The Rebuilt Life
Studies in Nehemiah

Session 9 – Up on the Wall | Nehemiah Chapter 11–12

Now that the wall was finished, the real work could begin. In fact, it already had. Rebuilding the wall had always been about bringing the city of God and His people back to life.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover what Nehemiah can teach us about surrender and dedication.
- Consider fresh ways to demonstrate faith and creatively support God's work.
- Pray honest prayers that express praise and cultivate thanksgiving.

Ice Breaker

For you personally, what has been the high point of studying Nehemiah so far?

Urban Renewal

Nehemiah 11:1–36
Nehemiah implements a plan to repopulate the city of Jerusalem.

1. Jerusalem's rebuilt wall was amazing, but the city itself was a sprawl of vacant land and urban decay (Nehemiah 7:4). Only a small percentage of people were actually living there. How did Nehemiah go about repopulating the city?

    a. Why was it important for more people to live in Jerusalem? List the reasons you think of.

    b. What possible reasons might keep someone from moving their family to Jerusalem?

    c. We've been asked this question before but it is worth considering again. When has taking a step of faith in order to be part of God's work required making significant adjustments in your life? In what way?

2. By now, we understand that Nehemiah's lists were a vital part in the history of God's people. In this list, we notice ordinary people doing a variety of jobs and responsibilities.

   Considering all the work it would take to make Jerusalem a thriving city again, the response to Nehemiah's call to action is inspiring. Think about it. The economy was not much different than we read about in chapter five. Times were still tough financially, and most families were still living paycheck to paycheck. But they *willingly* moved, knowing they were together in this great work that God was doing in Jerusalem.

   God gifts each individual with different skills and abilities to accomplish His work in a variety of ways. Every person is needed and no task is insignificant. What can stir up a willing heart to serve? Consider the verses below for your answer.

   1 Samuel 12:24

   Mark 10:45

   Colossians 3:23–24

   Romans 12:1

Good to Know

Joel and his assistant, **Judah** (v. 9) served as city overseers, possibly ensuring that city streets and markets were maintained.
Seraiah (v. 11) supervised the temple priests. His family tree is briefly mentioned here, but it appears he was also the father of Ezra the scribe (Ezra 7:1).
Zabdiel (v. 14) supervised the "men of valor" similar to our modern-day police force.
Shabbethai and **Jozabad** (v. 16) were in charge of the Levites who did maintenance and repairs on the temple. **Gatekeepers** (v. 19) did similar work.

3. **We're in this together.** Something more than bricks and mortar was restored during those fifty-two days of rebuilding the wall. At the start, they were willing to put their hand to the work. Now they are willing to uproot and move. What would you say has happened?

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.

> I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
> Romans 12:1 ESV

Think About It . . .

There can be no growth without change, and no change without surrender. What is helping you to grow in your faith? What might be hindering you?

A New Wall, A New Beginning

Nehemiah 12:1–47

Dedicating the wall was an exuberant celebration. After laying in rubble for more than a century, Jerusalem's wall was a significant landmark again. But it was a symbol of much more than urban renewal.

1. This chapter includes a list that documented family lines of the priests and Levites who returned to Jerusalem a century earlier with Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple. It pointed Nehemiah's people back to their spiritual roots.

   Before rebuilding, the people were out of touch with their own history. They could recite the past but they couldn't relate to it. Those glory days were long gone. Broken walls and neglected foundations was all they'd ever known. But now Jerusalem's wall was strong! And everyone, even their enemies, knew that God had helped them to accomplish it (Nehemiah 6:16).

   What if they would have quit when it got hard? What if Nehemiah let them give in and give up? What if Ezra never brought out the Book of the Law and taught them? Consider how different the outcome of their story—and our own—would be without God's Word and the faithful examples of so many who have gone before us. What do the verses below command us to remember?

   Deuteronomy 6:5–7

   Psalm 66:16

   Colossians 3:16

   2 Timothy 3:16–17

"Biblical history is a good memory for what doesn't work—and what does work. We need the centuries of experience provided by our biblical ancestors."

"A Christian who has David in his bones, Jeremiah in his bloodstream, Paul in his fingertips and Christ in his heart will know how much and how little value to put on his own momentary feelings and experience of the past week."

