The Rebuilt Life
Studies in Nehemiah

Session 1 – Nehemiah's Prayer | Nehemiah Chapter 1

It's the account of one man's determination to see the wall of Jerusalem rebuilt. To see the city of God brought back to life. Against all odds, he rallies dispirited men to rise and rebuild.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover similarities between Nehemiah's world and the times we live in.
- Consider how God uses life's problems and our prayers to accomplish His plan.
- Pray honest prayers that rekindle faith and a passion to serve.

Ice Breaker

When you hear of someone else's need, in what ways are you most likely to offer help?

The Back Story

When King David made Jerusalem his capital, it was ten acres of strategic land surrounded by steep hills and defensive walls. During his forty-year reign, Jerusalem thrived and the nation of Israel became a major military power. David's successor, Solomon began well and the Lord caused all that he did to prosper. He built a house for the Lord. He extended the walls and transformed Jerusalem into a world-class city.

Twenty years into his reign, God renewed His promise to Solomon with a warning. If he turned away from the Lord, the nation was headed for disaster. The people would be scattered and the temple reduced to ruins (1 Kings 9:7–8). Eventually this is what happened. Solomon died and the nation broke apart. Ten tribes went north and two tribes went south. Within 200 years, the northern kingdom was absorbed into surrounding cultures. The southern kingdom's on-again, off-again relationship with God (depending on who was king) lasted for two more centuries until Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah.

When Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers marched out of Jerusalem, the city was in ruins. The temple was looted and burned. Homes and public buildings trashed. Walls destroyed. Survivors were marched off to Babylon. The poorest were left behind to fend for themselves, defenseless and abandoned. All the warnings—so long in coming and chronically ignored—were over. God's rebellious people were in exile.

Decades passed and Babylon was overthrown. Persia's King Cyrus decreed that the Jews could return and rebuild Jerusalem. The first group to return laid the temple foundation before opposition shut them down. The unfinished temple sat neglected for nearly 20 years until Haggai and Zechariah urged them to finish.

Fast-forward 60 years. More Jews return with Ezra who came to teach Scripture, restore worship, and rebuild the *people*. Through Ezra's faithful work, the people repent and commit to obey the Lord. But the walls of their city (and lives) are in shambles. The people are vulnerable, afflicted, and too exhausted to hope that life will ever get better. This is the sad situation that reaches Nehemiah's ears.

The Power of Prayer

Nehemiah 1:1–11
The prayer of one man in this first chapter sets in motion God's plan to stir His people to revival.

1. It started with a question, and became a matter of personal concern for Nehemiah. Describe what Nehemiah learned about the conditions of life for God's people in Jerusalem.

2. What does Nehemiah's response tell us about the kind of man he was?

   a. What specific concerns did Nehemiah mention in his prayer?

   b. Nehemiah prayed before he took action. What effect did this have on the way he viewed the situation and what needed to be done? List anything you can think of.

   c. Recall a time when you prayed about a specific situation before taking action. How did taking time to pray it through give you clear perspective and guide your response?

Good to Know

Susa was 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf in Iran. The citadel (a fortified palace) was the king's winter residence.

This is where, 35 years earlier, Esther was made queen (Esther 2:16). The king Nehemiah served was Esther's stepson.

3. What will make our prayers effective? Read each verse and answer in your own words.

   2 Chronicles 7:14

   Jeremiah 29:13

   John 15:7

   1 John 5:14–15

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.

"If my people who are called by my name humble themselves,
and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways,
then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."
2 Chronicles 7:14 ESV

Think About It . . .

What is God's prescription for healing a nation? Where and how does it begin?

Revive Us Again

Nehemiah 1:5–11

As the king's cupbearer, Nehemiah held a high-level position of trust and influence. He wasn't simply a wine taster. The confidential nature of his job called for wisdom, discretion, and courage—the same God-given traits that will enable Nehemiah to rebuild the wall in spite of opposition.

1. Nehemiah was a man of action. He was used to identifying a threat or problem and dealing with it. But he was also a man of prayer. Think about it. The destruction of Jerusalem's wall wasn't news to Nehemiah, but it's as if he is hearing about *the people* for the first time.

   Maybe you can relate to Nehemiah. As you become more aware of the needs of others, what requires your attention and prayer? Are you willing to be part of the answer to your prayer? In what way?

2. Throughout the study of this book we will see, time and again, that Nehemiah's first response to problems was to pray. **ACTS** is a helpful acronym to remember four elements of effective prayer. Note where, or in what way, you see these expressed in Nehemiah's prayer.

   Adoration

   Confession

   Thankfulness

   Supplication

3. In your observation or experience, what is likely to be the outcome of a specific situation or need when:

   a. We pray, but don't take action.

   b. We take action, but don't pray.

   c. We pray *and* take action.

"You never lighten the load unless first you have felt the pressure in your own soul. You are never used of God to bring blessing until God has opened your eyes to see things as they are."

Alan Redpath
Victorious Christian Service

Gospel at a Glance: Redemption | Nehemiah wept for Jerusalem, praying and confessing sin on behalf of God's people, "Your servants…whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand" (Nehemiah 1:10 ESV). The day would come when Jesus would weep over the city (Matthew 23:37) and pray for broken people living in exile because of sin. He became the answer to His own prayer by giving His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

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 pray—for ourselves, for others, for our church, for our nation. As a focus for your prayer, use the memory verse, another Scripture, or 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 _____

Notes