

NEHEMIAH

return + rebuild



NEHEMIAH OVERVIEW

The book of Nehemiah tells the story of the return of God's people to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. But this isn't just about physically returning to Jerusalem. This story is about returning to God and his ways – what the Bible calls repentance.

This is a story for all of us. It's a story about all of us. We all go through seasons of rebellion and ruin. And we all have the opportunity to return and rebuild, repent and restore.

Thankfully, we have a God who never gives up on rebellious people and offers means for us always to return to him and be made new. Israel was given the means to return and rebuild through foreign kings. We are given the means to return and rebuild through King Jesus.

To learn more about Nehemiah, watch this Bible Project video on Ezra-Nehemiah: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/ezra-nehemiah/>.

PART 2: PROVISION TO REBUILD

Read the text: Nehemiah 2:1-8

In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. And the king said to me, “Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart.” Then I was very much afraid. I said to the king, “Let the king live forever! Why should not my face

be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it." And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time. And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy." And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.

This week, we see God provide for God's plans through God's preferred means. As cupbearer to the king, Nehemiah is in a very trusted position. God put Nehemiah, one of His own, in a position of power - to provide for His plans through His preferred means. So, when the King sees his sadness, he is very concerned and Nehemiah shares of his grief over the ruined walls in Jerusalem. The King is moved with compassion to ask what Nehemiah wants. Once again, Nehemiah prays to God and makes his requests. He asks to be given time to return and rebuild the walls along with very specific requests for the provisions he will need for this task.

Through prayer, Nehemiah knows that God wants him to leverage his position of power to rebuild the walls in Jerusalem. Although he risked losing his position, and possibly his life, he obediently stepped out with courage to ask the king for his support in this task. Ultimately, this story reminds us that,

through Jesus, God provides the means to accomplish the rebuilding He wants to do in our lives and our world.

Discussion Questions:

These questions are written for DNA groups, but you can use in any setting, including missional communities. Because they were written for the intimacy of DNA friendships, you may need to adjust for larger groups.

1. What good change am I longing for? Nehemiah longed for the walls in Jerusalem to be rebuilt. What kind of “rebuilding” has God burdened your heart with?
2. What position of power has God put me in that can be used for Him? Start with the simple question, where does God have me? Inventory and name the positions of power that God has put you in. You might feel like you don’t have any power. Andy Crouch helpfully defines power as *the capacity for meaningful action*. Where could you take meaningful action?
3. What is holding me back from using that position for God? Public humiliation? Loss of income? Loss of relationships? Loss of power/control? What might this reveal about how I view God?
4. Dream: What could God do through me from that position for the world? We shouldn’t assume we know what rebuilt life should look like. We might start rebuilding without God. Remember restoration isn’t just getting back what was, its about what could be. So let's dream together: God, what is the vision for the rebuild?