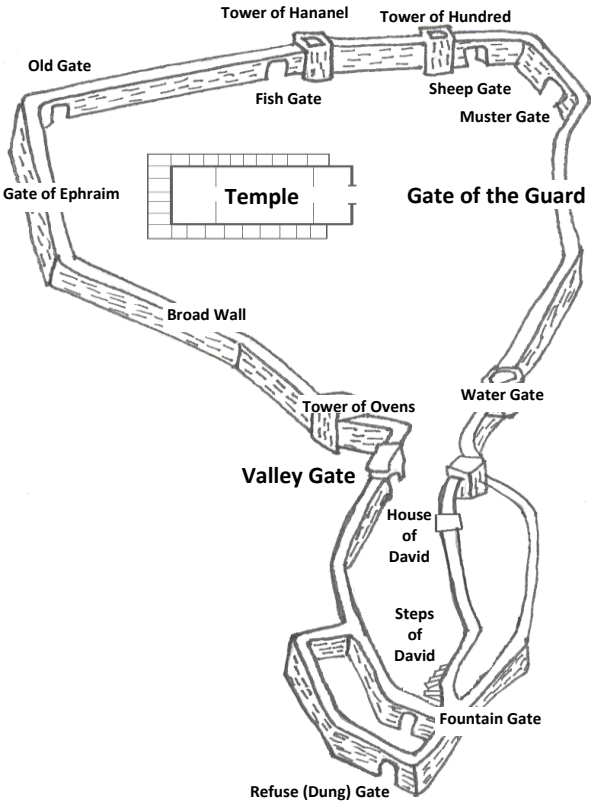
Eugene Peterson
A Long Obedience in the Same Direction

2. The wall dedication was centered around worship—a legacy passed down from King David when he brought the ark of God back to Jerusalem. Music was so important to David that he established an organized system for singing in worship from that time on. As they prepared for the dedication, ceremonial purification was necessary. True worship in God's presence still requires clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3). In what way do we do this?

   John 4:24

   1 John 1:9

3. Nehemiah divided the people in two groups with a choir to participate in a thanksgiving parade on the wall. Can you picture it? There were city officials, community leaders, and ordinary citizens. There were priests and Levites whose job it was to lead the people in praise and worship. They were the musicians, the singers, and the choir directors.



a. Trace the route of both choirs as they marched on the wall, beginning at the Valley Gate.

   Who led the first choir?

   Who followed the second choir?

b. The first choir started out by following Nehemiah's route on the night when he went out to survey the ruins. Go back to Nehemiah 2:11–15 and review what he remembered about that night. Note the details here.

   When Nehemiah reached the Fountain Gate, what did he have to do? Try to retrace his route on the diagram.

c. The choirs were high-spirited as they sang and marched around the city walls. Antiphonal music (two choirs performing together but taking turns singing alternate phrases) was a classic style of worship for Israel. They marched along, singing beautifully and loudly to the Lord and each other. Also, they were giving witness that it was God who accomplished the work! The ridicule of their enemies was answered in their praises to God. One insult in particular was put to rest that day. Why, and what was it? (See Nehemiah 4:3)

d. The choirs made their way around the wall and went into the Temple where the praise and worship continued. What else stands out to you?

4. What a spectacle they made! Two choirs, rhythmically winding around the city, atop a wall that—a few months earlier—nobody dreamed would ever exist again. But the real wonder would have been the singing. Imagine that. Cymbals and strings and baritone voices bursting out in song over the city below, first from this end of the wall and echoing back from the opposite end. Praise. Exuberant praise!

   a. The wall dedication was no small occasion. From what you can gather (Nehemiah 12:27–29) who participated and how much time and teamwork went to planning music for the festivities?

   b. A newly rebuilt wall called for new songs. Their songs aren't recorded here, and we certainly can't prove it, but Nehemiah's singers may have found inspiration in the lyrics from a few classic oldies:

      By the Rivers of Babylon Hebrew exiles hung up their strings and sat down by the river and wept, homesick for Jerusalem. "*If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget how to play the harp…my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I fail to remember…Jerusalem my greatest joy."* (Psalm 137:5–6)

      Like a Dream The exiles were allowed to come home, and it seemed too good to be true. *"We were filled with laughter and we sang for joy. The Lord has done amazing things for us! What joy!"* (Psalm 126:2–3)

      If you were asked to write a song of praise inspired by some recent experience, answered prayer, or new chapter in your life, what would you choose to sing about?

Good to Know

The Hebrews were known for their music. Songs about their collective experience, shared from one generation to the next.

Moses sang, and his sister Miriam did too (Exodus 15). He wrote Psalm 90, a stirring refrain that ponders God's eternal nature and man's fleeting days. Moses sang a ballad of Israel's history on the last day of his life, as part of his farewell to the nation (Deuteronomy 32).

David's catalog of songs and the songwriters he inspired (like Asaph), has been part of his legacy to all believers for generations.

Gospel at a Glance: A Sacrifice of Praise | The great festivities on this day included the people offering joyful sacrifices to God. Their singing was so loud and exuberant that *the joy coming out of Jerusalem could be heard far away* (Nehemiah 12:43). The day is coming when every living soul who puts their faith in Jesus will be gathered in Heaven and our hallelujahs will be like crashing ocean waves and roaring thunder. All to Jesus, the Lamb who was slain for the sins of the world. C.H. Spurgeon was fond of saying that when we offer praises now, we are simply rehearsing our eternal song. *Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name* (Hebrews 13:15).

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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