

# 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 9: COVENANT PROMISES

Read the text: Nehemiah 10:28-39

“The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law that was given by

Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord and his rules and his statutes. We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons. And if the peoples of the land bring in goods or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on a holy day. And we will forego the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.

“We also take on ourselves the obligation to give yearly a third part of a shekel<sup>[a]</sup> for the service of the house of our God: for the showbread, the regular grain offering, the regular burnt offering, the Sabbaths, the new moons, the appointed feasts, the holy things, and the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God. We, the priests, the Levites, and the people, have likewise cast lots for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, according to our fathers' houses, at times appointed, year by year, to burn on the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the Law. We obligate ourselves to bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of every tree, year by year, to the house of the Lord; also to bring to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God, the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, as it is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and of our flocks; and to bring the first of our dough, and our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the wine and the oil, to the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and to bring to the Levites the tithes from our ground, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all our towns where we labor. And the priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive the tithes. And the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers of the storehouse. For the people of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of grain, wine, and oil to the chambers, where the vessels of the sanctuary are,

as well as the priests who minister, and the gatekeepers and the singers. We will not neglect the house of our God.”

After confessing to God’s faithfulness and also both their own and their fathers’ sin; the returning exiles make a covenant to keep a covenant, committing themselves to the Law of Moses and the people of God. They had broken the covenant and received the curses which led them into exile. Now in their return and repentance they recommit to the old covenant which included faithfulness to God through marrying those who also worshipped God; observance of Sabbath and Sabbaticals; and giving firstfruits and tithes, ensuring the temple and temple worship were maintained.

We are also a covenant community. Though we are part of the new covenant, we are still committed to the law of love and to do so in community with God’s people. We covenant together (membership) to help each other remain faithful to God and one another as disciples who make disciples. We have similar commitments to keep marriage pure as a picture of the gospel. We will commit together the spiritual practices that enable us to be formed into a Jesus-like people. We will give our time, talents and treasure to ensure the local church is thriving and accomplishing her purpose.

### **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. Before they renew their covenant commitment, they first spend time confessing to God’s character and His work, along with their own failure and sin (ch. 9). Why do you think it’s important to start with confession of who God is and what He has done for you, along with confession of your own sin?

How might remembering God's character and work shape the commitments you make?

2. If you're married, what needs renewal in your marriage? What work do you need God to do in your marriage? Try to get specific and go beyond "I just need to love my spouse more." If you're single, what might need renewed in your commitment to honor God in your singleness?
3. How can you renew a commitment to healthy work/rest rhythms? Have you learned how to engage in a rhythm of Sabbath rest? If not, why do you think that is? What steps might God be calling you to take?
4. What commitments of your time, talent, and treasure need renewal to your church? Are you committed to giving generously of your resources, skill, and time to serve the church family, even during COVID? How might God be specifically inviting you to renew your commitment in any of these areas? What might that look like?
5. The returned exiles made these commitments in a community. God doesn't call us to make these commitments in isolation, but in a community who will covenant together with us. Do you belong to a community worth giving your life to? Who makes up this community and will you renew your commitment to these men and women?