

Series Overview and Guides

2017-2018 ANNUAL THEME | SERIES 3

JANUARY—MARCH 2018

Objective

what we hope to see God accomplish in us through this study

We use our powers for good as Nehemiah did.

STATEMENTS OF THE OBJECTIVE

"I devoted myself to the construction of the wall, and all my subordinates were gathered there for the work."

—Nehemiah 5:16 HCSB

"The book thrills and throbs and pulsates with the tremendous force of this man's will."

—G. Campbell Morgan,
Living Message of Nehemiah

Premise

why we are studying this

Christians today find it difficult to do good, much less to maintain the kind of healthy character that allows for genuine goodness. *Nehemiah* engages us in a life-changing case study where we can grow into similar servants – resolute, prayerful, trustworthy, God-pleasing, and selfless.

STATEMENTS OF THE PREMISE

"After I made an inspection, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, 'Don't be afraid of them. Remember the great and awe-inspiring Lord, and fight for your countrymen, your sons and daughters, your wives and homes.'"

—Nehemiah 4:14 HCSB

"Learn from Nehemiah the secrets of resolute leadership and successful service."

—Warren Wiersbe,
Be Determined

"As we study Nehemiah's life, we will see that he had many trials and difficulties come knocking on his door, and he felt the fiery blasts of threats and accusations. But they could not blow him down. Nor could they stop him from leading his people to rebuild Jerusalem's walls, providing protection against the wolves that threatened Israel."

—Charles Swindoll,
Hand Me Another Brick

Theme

what the study is about

God revives! That is the astonishing and encouraging message continually shared by the exilic and post-exilic prophets. From Ezekiel's dry bones vision to Nehemiah's walls to Haggai's temple construction, what seemed hopeless and dead is brought to life by God. He gets all glory in this, and it is an honor for humans to be used in God's restoration. To be most useful in revival, one should follow the lead of Nehemiah and develop godly character.

STATEMENTS OF THE THEME

"I told them how the gracious hand of my God had been on me, and what the king had said to me. They said, 'Let's start rebuilding,' and they were encouraged to do this good work."

—Nehemiah 2:18 HCSB

"Like the Book of Ezra, the Book of Nehemiah may be understood in terms of the faithfulness and holiness of God. The first part of Nehemiah is concerned primarily with the rebuilding of the walls... The servant of God used to instigate this restoration was Nehemiah, the cupbearer to the king in Susa (Neh 1:11)... Glory should not be given to Nehemiah, however, but rather to God, who directed and brought about this event. Just as in Ezra, the providence of God, his loving care, and discipline were the real forces behind the events recorded in these chapters."

—Mervin Breneman
Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS

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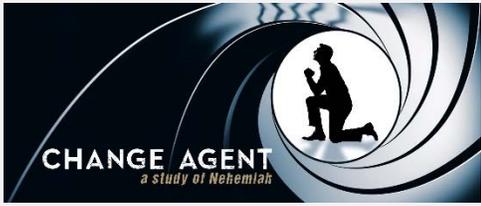
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SERIES 3 | SESSION 1

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2017-2018

USE YOUR POWERS FOR GOOD

SCRIPTURE READING

Nehemiah 9:26-38; 10:28-29; 13:31

KEY IDEAS

THEME

By God's grace, each of His chosen ones can be change agents. We can become people who use our powers for good. However, any lasting positive change requires that we develop godly character. Nehemiah's book is written in a way that highlights his character and we should emulate it.

OBJECTIVE

We are agents for positive change.

CHARACTER

No other OT book – save possibly Jonah – so reveals the character of the human author. Unlike Jonah, what is exposed about Nehemiah is very positive. There are eight qualities the text brings out, each of which is evidently intended for emulation by God's people.

PRAYER

Pray for each other during this week. Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 1: Change Agent

1. Nehemiah took a serious look at the circumstances and situations all around him. If we are to become agents for change, we must do the same. In what circumstances or situations would you like to become a change agent for good?

2. We can clearly identify eight character qualities of Nehemiah. He was:
 - Reliant Upon Prayer
 - Trustworthy
 - Politically Savvy
 - A Visionary
 - A Teambuilder
 - Steadfast
 - Selfless
 - Discuss the impact each of these can have on efforts to bring about positive change.

 - Discuss practical ways we can learn to master these characteristics and use them for good.

