

The Rebuilt Life: Studies in Nehemiah

Nehemiah 3 and 4

Suppose someone were to write an article about your involvement in your church. Would the information be interesting to the reader and speak well of you or would it be somewhat boring and critical? What would it reveal about the quality of your work and your ability to work well with others? In his book *Be Determined*, Warren Wiersbe writes: “*When it comes to the work of the Lord, there is no place for spectators or self-appointed advisors and critics; but there is always room for workers*” (Cook Communication Ministries, 1992, p. 37).

Begin your study each day with a word of prayer.

Day One: Surveying the Passage Workers on the Wall

The condition of God’s city brought shame and reproach to His name. The plight of God’s people had left them in poor, unprotected circumstances. Nehemiah faced a daunting challenge with great faith in God, and now the challenge to rise up and rebuild would require a large labor force as well as many resources.

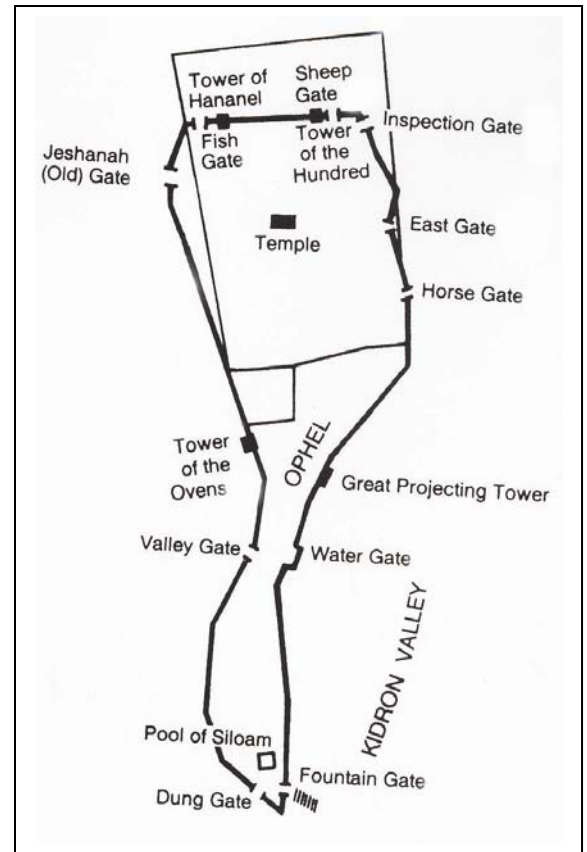
Nehemiah kept a journal that chronicled the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s wall. Here in Nehemiah 3, we see the results of his survey at night, picking up his pen to record on paper the names of those workers who answered the call. First glance at this list may appear repetitive and perhaps even meaningless, but a closer look allows the reader to appreciate that each person’s contribution to the work is significant to the overall success of the task.

1. Read Nehemiah 3:1-32, recording your initial observations . . .
 - a. What does this chapter reveal about Nehemiah’s plan?
 - b. What type of people were involved in the project?
 - c. Did you notice any similarities to God’s people today?
 - d. Did everyone agree to become involved? Who didn’t?

2. Take a few minutes to match specific individuals with their areas of service on the map at right.

3. Where is it that God's people (then and now) should begin working? v. 10

Think of the benefit to God's people if everyone acknowledged *home* as their first priority of service. (What about benefits to the church and even beyond to the world?)



4. Nehemiah evidently felt that one man's efforts merited special mention. Who is he and what is revealed about him in verse 20? (NASB is best.)

5. On a personal note, what is the most ambitious remodeling project you have ever undertaken? What lesson did you learn about yourself through the process?

- Did you have help? If so, what did you learn about teamwork?
- What do you want your work to reveal about you to others?

Remember that the purpose behind all work undertaken for the Lord must be the glory of God—not the organization behind it or the people involved. Jesus Christ fulfilled His purpose and left His followers motivating words to do the same: *"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work You have given Me to do"* (John 17:4).

6. Do you have a work to do for God? See Ephesians 2:10. Has He revealed to you His specific purpose? What will be your response?

Brick upon Brick: (Memory verse) *"So we built the wall . . . for the people had a mind to work."* Nehemiah 4:6

Day Two: Deeper Discoveries—Adding Words to the Wall

Taking a closer look reveals that the focus of this week is first of all on *building*—the process of what to use, where to start, and who to work alongside. The success of the worker’s ability lay in the determination to follow a plan, stay focused on the goal, and work together through distraction or discouragement, keeping in mind that it is all for God’s glory.

1. The word *built* is used six times in Nehemiah 3 (vv. 1, 2, 3, 13, 14, 15). Looking at these verses, what stands out to you?
2. Using the resources you have on hand, write a definition for the word *built*.

The literal translation for *built* means to *rebuild*. Author and preacher George Morrison states: “*For the restoration process no new material was needed. In the debris of the ruined masonry lay all the material required . . . and it seems to me that is always so when the walls of Zion are rebuilt*” (*Morning Sermons*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931, p. 249). In other words, new methods and materials do not guarantee the removal of the church’s reproach. The deeper discovery is to be uncovered by going back again to the truths of Scripture that laid the foundation of faith in the first place. The believer needs to be aware of so called “new ideas” and avenues of thought that may weaken and eventually erode the wall. If an idea isn’t based on God’s Word, it won’t stand the test!

3. What stone of truth have you been able to *recover* through your study?
4. The word *repair* is used some thirty-five times in this text. Using your resources, write a definition.
 - a. What does your definition tell you about the wall?
 - b. Why were the gates of such great importance?

Locks and *bars* are mentioned five times, indicating not only the importance of *doing* God’s work, but also of *protecting* it. Locks and bars are used to protect from what is outside, and also to keep safe what is inside. 2 John 8 (NIV) states: “*Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.*”

5. What steps are you taking to not only protect yourself from the enemy without, but also guard and keep what is safely within?

