



# The Rebuilt Life: Studies in Nehemiah

## Nehemiah Ch. 3-4

Inductive Women’s Bible Study – Lesson 3

If you have ever tackled a remodeling project, you know the tremendous amount of effort and planning that is needed *before* you begin. You draw up a plan and estimate the cost. You get your permits and gather your materials. Then you roll up your sleeves and get to work. For a project to succeed, you need coordination and cooperation. We see both as Nehemiah’s workforce set themselves to the task.

Getting the work started on the wall was a tremendous achievement for Nehemiah—but keeping it going proved to be the harder task. No sooner had the work begun when the naysayers showed up. Nehemiah’s response is a potent example of how to deal with opposition.

**Background** The conflict surrounding the wall was stirred up by a man named Sanballat. Nehemiah briefly introduced Sanballat and two of his cronies, Tobiah and Gesham, in chapter two. Now, in chapter four, Sanballat is back in full force, scheming and threatening the work. Who were these angry men opposing the restoration of Jerusalem’s wall?

Scholars believe that Sanballat lived in Beth-Horon, eighteen miles northwest of Jerusalem. Ancient history records that he was the governor of Samaria; as such, he had no interest in seeing Jerusalem restored. Throughout Nehemiah’s account we learn that Sanballat was a constant thorn in the side of God’s people. He and Nehemiah would clash on more than one occasion. Sanballat had a daughter who would later marry into the family of Eliashib the priest (Nehemiah 13:28).

Tobiah was an Ammonite official, thought by many scholars to be the governor of that region. He, too, had family ties to Eliashib the priest (Nehemiah 13:4). He was part of an influential family that gave him personal links to the nobles of Judah which, as we’ll see in chapter six, became a source of friction for Nehemiah. While Sanballat seems to be the ringleader, Tobiah turns out to be a stronger threat in the long run.

There is evidence that Gesham the Arab ruled a league of tribes that controlled the areas of Moab and Edom to the southeast as well as portions of the Arabian Desert stretching south to Egypt. This political threesome rallied every enemy they could find to obstruct God’s work in Jerusalem.



**Getting started.** Find a quiet place to study. Take your Bible, your lesson and any other study tools you want to use. Plan to spend about an hour each day on your lesson. **Pray.** Take time to settle your heart, focus your thoughts and ask the Lord to help you see with clear eyes.

**“Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in Your law.” – Psalm 119:18 NLT**

**Nehemiah Ch. 3-4** Read the passage two or three times without interruption. If possible, read from more than one Bible translation. Briefly describe in your own words what is happening.