3. In what specific ways has God uniquely positioned you to use your gifts and abilities in bringing about positive change?
 - Individually?

 - As a group or team?

4. What positive changes would you like to see happen in 2018?
 - in Frisco Bible Church?

 - in your community?

 - in your family?



SERIES 3 | SESSION 2

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2017-2018

USE YOUR POWERS FOR GOOD

SCRIPTURE READING

Nehemiah 1:1-11; 2:4-5; 4:4-5; 6:14

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Nehemiah's default response was to pray. He prayed and fasted deliberately. He also prayed in response to situations, including while standing in the presence of the most powerful human on earth. And he prayed imprecatory psalms when ugly opposition threatened.

OBJECTIVE

We are people of prayer.

IMPRECATION

Imprecatory psalms call down judgment on the enemies of YHWH and His people. Psalm 69 is probably the best known. Imprecation appears in the rest of the Bible as well, but is especially bold in a number of psalms. "Imprecation" is a Latin term (*imprecatio*) invented to describe these psalms...it combines the Latin "in" and a word for "pray." You pray God reveals truth in this situation.

PRAYER

Pray for each other during this week. Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Make prayer a regular habit in your life. Consider making a commitment to pray every day this week.

Session 2: Person of Prayer

1. What is one of your favorite verses from the Bible about prayer?
 - Discuss why it is difficult for us to confess our sins to God through prayer.
 - What are some other reasons that prayer is often said to be the weakest spiritual discipline for many believers?

3. In his *Confessions*, Augustine said, "We love the truth when it enlightens us and we despise the truth when it accuses us."
 - What are some examples of how the truth can enlighten us?
 - What are some examples of how the truth can accuse us?
 - How should we respond to each, specifically as it relates to prayer?

4. In what circumstances do you most often pray?

5. What are some ways we can help each other practice the discipline of praying consistently and proactively?



SERIES 3 | SESSION 3

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2017-2018

USE YOUR POWERS FOR GOOD

SCRIPTURE READING

Nehemiah 1:11-2:3; 5:1-15

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Nehemiah is proven trustworthy with the Emperor's life and the government of Judah. Even more importantly, he shows faithfulness in his response to and application of God's word. That positions him to be a remarkable force for good.

OBJECTIVE

We are trustworthy.

ACTS OF STUPIDITY

Please read these four common acts of stupidity, and ask God to protect you from falling in any one of these areas.

Flirting dangerously with sexual boundaries. By the time the physical sexual affair takes place, several sexual boundaries have already been crossed.

Plagiarism. You might think you can get away with it, but it becomes a pattern.

Financial stupidity. If you have any doubt about a financial matter, err on the side of total caution.

Social media madness. The office of pastor, as well as other church leadership positions, demands you demonstrate total integrity.

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we would be people who are trustworthy in our relationships, our responsibilities, and our use of God's word.

Session 3: Trustworthy

1. Describe someone in your life who has demonstrated trustworthiness. How did this person impact you?

2. Read Nehemiah 5:9-12. When things are going wrong—when an agent is needed to lead positive change—in what ways could your honesty and integrity impact this change?

3. According to Nehemiah 5:14-15, Nehemiah did not take advantage of certain abusive benefits he was entitled to as governor.
 - Why did he do this?
 - How did this demonstrate trustworthiness?

4. Consider these four acts of "stupidity" and discuss how we can live above reproach in each area:
 - Dangerous flirting with the opposite sex
 - Plagiarism—claiming someone else's work as yours
 - Financial mismanagement or abuse
 - Social media madness

5. How does accountability with other believers help to guard and bolster one's trustworthiness?

6. Seriously consider this question: Are you worthy of someone's trust? Why or why not?



SERIES 3 | SESSION 4

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2017-2018

USE YOUR POWERS FOR GOOD

SCRIPTURE READING

Nehemiah 2:6-16; 5:17-6:14

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Servant-leadership rises or falls on the capacity of God’s person to manage human interaction. Diplomacy gets a bad rap, but when practiced honestly, it can spark great success. Nehemiah shows us the import of being definitive, loyal, discreet, generous, well-informed, unflappable, and insightful with others. He also shows the power of being God-focused, speaking frankly with YHWH.

OBJECTIVE

We are wise with people.

