our own are no match for God’s goodness and faithfulness. The fear and struggle of rebuilding—whether a wall or a relationship—are no match for His perfect love. We no longer need to cling to the ruins of the past, but to the Savior who makes all things new in His perfect time.







Original Artwork by Vivian Nguyen



The Work of My Hands  
Nehemiah reveals an authentic  
alchemy of work and faith  
in the ruins and the rebuild.  
he names names, remembers dates,  
records gates and walls — and who s  
It's meticulous, passionate, personal  
Part engineer, part emotion —  
Nehemiah is holy.

by Lorraine O'Keefe

# The Work of My Hands

*A Thematic Reflection  
on the Memoirs  
of Nehemiah*

Nehemiah reveals an authentic  
alchemy of work and faith  
in the ruins and the rebuild.  
He names names, remembers dates,  
records gates and walls—and who stands where.  
It's meticulous, passionate, personal.  
Part engineer, part emotion—  
honest, humble, holy.

I want to do more than  
write of it—I want to embrace it.  
So I pick up a pen. My hand  
cramps almost immediately.  
Maybe that's the point.

## **He weeps first.**

Nehemiah 1:4

Before plans. Before pages of papyrus.  
Before progress.  
He sits down and weeps.  
Days of it. Not a productive pause.  
Weeping, fasting, mourning.  
Not out of despair—but devotion.  
He lets the heartbreak settle.  
I usually try to outrun it.  
What if I stay long enough  
in the ruins to hear God speak?



*Back to Jerusalem*

Original Artwork by Susie Sprinkel Hudson

### **He does it afraid.**

Nehemiah 2:2-3

The fear doesn't leave.  
He just speaks anyway.  
Months of prayer meet  
one terrifying moment—  
and he doesn't waste it.  
God provides—in Nehemiah's ask...  
and the answer.  
He does it afraid.  
Sometimes, that's what trust looks like.

### **He moves carefully.**

Nehemiah 2:11-12

When he finally arrives, Nehemiah  
doesn't shout directions.  
He walks the walls, nearly alone. At night.  
He listens to the stones, the silence.  
Sometimes leading doesn't look  
like talking.  
It looks like walking amidst  
broken things...quietly.  
I don't do quiet well. I like helping, fixing.  
But maybe some nights, God just wants  
me to see—not to fix, but to feel what  
He feels.



**He invites.**

Nehemiah 2:17

When he speaks, it's not a command.  
It's a call to rise and rebuild.  
He doesn't say, "Let me."  
There's something about shared work  
that is sacred. And risky.  
People disappoint. People don't show up.  
But Nehemiah chooses  
togetherness anyway.  
In the overwhelm, I ask—might I?

**He works.**

Nehemiah 3:1

Not a metaphor—but a movement.  
Perfume makers, priests, sons, daughters,  
guards—they all take up stones.  
Nehemiah doesn't hover  
over them with his blueprints.  
He builds alongside.  
Neighbors, side by side.  
Families, brick by brick.  
There's a dignity in doing  
something with your hands  
that no title can give.  
My hands used to show it—  
the finger calluses and ink smudges.  
Perhaps it's time to get them back.

**He battles while he builds.**

Nehemiah 4:16–17

One hand for tools. One for weapons.  
That's the part I resist.  
I want the work to be peaceful, respected,  
and often, even admired.  
But Nehemiah's story reminds me:  
Sometimes obedience draws fire.  
The wall goes up amid mockery.  
Maybe opposition doesn't mean  
I'm doing something wrong.  
Maybe it means I'm doing something holy.  
And still, the wall rises.



**He gives.**

Nehemiah 5:14-15

Nehemiah has every right to tax the people.  
To take the perks of his position.  
Unlike former governors...he doesn't.  
He feeds people from his own table.  
Because leading means serving.  
And generosity isn't optional—it's worship.  
I'm not sure I always give  
without counting the cost.