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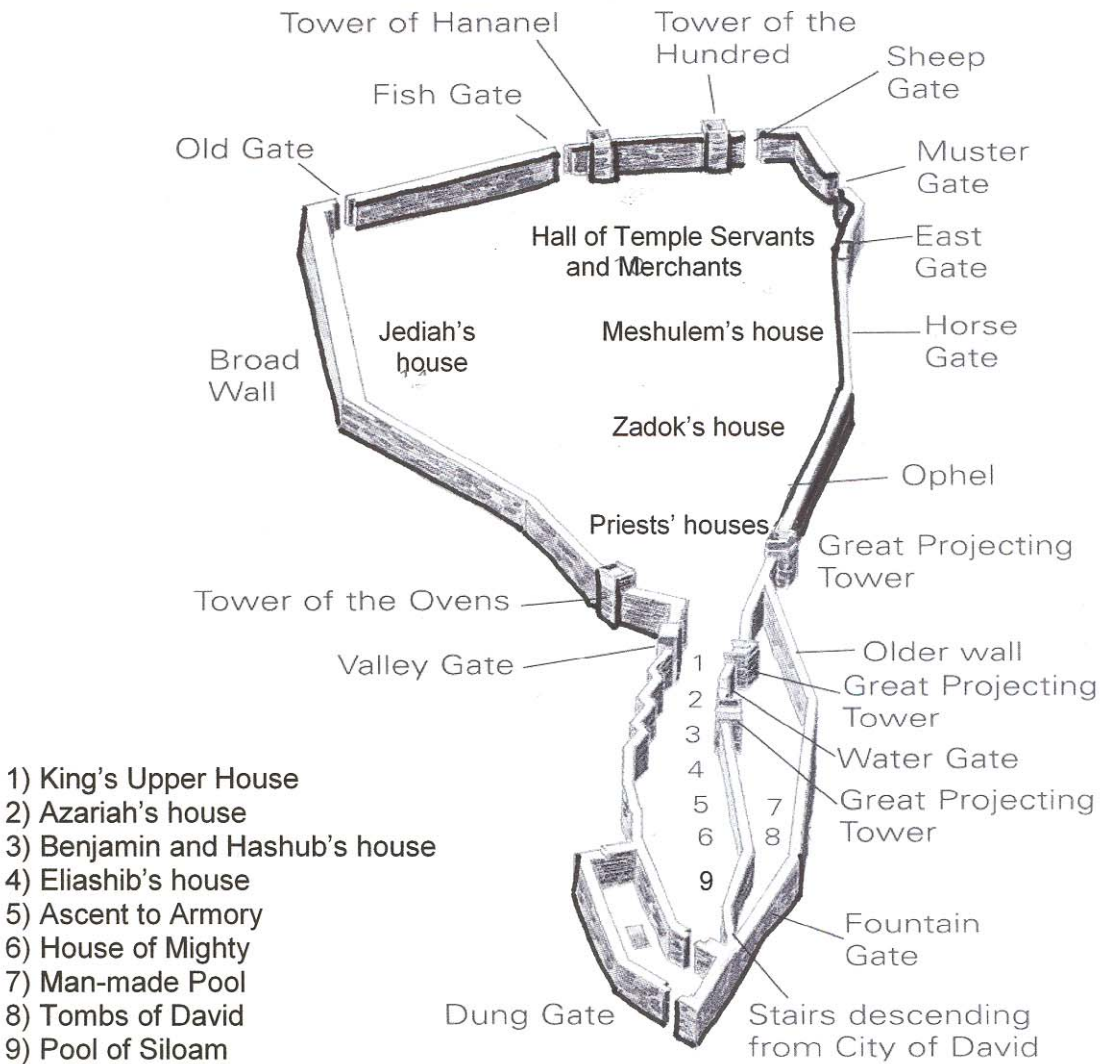
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## OBSERVATION – *Who worked where?*

**Nehemiah 3** Using the diagram below, you should be able to chart where each person worked on the wall. Start with Eliashib the priest who worked on the Sheep Gate—then work your way counterclockwise around the wall.



With each lesson, a “working” text is provided for your convenience. You can use this to scribble notes, write down word definitions, highlight events—whatever you find useful to your own personal study. The translation used will vary from week to week.

### **Working Text for Nehemiah Ch. 4**

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

4:1 Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. 2 He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?”

3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was near him and he said, “Even what they are building—if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!”

4 Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. 5 Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You, for they have demoralized the builders.

6 So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

7 Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, and that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry. 8 All of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it. 9 But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night.

10 Thus in Judah it was said, “The strength of the burden bearers is failing, yet there is much rubbish; and we ourselves are unable to rebuild the wall.” 11 Our enemies said, “They will not know or see until we come among them, kill them and put a stop to the work.”

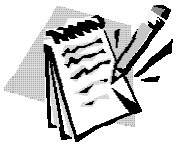
12 When the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times, "They will come up against us from every place where you may turn," 13 then I stationed men in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places; and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows. 14 When I saw their fear, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: "Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses."

15 When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work. 16 From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates; and the captains were behind the whole house of Judah.

17 Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took their load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon. 18 As for the builders, each wore his sword girded at his side as he built, while the trumpeter stood near me. 19 I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another. 20 At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

21 So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared. 22 At that time I also said to the people, "Let each man with his servant spend the night within Jerusalem so that they may be a guard for us by night and a laborer by day."

23 So neither I, my brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us removed our clothes, each took his weapon even to the water.



## OBSERVATION – *What do I see?*

Read the section and record what you see. **Use the first column to keep track of what you find in the Bible passage.** (Who? What? When? Where?) Follow along with Nehemiah as he tells his story. Look for clues that tell you when and where the story is taking place. Who else is mentioned and what part do they play? What events have taken place? What is happening now? How does Nehemiah respond?

**Use the second column to record information you gather from other sources.** You may want to look up names and places in a Bible dictionary, map or encyclopedia. What else can you discover about the people and places mentioned in this chapter?

You can also use this section to jot down your own thoughts and impressions about people and events. What do you observe about Nehemiah’s character? What challenges or problems does he face? What do you observe in the character and behavior of others in the story?

