

Lessons from the Book of Nehemiah

“A mind to work”

2018 New Jersey Florida College Camp

Nehemiah- A Mind to Work
(Lesson 1 – See the Need and Seek God’s Help)



Intro.

A. The need for protection

1. Write some things that humans do to protect themselves against disease, financial problems, injury in automobiles, etc.

B. Ancient cities had walls to protect them from invading armies, bandits and other dangers.

1. Without walls, the cities were vulnerable. (They were open to danger.)
2. How would you like to live in a rough neighborhood with no doors in your house and open windows? Would you feel vulnerable (in danger)?

C. Historical background to Nehemiah

1. The Jewish people had been punished for their worship of idols by being sent away to captivity in Babylon between the years 606 and 536 before Christ.
2. Several groups made returns to Jerusalem and Judea starting in 536 B.C.
 - a. Some finished rebuilding the temple under Zerubbabel in about 520 B.C.
3. However, the Jews in Judea remained weak. The walls were broken down.
 - a. Many Jews who stayed behind in Babylon and Persia were more prosperous.
4. That’s where the story of Nehemiah begins

I. Sad news (Read chapter 1 verses 1-3)

A. Analyzing the text

1. Who gave this sad news to Nehemiah? _____ (He is also mentioned in 7:2)
2. What were some words used to describe the people left in Jerusalem? _____
3. How were the walls of the city? _____

B. Making some applications – Thought questions.

1. Have you ever known some people who could be described like the remnant of people in Jerusalem? Have you ever thought that you might be described that way?
2. What are some ways our “spiritual” walls of protection can be broken down?

II. Nehemiah’s prayer

A. Read the prayer (verses 4-11)

1. What did Nehemiah do for several days before his prayer in verses 5-11? _____
2. What does Nehemiah do in the first part of his prayer? Verses 5,6

3. What does he do in verse 7? _____
4. What does he remind God of in verses 8, 9? (Reference Deut. 4:27-30)

5. What does he request in particular in the last part of verse 11? _____
6. What was Nehemiah’s work according to the last part of verse 11? _____

B. Applications

1. Have you ever been depressed about the physical or spiritual condition of a loved one?
2. What is the best thing to do in such circumstances?
3. What are some things that impress you about Nehemiah’s confession of sin?
4. Why is it essential to be completely open and honest when confessing sins?
5. Is it wrong to “remind God” of his promises? (verses 8,9)
6. Who is “the man” that Nehemiah is wanting to approach about the problem in verse 11?
 - * Why would this have been risky? (Read Esther 4:11 to see about the danger of approaching Persian kings without an invitation.)
7. What special position did Nehemiah have that would help him in this task? What did this involve? (He would have already known something about “security”)
8. What special position might you be in to help certain people in your life? (parents, siblings, friends, schoolmates, etc.)

III. Nehemiah receives the king's help

A. Read verses 1-6

1. Why did the king know something was wrong with Nehemiah? _____
2. How did Nehemiah feel when he realized the king had read his emotional state? _____
3. How did Nehemiah explain the problem to the king? _____
4. What did Nehemiah do before explaining what he wanted to the king? _____
5. How did the king respond? _____

B. Making applications

1. Have you ever had to ask someone important to do you a very important favor? (A teacher, the principal, your parents, etc.) Tell about it if you want.
2. Did you say a short prayer before you did it?
 - a. Would Jeremiah's prayer in the last part of verse 4 have been pretty short, but fervent?
 - b. Why are such prayers important?
 - c. When are some good times for short prayers like this?

C. Further requests – Read verses 7-10

1. If Nehemiah had been a half-hearted worker and not very responsible, would the king have been so willing to give him what he wanted? _____
2. And yet, who did Nehemiah credit with all the blessings? (verse 8) _____
3. Who wasn't very happy about the project? _____ and _____
(These are going to be the bad guys in the rest of the story.)

IV. Arrival in Jerusalem and preparation for the project

A. Read verses 11-16

1. What are some little details that indicate this is a true story of something that really happened? _____

* This kind of detail is all through the Bible. It's not fairy tales! It's history!

B. Applications

- * Why did you think it was best for Nehemiah not to tell anyone about his ride and immediate plans prematurely?
- * Are there times when it may be best for us to examine the situation and gather facts before talking to others? Give examples.

C. Read 17, 18

1. How did the Jewish leaders respond to Nehemiah's proposal to rebuild the walls?

D. Applications

- * What are some things Nehemiah did as a leader that made his proposal so quickly accepted by the leaders? How can we follow his example?

E. Read 19, 20

1. What two men are going to cause problems about his project? _____ and _____
2. What were two parts of Nehemiah's answer to them?
 - a. Who would give them success? _____
 - b. Was it any of their business? _____

* Sanballat was probably a Samaritan leader (4:2). He came from either Upper Beth Horon or Lower Beth Horon, in the area just south of Samaria and north of Jerusalem. Tobias was an Ammonite, traditional enemies of Israel.

Conclusion – How can we be people of vision like Nehemiah who take on challenging projects and trust in God as we do them? What are some key elements of his success and ours?

B. Thought questions for application

1. What would have been some benefits from working “close to home?”
2. What are some ways we should work “close to home” today?

3. Have you known someone who was excited about working in the streets or in other countries that didn’t take care of working with his family?
4. When you have children, why will it be important to work with you on various aspects of serving God?
5. What are some things you can do together with your children when you have them?

