

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 3: STRATEGY FOR REBUILDING

Read the text: Nehemiah 2:9-20

Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days. Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode. I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Dragon Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass. Then I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were to do the work.

Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision." And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work. But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" Then I replied to them, "The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem."

Nehemiah takes three days of rest before doing a thorough inspection of the walls to determine the actual damage and need of repair. He defines the discouraging reality without mincing words, but also provides encouragement by sharing about God's hand on him and the favorable provision granted by the King.

Nehemiah is calling them not to put their confidence in his leadership but in God's power and provision. This is the motivation needed to get to the work of rebuilding. It is God who has provided the favor and the resources. God will also provide the inspiration and the strength not only to rebuild but to persevere in the face of opposition.

In rebuilding our lives, the church, or our city, we would be wise to follow Nehemiah's strategy: 1) Rest before you assess; 2) Assess before you address the problem; 3) Involve others in the assessment; 4) Be honest about what is broken; 5) Remembrance is key to rebuilding; and 6) Don't be surprised by opposition.

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. Looking at Nehemiah's strategy, detailed in the paragraph above, which part is hardest for you as you think about the problems you face?
2. Take time to share about a specific problem or struggle you are currently facing so that you can apply this strategy together.
3. Stopping to rest in the face of unsolved problems requires trusting that God can hold things together while you rest. What might this look like for you?
4. What might it look like to do an honest assessment of the problem and who else do you need to involve in this assessment? Try to be as specific as possible.
5. Do you tend to minimize the problem, either making excuses or handing out blame? What does that look like and why do you

think that is? Have you been honest about the opposition you have faced or will face?

6. Remembrance is key to rebuilding. What truths about who God is and what He has done will be key for you to hold onto as you face this problem?