### **Nehemiah 4:1-6**

Bible Facts and Information:

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## INTERPRETATION – *What does it mean?*

**Look for a spiritual lesson.** Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as, “Is there a command to obey? A promise to claim? A condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? An example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**



## APPLICATION – *How does it apply to me?*

We don’t study the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to **put it into action.**

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to do something with what we have learned. Ask yourself: Is this a new lesson, or does it reinforce what I already know? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions? What changes does it require? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

### **Nehemiah 4:1-6**

Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Application: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Nehemiah 4:7-14**

Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Application: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Nehemiah 4:15-23**

Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Application: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the chapter is about. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it.

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## Take A Closer Look

**“When our enemies heard that it was known to us,  
and that God had frustrated their plan,  
then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work.”**

Nehemiah 4:15 NASB

Sanballat and his cronies had hoped their threats and intimidation would grind the work to a standstill. They ridiculed and plotted against God’s people and for a time, it appeared they might succeed. Discouragement and doubt began to creep in. But Nehemiah’s godly response to opposition helped the workers to remain focused and faithful. Let’s take a closer look at how Nehemiah handled the scare tactics with an eye to arm ourselves against spiritual assaults.

In verses 1-3, what tactics did Sanballat and Tobiah use to discourage the workers?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Put yourself in the place of these workmen on the wall. What effect would insults and ridicule have on you?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What was Nehemiah’s first response? \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer was a consistent part of Nehemiah’s approach to problem solving. He prayed first and he prayed often. What is usually your first response to insults or criticism?

\_\_\_\_\_  
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When harsh words failed to stop the workers, the situation intensified. In your own words, briefly describe what Nehemiah and his crew were up against.

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Where were these threats coming from? You have already charted where each person worked on the wall. Go back to the diagram and chart the location of their foes. To do this, look at a map or use the information given here.

- Sanballat was from Samaria, to the north.
- Tobiah and the Ammonites came from the east.
- Arab country lay south of Jerusalem.
- Ashdod was due west of Jerusalem.

What creative and practical solution did Nehemiah come up with? \_\_\_\_\_

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The work continued. What do you think gave the workmen strength and courage to carry on despite the threats?

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It's no secret. Our adversary, the devil, wants to hinder your spiritual progress and obstruct the work that God wants to accomplish in and through you. If you are actively involved in building the wall, the enemy is out to sabotage the work. How can we stay focused and faithful? Nehemiah's example gives us a spiritual pattern to follow.

**Pray.** Have you ever felt yourself come under attack for practicing your Christian faith? How should you respond? Read the following scriptures and record what you find.

Matthew 5:43-44 \_\_\_\_\_

Philippians 4:6-7 \_\_\_\_\_

Colossians 4:2-6 \_\_\_\_\_

**Stay focused on God.** Nehemiah urged the people to "remember the Lord who is great and awesome and *fight*." When the enemy comes out in force, our strength is in knowing who fights our battles. Of what can you be certain?

Psalms 138:7-8 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 147:5-6 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 5:7-12 \_\_\_\_\_

**Be armed and ready.** Every man in Nehemiah’s workforce was equipped with a tool and a weapon. They took practical measures, doing what was humanly possible—then put their trust in the Lord. *“Our God will fight for us.”*

How prepared are you to fend off spiritual attacks? God promises that if we put on the full armor He has provided us with, we will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. Carefully and *prayerfully* read through **Ephesians 6:10-18**.

Briefly describe each piece of armor and how it protects you against enemy attack.

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Having put on the full armor of God, what instructions are we given? \_\_\_\_\_

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Are you careful to put on every piece of armor God has provided? Why or why not? How will neglecting even one piece leave you vulnerable to the enemy’s assault?

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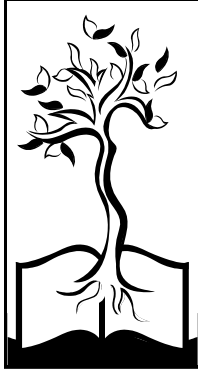
Nehemiah’s response to opposition was just what the people needed to see in their leader. His influence and example heartened the workers and strengthened their resolve.

What do you most appreciate about the way Nehemiah handled this challenging situation? Share your thoughts.

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## God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you personally, what has been the most important lesson from this chapter? How will you put what you have learned into practice?

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## Something to Think About . . .

This chapter is a wonderful case study in how to persevere  
in the face of intense antagonism.  
It also reveals how opposition, rightly handled,  
can actually become a tool in the hands of God to make His people  
stronger in their quest to do His will.

- John MacArthur -  
*Experiencing the Good Hand of God*

**Message Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

Lined area for writing message notes.

**Prayer Requests:** \_\_\_\_\_

Lined area for writing prayer requests.