**He cleanses.**

Nehemiah 13:8

Even after the wall stands strong,  
Nehemiah finds crumbling compromise.  
Tobiah in temple rooms.  
Business on the Sabbath.  
Neglect in the courts.  
He doesn't just shake his head  
and write it off. He cleans house.  
Tosses things. Closes doors. Reinstates boundaries.  
Because sometimes building also means dismantling.  
I want to welcome God in—but am I willing to clear space?

**So, I write.**

Nehemiah 6:9 & 13:14

With fingers that cramp and a mind that wanders,  
I write because I need to remember...  
That faith isn't just belief—  
it's a burden that moves me.  
That the holy work is hard, ordinary,  
unglamorous, unfinished.  
That maybe, just maybe, God is still  
asking me to pick up a stone.  
And do the next thing.  
Brick. By. Brick.





# RESOLVE

W E E K 0 7







# 13 NEHEMIAH'S FURTHER REFORMS

At that time the book of Moses was read publicly to the people. The command was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, <sup>2</sup> because they did not meet the Israelites with food and water. Instead, they hired Balaam against them to curse them, but our God turned the curse into a blessing. <sup>3</sup> When they heard the law, they separated all those of mixed descent from Israel.

<sup>4</sup> Now before this, the priest Eliashib had been put in charge of the storerooms of the house of our God. He was a relative of Tobiah <sup>5</sup> and had prepared a large room for him where they had previously stored the grain offerings, the frankincense, the articles, and the tenths of grain, new wine, and fresh oil prescribed for the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, along with the contributions for the priests.

<sup>6</sup> While all this was happening, I was not in Jerusalem, because I had returned to King Artaxerxes of Babylon in the thirty-second year of his reign. It was only later that I asked the king for a leave of absence <sup>7</sup> so I could return to Jerusalem. Then I discovered the evil that Eliashib had done on behalf of Tobiah by providing him a room in the courts of God's house. <sup>8</sup> I was greatly displeased and threw all of Tobiah's household possessions out of the room. <sup>9</sup> I ordered that the rooms be purified, and I had the articles of the house of God restored there, along with the grain offering and frankincense. <sup>10</sup> I also found out that because the portions for the Levites had not been given, each of the Levites and the singers performing the service had gone back to his own field. <sup>11</sup> Therefore, I rebuked the officials, asking, "Why has the house of God been neglected?" I gathered the Levites and singers together and stationed them at their posts. <sup>12</sup> Then all Judah brought a tenth of the grain, new wine, and fresh oil into the storehouses. <sup>13</sup> I appointed as treasurers over the storehouses the priest Shelemiah, the scribe Zadok, and Pedaiah of the Levites, with Hanan son of Zaccur, son of Mattaniah to assist them, because they were considered trustworthy. They were responsible for the distribution to their colleagues.

<sup>14</sup> Remember me for this, my God, and don't erase the deeds of faithful love I have done for the house of my God and for its services.

<sup>15</sup> At that time I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath. They were also bringing in stores of grain and loading them on donkeys, along with wine, grapes, and figs. All kinds of goods were being brought to Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. So I warned them against selling food on that day. <sup>16</sup> The Tyrians living there were importing fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah in Jerusalem.



<sup>17</sup> I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this evil you are doing—profaning the Sabbath day? <sup>18</sup> Didn’t your ancestors do the same, so that our God brought all this disaster on us and on this city? And now you are rekindling his anger against Israel by profaning the Sabbath!”

<sup>19</sup> When shadows began to fall on the city gates of Jerusalem just before the Sabbath, I gave orders that the city gates be closed and not opened until after the Sabbath. I posted some of my men at the gates, so that no goods could enter during the Sabbath day. <sup>20</sup> Once or twice the merchants and those who sell all kinds of goods camped outside Jerusalem, <sup>21</sup> but I warned them, “Why are you camping in front of the wall? If you do it again, I’ll use force against you.” After that they did not come again on the Sabbath. <sup>22</sup> Then I instructed the Levites to purify themselves and guard the city gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Remember me for this also, my God, and look on me with compassion according to the abundance of your faithful love.

