The Rebuilt Life
Studies in Nehemiah

Session 6 – Revival | Nehemiah Chapter 7–8

Building the wall was a tremendous undertaking, but establishing a God-worshipping community is what would make Jerusalem *the holy city* again. As God would have it, the wall was completed just in time to celebrate two of the most family–oriented feasts on the Jewish calendar.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover what Nehemiah can teach us about the key elements of revival.
- Consider where God wants you to step out in faith to be part of His work.
- Pray honest prayers that rekindle devotion and obedience to God's Word.

Ice Breaker

Have you ever traced your family tree? How many generations back can you go?

Rebuilding the Community

Nehemiah 7:1–73
After the wall was completed, Nehemiah focused on rebuilding the community. His first priority was seeing to their physical protection and spiritual instruction.

1. Nehemiah chose two men to oversee the security of Jerusalem. It appears they replaced the men who previously held that position (Nehemiah 3:9, 12).

    a. Who did Nehemiah appoint, and what qualified them for such an important position?

    b. It speaks well of both men that Nehemiah had confidence in them. If you were being recommended for a position of trust, what would you most want to be said about you?

    c. From verses 3–4, describe the safeguards Nehemiah put in place, and why these would be necessary.

2. If Jerusalem was going to be a thriving city again, it needed permanent residents. Now that the wall was built, most of Nehemiah's workforce would go back to their homes and regular jobs. Who would be willing to uproot their families, move to the city, and help rebuild the infrastructure? This was a big ask, and Nehemiah prayed about what to do. When he found a copy of census records, (dating back 90 years to Zerubbabel and the first group to return), Nehemiah got his answer.

   He gathered the leaders to work out a plan (verse 5). The plan is described in more detail later (Nehemiah 11:1–2), but essentially it went like this; the entire population registered using the same categories as the old census. This determined who was eligible and what role they would serve in rebuilding the community. Ten percent were then asked to relocate to Jerusalem. It was a major upheaval and readjustment of ordinary life but they willingly did so, knowing they were part of something bigger than themselves.

   Good to Know

   Nehemiah 7:6-73 is the list of men from the original census, long before Nehemiah's time. The actual record of the census Nehemiah took is listed in Nehemiah 11. Approximately 5,000 men along with their families voluntarily left their homes and moved to Jerusalem.

   a. When serving the Lord requires stepping outside of our comfort zone, what can we be certain of? Consider the following verses and answer in your own words.

      Joshua 1:8–9

      Proverbs 3:5–6

      John 15:16

      Philippians 4:13

   b. When has taking a step of faith in order to be part of God's work required making some significant adjustments in your life? In what way?

   c. "The good hand of my God was upon me" (Nehemiah 2:8). When you think about the work that God has called you to participate in, what will you praise Him for?

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.

Ezra praised the Lord, the great God,
and all the people said, "Amen! Amen!" as they lifted their hands.
Then they bowed down and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.
Nehemiah 8:6 NLT

Think About It . . .

Ezra led the people in worship and they made a vocal and physical response. How comfortable are you with engaging in worship? Where might you stretch your comfort level, not for show, but as an intentional effort to engage more fully?

Bring Out the Book!

Nehemiah 8:1–18
Nehemiah 8 opens with the entire community gathered for the Feast of Trumpets, a kind of "opening day" for the harvest season (Leviticus 23:23–25). On this year, they asked Ezra to read from the Book of the Law, which is the first five books of the Old Testament. Ezra may have concentrated on Deuteronomy in particular.

1. They wanted to hear God's Word. Can you picture the scene? From Nehemiah 8:1–8, note anything you see to indicate how eager and intentional the people were to hear God's Word.

   a. Before reading the Book of the Law, Ezra prayed and praised God as the source of all blessing. How did the people respond? What does their verbal and physical posture indicate about the posture of their heart?

   b. The Levites (verse 7) spread out to help the people understand what they heard. The language barrier (many weren't fluent in Hebrew anymore) made it difficult to catch the meaning without help. Why is teaching essential for understanding the Bible? What effort on your part is required? Share what helps you personally to gain a better understanding of God's Word.

Good to Know

Ezra was a priest and scribe, an expert in teaching the Scripture. He was sent to Jerusalem by Artaxerxes some 13 years earlier to instruct the people and restore temple worship. When he arrived, he found the people living in moral and spiritual compromise. From Ezra's perspective, the revival we read about in this chapter was long overdue, an answer to unrelenting prayer.

Ezra devoted his life to studying and obeying God's Law (Ezra 7:10). Bible scholars believe he was the first to compile all the scriptures that existed during his time, in a way that eventually came to be recognized as our Old Testament.

2. When Ezra read the Law and the Levites explained it, the people began to weep. It was an emotional scene—not caused by theatrics to stir up the crowd, but because of the impact of God's Word. How does Hebrews 4:12 describe the power of God's Word?

   a. Ezra and Nehemiah urged the people to stop weeping. The kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads to a change of heart and direction. That's repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10) and it is always a good thing. But the people were so overcome with their sin that they were in danger of missing the follow-through.

      Think about what is happening here. What if the people were allowed to fixate on their failures? If discouragement settled in, what might they be tempted to do?

      The Bible cuts across the surface of our words and actions and penetrates to the heart of the matter. The Bible gives us insight into our own life: What is broken, what needs to change, what absolutely must go.

      START! to Follow
      Harvest Ministries

      Do we see what a subtle enemy the devil is? He was trying to hijack their revival! Sorrow for sin is only half the story. An authentic response to conviction of the Holy Spirit brings us to our senses and stirs us to lean into the grace and strength of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Use these verses to explain how conviction and repentance leads to joy.

      Jeremiah 15:16

      Titus 3:3–7

      1 John 1:9

   b. Nehemiah encouraged the people to focus on God's blessings and rejoice together. They were told to spend the rest of the day feasting and sharing their food with those who had nothing to prepare. The next day, the family leaders met again with Ezra and the Levites to hear more of God's Word. From Nehemiah 8:13–18, what did they discover and do?

   c. If we describe Nehemiah 8 in one word, it would be *revival*. As you look over this chapter, think back on your own history with God. Can you point to evidence of His goodness and faithfulness to you? In what way?

Gospel at a Glance: Revival | The rebuilt wall signaled a new beginning for Jerusalem. Now that the city was fortified and protected from enemies outside the wall, inner restoration and daily living could begin. The first indication of things to come was the people's renewed interest in God's Word and responsive hearts. Their spiritual heritage, lost in the rubble of time and neglected tradition, was rediscovered. Let this be our prayer, individually and as the church. "Repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, and He will again send you Jesus, your appointed Messiah." Acts 3:19–20 NLT

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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