POLITICALLY SAVVY

In Susa, as in most kingdoms, political savvy was required to reach the heights of service in the empire. Nehemiah displayed this capacity in his speeches before Artaxerxes, his initial assessment on the ground in Jerusalem, and his management of the politically-crafted conflicts in Israel.

Nehemiah also recognized the ugly nonsense of false prophets. When Shemaiah seemed to offer friendship and protection within the temple, Nehemiah saw through Shemaiah’s ruse and rejected the offer because he knew it was a sin to enter the temple.

PRAYER

Pray for each other during this week. Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 4: Politically Wise

1. With those over him in authority, Nehemiah is **definitive** with his requests and answers, and he is **loyal**. (Nehemiah 2:6-8; 6:1-9)
 - How does being definitive show respect to those in authority over us?
 - What does loyalty look like in our culture of fierce independence?
2. With those he has authority over, he is **discreet**, and **generous**. (6:10-16; 5:17-18)
 - What are some challenges today to being discreet with those around us? How can we overcome these challenges?
 - Being generous is about more than money. What are some examples of how leaders in authority over you have been generous?
3. With peers outside of his community, he is **well-informed**, and **unflappable** when opposed. (2:10, 6:1-2,9; 6:3-8)
 - With so much disinformation being spread today, what are some ways we can be well-informed?
 - What are some examples of opposition in your life? Pray for each other to remain unflappable in the work God has given each of us.
4. With peers inside of his community, he is **diplomatic**, and he is **insightful**. (2:7,9; 6:10-14)
 - Being diplomatic is more art than science. As we learn to use our powers for good, how can the art of diplomacy help?
 - How can we improve our ability to be insightful?
5. With the ultimate authority—God—Nehemiah is **dedicated**, **frank**, and **focused**. (6:11; 6:9; 5:19)
 - How can we stay focused on our good objectives when others try to interfere or sidetrack us?
 - How does Nehemiah show his desire to please God and not himself?
6. Which of these traits resonate with you in your circumstances?
 - In which traits do you excel?
 - In which do you need to improve?



SERIES 3 | SESSION 5

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2017-2018

USE YOUR POWERS FOR GOOD

SCRIPTURE READING

Nehemiah 2:7-8; 17-20; 7:73-8:12

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Nehemiah’s visionary capacity is legendary. However, unlike many “visionaries” who consult on leadership, Nehemiah’s contributions are common-sensical and worthy of adoption as we tackle the problems of our time.

OBJECTIVE

We develop biblical vision.

BE THOU MY VISION

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true
Word
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Riches I heed not, nor man’s empty praise
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won
May I reach Heaven’s joys, O bright Heav’n’s
Sun
Heart of my own heart, whate’er befall
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

—Eleanor Hull

PRAYER

Pray for each other during this week. Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 5: Great Vision

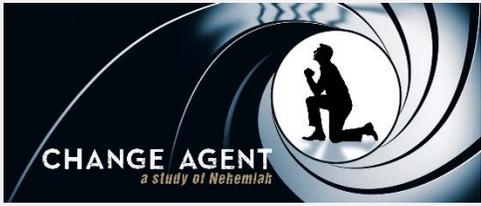
- Nehemiah consistently recognized that apart from the Lord, he could accomplish nothing. His trust was in God’s provision and protection to accomplish the work. Furthermore, he led his people to do the same, teaching them to rejoice in God’s faithfulness.
 - Describe a time when God inspired you to accomplish something that could only be done by completely relying on Him.
 - What were the challenges along the way?
 - How did God provide for you throughout the work?
- Read Nehemiah 2:7-8.
 - What two challenges did Nehemiah foresee that these letters would help him overcome?
 - To whom did Nehemiah give credit for the fulfillment of these requests?
 - Discuss a time that God led you to be bold in asking for something similarly special or difficult to receive.
- Nehemiah 8 teaches us that God’s faithfulness, even when it convicts us and leads us to repentance, is a deep source of renewed joy for His people. In what ways have you experienced similar revival through life’s challenges?
- As you seek the Lord’s hand in directing the future of your church, what role do you see yourself playing in accomplishing its vision? What challenges to that vision can you foresee and begin to pray about now?

Pray that we, like Nehemiah, will recognize “the good hand of our God upon us,” and that we will give Him all the credit as we rejoice in His faithfulness.