<sup>23</sup> In those days I also saw Jews who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. <sup>24</sup> Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples but could not speak Hebrew. <sup>25</sup> I rebuked them, cursed them, beat some of their men, and pulled out their hair. I forced them to take an oath before God and said, “You must not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters as wives for your sons or yourselves! <sup>26</sup> Didn’t King Solomon of Israel sin in matters like this? There was not a king like him among many nations. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, yet foreign women drew him into sin. <sup>27</sup> Why then should we hear about you doing all this terrible evil and acting unfaithfully against our God by marrying foreign women?” <sup>28</sup> Even one of the sons of Jehoiada, son of the high priest Eliashib, had become a son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite. So I drove him away from me.

<sup>29</sup> Remember them, my God, for defiling the priesthood as well as the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

<sup>30</sup> So I purified them from everything foreign and assigned specific duties to each of the priests and Levites. <sup>31</sup> I also arranged for the donation of wood at the appointed times and for the firstfruits.

Remember me, my God, with favor.

## SERMON NOTES

SERMON NOTES

Dotted lines for writing notes.



# LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

## RHYTHM REMINDER



Repentance

### LEAN IN

When you're feeling disappointed or discouraged, what helps you reset and rest?  
People, prayer, food, sleep? \_\_\_\_\_

### LOOK DOWN

What does Nehemiah's repeated phrase "Remember me, my God, for good" (v. 31)  
tell us about his motivation and his hope? \_\_\_\_\_

### LOOK OUT

How can Christians live out a balance of active love for the world (like Nehemiah)  
*and* deep dependence on God? \_\_\_\_\_

### LOOK IN

Where in your life are you feeling restless right now—like something just isn't how  
it's supposed to be? \_\_\_\_\_

WEEK 7

# IF I HAD MORE TIME

WITH SPECIAL GUEST

**CHRISTINE CAINE**



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



*Sometimes the  
Lord calls you into  
places that make no  
sense economically,  
strategically, or  
humanly—but He  
shows up.*

**CHRISTINE CAINE** is a speaker, author, and activist who has been serving the local church globally for over 30 years. She and her husband, Nick, founded the anti-human trafficking organization, The A21 Campaign, which works at the local, domestic, and international level to end modern-day slavery. She also founded Propel Women, an A21 initiative dedicated to coming alongside women all over the globe to activate their God-given purpose.







by Lexi Ragan

# What We Long For

*“...yet our God turned the curse into a blessing.” (Nehemiah 13:2, ESV)*

Reaches for what lives  
out of reach. Stretches oneself  
to the possibility of what feels  
far from even a finger's grasp—

presence permeates one's desires  
for light that surpasses insight,  
for now, we say, *not yet*, still  
a burning inside exhausted chests

tells us we are close enough  
to keep on reaching as joy  
echoes miles behind us, lingering  
from Jerusalem's singers.

*Longing, we say, because desire  
is full of endless distances,  
though we know eternity is far  
from untouchable, closer than*

a traveling prayer, so until then,  
we ache for unity, inside and out.  
Sheer peace preserved that won't  
be breached before night falls

down; frankly, I am tired  
of evil, of its residue when  
the upright have trail-blazed  
reparations in faith! Yet You

have covered our messes with  
blessings that break like oil over  
dirty feet. How only You are able to turn  
ill-will into invitations of healing

that flow in noticeable doses,  
the remnant are desperate for  
holiness to cure all

dissension, such tension—

put back  
together  
what broke  
like lost  
bricks and mortar  
put us  
back together  
together put  
us back...

Until then, we link arms  
and wait in expectation  
for ruins to be made right.

And what do we pine for most?  
Oh, only to be remembered by  
the One who fashioned Heaven;

this much we know.

