The Rebuilt Life
Studies in Nehemiah

Session 10 – Remember, Repent, Repeat | Nehemiah Chapter 13

Happy endings are nice. If that's all Nehemiah was looking for, he would have finished this record with the wall dedication. After twelve years as governor, Nehemiah was called back to Persia. Sometime later, Nehemiah returned to find that Jerusalem had slipped back into spiritual neglect.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover what Nehemiah can teach us about holiness and devoted living.
- Consider the dangers of spiritual drift and the need for accountability.
- Pray honest prayers that remember past mercies, repent of sin, and repeat new growth.

Ice Breaker

If you could have one do-over for the past twenty-four hours, how would you use it?

Absence Makes the Heart . . . Wander

Nehemiah 13:1–31
Nehemiah returns to find that the people of Jerusalem have wandered back into a spiritual drift.

1. The first three verses wrap up the previous chapter, when the community was on fire with renewed devotion to God. Excluding Ammonites and Moabites from the assembly is a strong indication that they were serious about following the Lord with pure and undivided hearts.

   Being part of the assembly essentially meant *you're one of us*—fully participating in the worship and life of God's covenant with His people. Converts were welcomed (Ruth was a Moabite) but it meant leaving their pagan beliefs and practices behind.

   a. Why was it so vital for Israelites to separate themselves from the influence of unbelieving people groups? Why is it for us? Use the following verses to explain your answer.

      Luke 9:62 and 10:27

      John 14:15

      2 Corinthians 6:14–18

b. Long ago, God had promised Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you" (Genesis 12:3). God's command regarding the Ammonites and Moabites was simply keeping His promise.

When the children of Israel were coming out of Egypt, the Ammonites callously refused to do the right thing. The Moabites intentionally did the wrong thing. Is there a lesson here for us? We tend to think of sin in terms of *doing the wrong thing*. In what ways do we also sin by *not doing* the right thing?

James 1:22–24

James 4:17

Good to Know

The Ammonites would not let the Israelites coming out of Egypt pass through their land or buy food and water from them (Deuteronomy 2:27-30 and Numbers 21:21-23).

The Moabites hired a prophet named Balaam to curse God's people and deliberately tried to harm them (Numbers 22).

2. During Nehemiah's absence, things were allowed to deteriorate. When Nehemiah returned, he was stunned to find out that Tobiah the Ammonite was actually occupying rooms in the temple compound.

The temple was built with a series of chambers originally meant for storing worship utensils and all of the offerings, firstfruits and tithes. These items were earmarked to support the priests and Levites who served full-time in the temple (Nehemiah 12:44–47) but the supply had dwindled over time because of misuse and neglect.

a. Since the rooms were empty, Eliashib the high priest let Tobiah move in and set up house. Tobiah had been a troublemaker from the beginning, but why didn't Eliashib see it that way? Look for clues in Nehemiah 6:17–19 and answer in your own words.

b. After clearing out the junk that Tobiah brought in, what else did Nehemiah do?

c. There will always be Tobiahs in life. By that, we mean worldly pressures and our natural tendency to allow other things to occupy our thoughts and affections. But God's Word provides ways to keep our hearts stocked with truth and ready for worship. In what way?

Ephesians 5:15–17

Philippians 4:6–8

Colossians 3:16–17

3. **Not on my watch.** It's been said that the only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.[1] Nehemiah wasn't about to let the people forget all that God had brought them through! Does Nehemiah's example motivate you to action? In what way?

   a. **Remember**. No one could accuse Nehemiah of being indifferent. He had wept and prayed for them. Built and battled alongside them. They'd prayed together, worshipped together, and walked that rebuilt wall together. He had a long, self-sacrificing, and God-centered history with them.

      There are times when we need a Nehemiah like this in our life. Someone to speak truth, pray with us, and even (figuratively) yank on our hair as needed. Can you allow someone to be this kind of Nehemiah for you? Have you been this kind of Nehemiah for someone else? Why or why not?

"The Christian life is one of progression, growth, and constant change. The simple fact is that you are either moving forward as a believer or you are moving backward."

Pastor Greg Laurie

   b. **Repent**. *You see the trouble we are in*. It wasn't the city walls bringing reproach this time (Nehemiah 2:17) but there was debris that needed to be cleared. Earlier in this lesson, we considered how sometimes sin is doing the wrong thing (commission) and sometimes it is *not doing* the right thing (omission). Either way, what will *always be true*?

      1 John 1:5–9

   c. **Repeat**. Once the debris was cleared, the wall was ready to be rebuilt. Remember that every man was assigned to repair that part of the wall closest to home (Nehemiah 3:23)? Ask the Lord to identify any necessary repairs. Note what He shows you about:

      Right things must be kept in the right place.

      Neutral things must be surrendered.

      Wrong things must be abandoned.

[1] Edmund Burke (1730-1797) was an author, orator, political theorist and Member of Parliament during the Revolutionary War.

Memory Verse
As you memorize this verse, make it part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!
Psalm 139:23–24 ESV

Think About It . . .

While you chew on this verse, why not also turn it to praise? Allow God to search your heart—and also tell Him something that you know about His heart, His thoughts, and His ways.

Remember Me, O My God

Nehemiah 13
Four times in this last chapter, Nehemiah prays one of his "remember" prayers. Some think he was discouraged by the compromise and half-hearted living among God's people. If so, his fervent prayer was the right response.

1. God answered Nehemiah's *remember me* prayers. His unwavering faith and obedience is forever recorded in God's Word. As we finish our study in this book, what life lessons can we take away from Nehemiah about:

   Faithfulness

   Prayer

   Obedience to God's Word

Our Influence

Resolve and Dedication

Building and Battling

Courage under Fire

Finishing Well

2. For you personally, what has been most life changing in our studies in Nehemiah?

Gospel at a Glance: God's Perfect Plan | Nehemiah accomplished what God sent him to do, but his account still ends with a sense of unfinished business. And it was. Nehemiah led the last great revival of God's people in the Old Testament. The wall was rebuilt and Nehemiah gets a glimpse of God's perfect plan. But the rest of the story was not his to tell. Thirty years after Nehemiah passed from the scene, the people were back to broken promises and careless living. God sent Malachi to rouse His people back to their first love but Israel rejects God's question with a question. The Book of Malachi opens with "I have loved you," says the Lord. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?'" And so the Old Testament ends in a 400-year chasm of silence, filled with promises made by men and broken. Only the Lord Himself could provide a way out of this impasse.

John the Baptist came…a voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord." (Matthew 3)

Adoration **C**onfession **T**hankfulness **S**upplication

"Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." Ephesians 6:18 NIV

God sparked Nehemiah to pray and take action. Others joined in and the work began. With God's blessing, power, and protection, the wall was rebuilt. In each session, we will take time to pray—for others and for ourselves, for our church, our communities, and our nation.

As a focus for prayer, you can use the memory verse, another scripture, or simply what the Lord has impressed on you from the chapter. No need to be profound or elaborate, just authentic.

Record your simple prayer, including each element here.

A _____

C _____

T _____

S _____

Group Prayer Requests

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