SERIES 3 | SESSION 6

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2017-2018

USE YOUR POWERS FOR GOOD

SCRIPTURE READING

Nehemiah 3; 11:1-2; 12:44-47

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Nehemiah may be the most effective and efficient coalition builder in history. He draws together a remarkably wide and committed set of teams that achieve true unity. Possibly more impressive than the ad hoc work is the commitment to resettle Jerusalem – a sacrifice of lifestyle and not merely a little time.

OBJECTIVE

We build on our unity in Christ.

DEVELOPING LEADERS

In Nehemiah we constantly read about the “leaders” of the people. God raises up leaders; and those in charge, such as Nehemiah, must pay attention to developing leadership and delegating responsibility to the leaders. Nehemiah teaches us the balance between efficient organization [with] good leadership and dependence on God at the same time. The two should not and need not be contradictory.

—Marvin Breneman
Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

PRAYER

Pray for each other during this week. Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

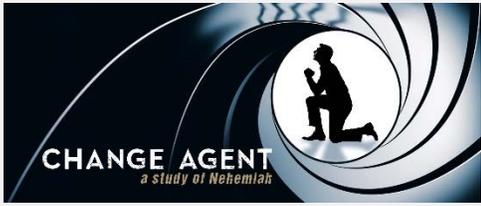
Session 6: Dynamic Team Builder

1. Nehemiah 3 lists many of the people Nehemiah motivated to help rebuild Jerusalem’s wall. Some are listed by name only, while many are described by their town or occupation.
 - When you read about all the people doing the work, what impresses you the most?
 - There are people from many local communities worshipping at Frisco Bible Church.
 - a. As a group, list all those you are personally aware of.
 - b. How many of these are represented in your Life Group?
2. Read chapter 2:17-18 and briefly discuss how Nehemiah motivated the people.
3. In chapter 11:1-2, Nehemiah took steps to solidify unity among the people. Maintaining unity within a church body can often be difficult.
 - What are some of the challenges of maintaining unity in Christ?
 - What are some of the ways your church encourages and builds on unity?
4. It is important for church leaders to balance hands-on leadership with delegation.
 - Name some of the tasks that should be done by volunteers to accomplish the mission of the church.
 - What types of responsibilities must be left to church leadership and should not be delegated?
5. Pray this week for the leaders and volunteer workers at your church. And pray for strong and enduring unity in Christ throughout your local body and other churches in your area, that we may all fulfill the work God has given us to do.



SERIES 3 | SESSION 7

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2017-2018

USE YOUR POWERS FOR GOOD

SCRIPTURE READING

Nehemiah 4; 6 :15-19

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Nehemiah's opponents tormented him with what Ryrie tidily dubs "mockery, conspiracy, extortion, compromise, slander, and treachery." Yet, Nehemiah fought through it all and triumphed. He prayed, motivated others, and vigilantly pressed on.

OBJECTIVE

We are strong in the Lord.

OPPOSITION

Since Nehemiah's opponents did not possess the political ability to stop this rebuilding effort, they were forced to resort to a barrage of verbal assaults and threats of physical attack in their attempt to undermine this work. These tactics have changed very little in the centuries that have passed. The real test of a leader is how he or she faces crises and reacts to opposition. The manner in which Nehemiah responds to opposition provides us with an example to follow when we face adverse situations today.

—Marvin Breneman
Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

PRAYER

Pray for each other during this week. Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 7: Stalwart

1. Have you ever encountered opposition to a work you felt God calling you to do? Explain the situation, how it made you feel, and what eventually happened.
 - How did Nehemiah pray for those who ridiculed him and the people's work?
 - How did the people respond to the taunts of the scoffers?

3. Read the rest of chapter four, and chapter six, verses 15-16.
 - What strategy did Nehemiah use to ensure the work continued even while under constant threat of attack?
 - How can that same strategy apply to the Church as we seek to fulfill the great commission today?

4. What oppositions to your faith do you personally face in your life? How do you handle those?

5. Read 1 John 4:1-6, paying close attention to verse 4. In what ways can this passage encourage you when you are facing opposition?



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SERIES 3 | SESSION 8

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2017-2018

USE YOUR POWERS FOR GOOD

SCRIPTURE READING

Nehemiah 5:14-19; 11:2; 13:6-13

KEY IDEAS

THEME

An oft-overlooked aspect, Nehemiah's other-centeredness set a cultural tone. He sacrificed his entitlements as a government official and called out others who refused to care for the needy.