~ ~ ~

by Erica Kim

# Called to Lead, Invited to Rest

Enneagram Type 3. Eldest Daughter Syndrome. Type A Personality. These are the labels the world puts on people like me. In simpler terms: ambitious, responsible, overachieving, perfectionistic—and highly likely to burn out.

That drive within me has often felt like an old friend...and sometimes like an enemy. It keeps me going, pushes me toward excellence, and helps me lead effectively. But it also robs me of rest. It whispers that my worth is tied to what I build, solve, or achieve. It tells me that stillness is laziness—that pause equals failure—and guilt and shame flood in when I try to slow down.

I think Nehemiah would understand.

After rebuilding Jerusalem's wall against impossible odds, you'd think he could finally rest. But in Nehemiah 13, he returns to find that spiritual decay has crept back in. The people had slipped into old sins, the temple was neglected, and compromise had taken root in the community. Nehemiah could have said, "I've done enough." Instead, he took up the harder work—not of stones and gates, but of hearts and habits.

His story reminds me that leadership isn't just about vision and execution. It's about faithfulness in every season, even the draining ones. And it's about remembering who the true Builder is—our Almighty God.

In recent years, I've come to realize that my restlessness isn't all bad. God has used it to propel me into important callings—whether it's stepping into new roles in my career, serving here at Mariners on the Creative Arts team, or guiding my two young girls in a world that sometimes feels like it's falling apart. Like Nehemiah, I often feel a holy discontent—a sense that there's more to be done, more to repair, more to rebuild. I believe God honors that drive when it's rooted in love, humility, and obedience.

But it's a double-edged sword. Left unchecked, restlessness becomes a subtle form of striving. I begin measuring my worth by my output. I lose the ability to simply be—to sit with God, to enjoy stillness, to celebrate what He's



▼  
*The Book of the Law is Abandoned*  
Original Artwork by Cedric Dennis



already done. My soul starts running even when my body is still. And I forget: the goal is not just to lead well—but to lead from a place of rest. For me, that's so much easier to say than to do.

In Nehemiah's final chapter, we see him as a tired, seasoned leader—correcting injustice, confronting compromise, and calling people back to holiness. There's no celebration. No applause. No victory lap. Just quiet, gritty faithfulness. I believe his refrain in chapter 13—"Remember me, my God"—isn't a request for recognition. It's the prayer of someone who knows he's not the main character in the story. God is.

God interrupted all our striving. He didn't send a strategy—He sent a Savior. Jesus didn't come to give us a to-do list; He came to say, "It is finished." The birth of Christ is a declaration that we no longer have to hustle for meaning. That we can rest—not just in the rhythm of sleep or Sabbath, but in the deeper soul-rest that only comes from knowing we are already loved, already chosen, already enough, because of Him.

The end-of-year season is filled with busyness and chaos, but the birth of Jesus reminds us to stop striving. The work that matters most has already been done. The walls may crumble again. The people may drift. But the foundation has been laid, once



▼  
*Nehemiah 13:15-18*

Original Artwork by  
Tamara Czerwiak

and for all, in Christ. It was secured not just in His birth, but in His death on the cross, where every ounce of striving was met with grace, and every burden was finished in Him.

I don't want to lose my restlessness. It's a foundational part of who I am. I believe God placed it there for a reason. It keeps me alert to the needs around me and aware that the world is still broken and beautiful and in need of redemption. It gives me urgency, energy, and passion to pursue good work and meaningful change.

But I also don't want to be mastered by it.

So this season, my resolve is this:

To let God use my restlessness—but to let Him *define* my rest.

To *lead* with diligence, but *live* with grace.

To show up faithfully, but stop believing the lie that everything depends on me.

Like Nehemiah, I want to finish well—not just the work I've been called to, but the way I've walked with God in the process. I want my identity to rest securely in Him, not in striving, and to live in the truth that I am already loved, already known, and already enough, in Him.

Foundation of Agapē  
Original Artwork by Kimmy Johnson





City Gates

Original Artwork by  
Jessica Wu







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