Review this week’s memory verse.

Read Nehemiah 4:1-23.

Opportunities to glorify God will always be met with opposition. The moment you start to build, you will also begin to battle, because the enemy—Satan and his demonic forces of evil—do not want to see the Lord’s work progress. The people in Jerusalem were used to living in the poorest conditions, left alone by their enemy; but when they turned to God for help and to each other to change their circumstances, the enemy suddenly reappeared.

The tactics the enemy uses to halt God’s work can often become opportunities for growth as well as blessings for God’s people. Placed in hard circumstances, we can either choose to be better or bitter, thankful or critical, humble or rebellious. What Satan intends for evil, God intends for our good. When allowed, He uses the enemy’s weapons as tools to further His work and develop our character.

1. In Nehemiah 4, list the tactics used to halt the work in the following passages. Then look up the references in God’s Word to counter those tactics and briefly note them in the space provided.

Enemy’s tactic

Believer’s Counter Tactic

- | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| • vv. 1-6 | 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 – |
| • vv. 7-9 | Mark 14:38 – |
| • v. 10 | Ephesians 6:18 – |
| • vv. 11-23 | 1 Corinthians 15:58 – |

2. Which of the above counter tactics is most useful to you right now? Why?
3. Look up 2 Corinthians 10:4 and note what it says about our weapons and warfare.
 - a. Have you been able to pull down any strongholds lately?
 - b. Is anything keeping you from being “mighty in God”? Please explain.

Dr. Alan Redpath said of the Jews in Nehemiah's day that the reason they were successful in their work and in holding the enemy at bay was because they had a mind to work (v. 6), a heart to pray (v. 9), an eye to watch (v. 9), and an ear to hear (v. 20) (*Victorious Christian Service*, Revell, 1958; pp. 76-79). This combination allowed them to be victorious. If the same holds true for us today, then we too will be victorious. But let's face it, sometimes it's possible for us to become our worst enemy! God warns every believer to be obedient in all things, lest Satan take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:9, 11).

4. Is there an area in which God is requiring obedience today? Would you note it here and write out your prayer request on page 7?

Disobedience can easily lead to discouragement, which can then hinder your attempts to rebuild those areas of your life that need attention.

Selah . . . (Pause and think about it.) Anyone working on a building site is required to wear a hard hat on the job. Which of the following hard hats do *you* wear most often?

- *Constructor*: making a positive contribution to build up and get the job done.
- *Destructor*: negatively tearing down what God's people are building up.
- *Obstructor*: deliberately placing obstacles in the path of those doing the work.
- *Interrupter*: causing ongoing problems for the workers that continue to bring things to a halt.

5. Are you helping or hindering the process? Do you perhaps need to change hats? What will help you make an immediate change?

Review this week's memory verse.

Day Four: Nehemiah—Man of Courage

Suppose you heard over and over—as many as ten different times—that your enemies were going to pounce on you? The repetition of those words ringing in your ears would be disheartening to say the least. In the face of such discouragement, Nehemiah did not lose heart. He quickly took the appropriate action to remedy the situation. He countered the tactics of the opposition by posting guards at the most vulnerable places on the wall and then arming Jewish families to fight together (v. 13). He didn't ignore the people's fear, rather he addressed it (v. 14), beginning first with the nobles, then the officials, then the rest of the people.

Courage is defined as the quality of mind or spirit that enables a person to face difficulty, danger, pain, etc., without fear. It is fearlessness in the face of great peril. Many of us feel we lack this quality in our lives, but today's lesson teaches us that we can easily have it by basing our faith on three solid truths about the Lord: *who He is; what He's done in the past; what He's promised to do in the future.* We find all three in His Word.

1. What three things did Nehemiah tell the people to encourage them?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

The people had their eyes fixed on the rubbish around them instead of on the Lord. They could overcome their fear and fight the battle as they remembered Him. Good advice from the man looked to as a fearless leader. Good advice for us today as well.

2. Take a moment to reflect on the following, sharing briefly on each one.
 - *I remember when God came to my defense . . .*
 - *I remember from His Word that God says He is . . .*
 - *I remember the specific word that He spoke to my heart . . .*
3. Of what did Nehemiah assure the people? v. 20 Do you believe this truth applies to you in your present circumstances?
4. Read this promise in Scripture that Nehemiah might have been familiar with and every believer should realize and claim: Psalm 33:10-11.
5. What further tactic did Nehemiah employ from that day on to alleviate fear and bolster confidence? vv. 16-18
6. Explain the significance of the *trumpet* in vv. 18 and 20.
 - a. Can you think of why it might be good to have a *rallying point*?
 - a. Do you have Christians you can call upon when an emergency arises?
 - c. Have you thanked God and those individuals for standing with you?
Have you got someone else's back covered for them?

Day Five:

*Applying the Mortar—
Sealing the learning process with prayer!*

Take a moment to ponder each request before writing out your prayer. Lift these requests at home in your quiet time with the Lord. (If you are participating in a group study, you will also have the opportunity to pray for these requests in agreement with others.)

A prayer for revelation . . .

Has God revealed His specific purpose for your life? Ask God to help you respond in obedience to His call. _____

A prayer of examination . . .

The workers on the wall held their weapons and wore their armor at all times; they removed their clothes only as they needed washing. Use Ephesians 6:10-18 to examine yourself—whether or not every part of your spiritual armor is in place and ready for battle. _____

A prayer for courage . . .

Remember again today who God is and what He's done on your behalf. Ask Him for a Scripture verse to strengthen your heart this coming week. _____

Write out this week's verse from memory: _____

Notes