OBJECTIVE

We are selfless.

SACRIFICIAL SERVICE

We must be willing to sacrifice personal gain for the spiritual good of others. It has been said that leaders are people who accept more of the blame and less of the credit, but they are also people who quietly sacrifice so that others might have more... For people in places of authority, the temptation to increase in wealth and power is always present, but Nehemiah walked in the fear of the Lord and served honestly.

Warren W. Wiersbe
The Warren Wiersbe Commentary: OT

HUMILITY

"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less."

—Rick Warren
The Purpose Driven Life

PRAYER

Pray for each other during this week. Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

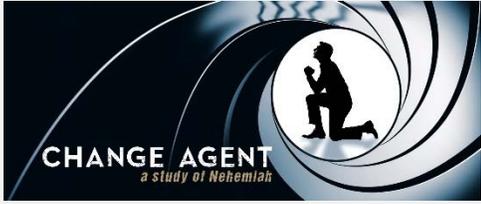
Session 8: Selfless

1. 1. Read Nehemiah 5:14-19. What are some examples of Nehemiah's selfless attitude?
 - in one's family, or friend group?
 - in a church community?
 - in a business or work environment?
2. As a servant-leader, Nehemiah upset the status quo of his day. How can a believer as a servant-leader upset an unhealthy status quo today...
 - What motivated Nehemiah to be other-people centered? (see Nehemiah 5:15)
 - As Christians, what is our motivation for living selflessly? Read Luke 6:32-36 and Philippians 2:1-4.
 - What are some specific ways this group can pray for you in this area?
3. Read Nehemiah 11:1-2.
 - How was Nehemiah's selfless attitude reflected in the people at large?
 - Read Romans 12:9-21, and discuss ways in which a selfless attitude can become contagious.
4. Read Nehemiah 13:6-9. Nehemiah completed his 12 years as governor in Judah and returned to his palace life, but then gave that up to return to the work of rebuilding Jerusalem and Judah.
 - What would you be willing to give up to advance the work of God in our world?
 - Give some examples of what people might have to give up – such as spending their day off doing a service project.
5. In Nehemiah 13:10-13, Nehemiah supports the Levites who were also servant-leaders in Judah. How can we support our leaders and encourage them in doing God's work?



SERIES 3 | SESSION 9

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2017-2018

USE YOUR POWERS FOR GOOD

SCRIPTURE READING

Nehemiah 5:19; 13:14, 22-31

KEY IDEAS

THEME

He lived to please God. This was his most important trait, the characteristic that drove all the rest. His five statements of “Remember me, my God, with favor” are neither the crowings of personal aggrandizement nor the whining pleas of one doubtful of his reception. They are rather statements of focus. His only goal was, as the Westminster divines would render it about 2000 years later, “to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

OBJECTIVE

We live to please God

HESED

In my opinion, *hesed* is the most remarkable word ever coined in any language. Though translated faithfulness, mercy, or kindness, *hesed* is none of these; rather, it is a sense of all of them with an added conviction of moral obligation. It is a word that opens a brilliant window into the very character of God. *Hesed* is loyal lovingkindness that will not die.

—Wayne Braudrick

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we have the grace to use our powers for good as Nehemiah did, and that we give God the glory for all that He does through us.

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

Session 9: Focused on YHWH

1. Think of someone you know who lives to please God, or who lives a life which glorifies God. Tell the group what that looks like.
2. Read Nehemiah 13:22 together. At the end of this prayer, Nehemiah glorifies God by recalling His *hesed*—God’s steadfast love, or abundant faithfulness.
 - Reflecting on our study, describe some ways Nehemiah experienced God’s *hesed*.
 - Talk about ways in which you have experienced God’s abundant *hesed*.
3. Read Nehemiah 5:19, 13:14, and 13:31. Nehemiah is asking God to remember his (Nehemiah’s) own attempts at faithfulness which were grounded in the Mosaic covenant under which he lived.

Read Matthew 22:34-40. What are some deeds under the new covenant in which we live, through which we may demonstrate our faithfulness to God?

SERIES WRAP UP

4. Review the Objective and Premise of this series. What impact has studying Nehemiah had on you?
5. Review the character traits of Nehemiah which we covered in this series. Which ones challenged you the most, and why?

