

# 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 6: THE PROTECTION OF FAITHFULNESS

Read the text: Nehemiah 6:1-16

Now when Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies heard that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it (although up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm. And I sent

messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" And they sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner. In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. In it was written, "It is reported among the nations, and Geshem also says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall. And according to these reports you wish to become their king. And you have also set up prophets to proclaim concerning you in Jerusalem, 'There is a king in Judah.' And now the king will hear of these reports. So now come and let us take counsel together." Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind." For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done." But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

Now when I went into the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was confined to his home, he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple. Let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. They are coming to kill you by night." But I said, "Should such a man as I run away? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live? I will not go in." And I understood and saw that God had not sent him, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. For this purpose he was hired, that I should be afraid and act in this way and sin, and so they could give me a bad name in order to taunt me. Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, according to these things that they did, and also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who wanted to make me afraid.

So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. And when all our enemies heard of it, all the

nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

In light of Nehemiah's success in rebuilding the wall, his enemies grow more intent on taking him out. They conspire to kidnap, malign, intimidate and undermine Nehemiah. However, Nehemiah remains focused on the work, full of integrity, strengthened and guided by God's hand. He was protected by God and in faithful commitment to God's work.

Every good work that God calls us to do will eventually come under attack either from others or from the evil one or both. The key to our protection is not in defending ourselves or fighting others but in faithfulness to God's call and trust in God's protection and power.

During this season, we are called to the very difficult work of being God's people on mission in a very toxic and, at times, vicious world. As we stand up for justice and against oppression, seek the good of our city, while also remaining faithful to God's word, we will experience attack. And when we fail, which we will, we must put our hope in Jesus, who was never distracted from His work and was faithful to the very end. Nothing kept Jesus from fulfilling God's work on our behalf. He went to the point of death on a cross for us so that we, now in him, can do all things through Christ who gives us strength for the work.

### **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 work is God calling you to do for His glory and the good of others? It could be many things. (related to your role, your job, your ministry, work in the community, etc.) Is it important enough

to enable you to say “no” to destructive distractions?  
(Remember, importance is rooted in purpose, not position.)

2. How have you been lured away from this work? What are the destructive distractions in your life that pull you away from the work God has called you to do? Be specific with each other about these.
3. Nehemiah knows and believes the identity and calling God has given him. This allows him to resist the lies that others speak to him to try to lead him to sin against God. When we forget who we are, we tend to either have an inflated view of ourselves or a deflated view of ourselves. Which direction do you tend to go? What does that look like when you believe this lie? Do you know who you are? How does this truth bring security and freedom?
4. So often, we are not faithful and have failed to stay focused on our identity and calling. Yet, Jesus was faithful to the end, never distracted or lured away from His calling and work. How is this good news of Jesus’ faithfulness good news to you?
5. What is God calling you to do? Be specific. It’s okay if you’re not sure and don’t know. Be honest about that too. Take time to pray for each other and ask for the Spirit’s help.