IV. Work “overtime”

A. Questions

1. How many sections did Meremoth and Meshulam work on? (vss. 4, 21, 30)
2. Who did **not** help the men of Tekoa? (vs. 5) _____
3. Did the men of Tekoa do their work anyway? _____
4. What else did they do according to verse 27? _____
5. How did Baruc the son of Zabbai repair his section? _____

B. Applications

1. What are some things that some Christians want to do “as little as possible” in the church?

2. Why is the desire to do as little as possible harmful in the church?
3. Are some people like the “nobles” of Tecoa and feel that they are “too good” to do physical work or “menial” tasks?
 - a. Why is such a spirit so harmful among God’s people?
 - b. What are some jobs you might not want to do?
 - i. Clean toilets
 - ii. Wash dishes
 - iii. Clean up messes that old people can make
 - c. How can you make sure you are not an “arrogant” person like the nobles of Tecoa and that you’re willing to do anything to serve others?
4. Are there always some people who won’t work as they should?
5. How can we avoid being discouraged by such people and keep on working?
6. How can enthusiastic fellow workers encourage us?
 - a. Tell of some enthusiastic people you know in school, work or church whose enthusiasm rubs off on other people?
 - b. Tell of some unenthusiastic people who discourage others (no names please!)
 - c. What are some enthusiasm killers?
7. How can you make sure you are an encourager and not a discourager in your work habits?

Conclusion – What are some things you can do to make sure you learn good work habits, not only in the kingdom of God but in your life in general?

Nehemiah - A Mind to Work

(Lesson 3 – Enemies!)



Intro. Whenever we desire to serve God, we'll always have to deal with enemies!

I. External enemies – These are the Samaritans (Sanballat) and Ammonites who were close to Judea

* Thought questions designed to help us make applications

A. Threat - Ridicule – Read chapter 4:1-3 and answer the questions

1. What was the focus of the ridicule of Sanballat in verses 1,2? _____

2. What was the focus of Tobiah in verse 3? _____

* What are some ways people ridicule Christians and their work today?

B. The response (Read verses 4 -6)

1. What did Nehemiah ask God to do to the enemies?

* Thought question for mature students? How do “imprecatory prayers” like this harmonize with the teaching of Jesus to love our enemies? Is it always wrong to desire justice?

* Why is prayer so important when facing those who would make fun of us?

2. How does verse 6 describe the way the people worked? With _____

* Why is it important to respond to ridicule with renewed zeal and fervor?

C. Threat - Violence (verses 7,8)

1. What did the enemies threaten to do? _____

* How do the enemies of Christ sometimes threaten us today? _____

D. The response (verse 9)

1. What two things did the Jews do? _____

* Why after praying, should we also take action? (When sick, when in need, etc.)

2. What was another problem (verse 10) _____ Does that happen today?

E. Threat - Infiltration (Verse 11)

1. What tactic did the enemies propose in verse 11? To be _____

* How does Satan try to infiltrate God's people today? (Look at Acts 20:29-31 if you want)

F. Response (Verses 13-15) – Again we see action along with attitude adjustment

1. What action did Nehemiah take in verse 13? _____

2. What attitude should they avoid, according to verse 14? _____

3. Who would fight for them? _____

4. Who would they be fighting for? _____

* How can we avoid fear today?

* Why is fighting evil as individuals also involve fighting evil for our families and friends?

G. Response (Verses 16-18)

1. How did Nehemiah divide the responsibilities? _____

2. What did each worker wear by his side as he worked? (vs. 18) _____

* Why is it important for Christians to be able to build as well as defend? In what ways do they build in the work of the Lord? In what ways do they defend?

* Do some disciples excel at building while others excel at defending? Why are both needed?

G. Response (Verse 19)

1. How would separate groups be advised of danger in areas away from them? _____

* How can we “blow the trumpet” today when there is spiritual danger?

H. Summary (Read verses 21-23)

1. When did the workers lay their weapons down? _____

* Spiritually, can we afford to “lay our weapons down?” What are our weapons?

I. Threat - Discredit leaders (Chapter 6:1-14 focuses on efforts to discredit Nehemiah personally.)

- Tactics

- Isolate Nehemiah from his Jewish brethren (Verses 1-4)

- Slander (“Nehemiah wants to be king,” (Verses 5-7)

- Fear, cowardice (Get him to run away – (Verses 10-13)

J. Response

- 1. How did Nehemiah respond in the last part of verse 9 and verse 14? _____
- * Why is this such an important tactic for us to use today when people want to discredit us?
- 2. Did Nehemiah give in an inch? (Verse 4) _____
- 3. Who did he realize was the source of all these tactics? (Verse 12) _____
- * Why is it always important for us to investigate the source of information we receive? How do we see that in Acts 17:11?

II. Internal enemies

- An character in an old comic strip "Pogo" said, "We have met the enemy and he is us!"
- * Why can we sometimes be our own worse enemies?
- A. Indentured servitude (a kind of slavery) caused by excessive interest in lending money (usury)
 - When people couldn't pay their debts, they had to give up their land and even their children.
 - Chapter 5:1-5 describes this problem.
- B. Response – Read chapter 5 verses 6-12
 - 1. How did Nehemiah feel when hearing about this? _____
 - * Is it always wrong to be angry? What's the difference between the bad kind of anger and "righteous indignation" _____
 - 2. What did he demand to be done? (verse 11) _____
 - 3. Did all the leaders agree to do this? (vs. 12) _____
 - * Can Christians sometimes take advantage of others? How?
 - * Why is it important to be decisive in getting brethren to stop taking advantage of others?
- C. Response – Active efforts to help the poor 5:14-19
 - 1. How many people did Nehemiah feed? (vs. 17) _____
 - 2. How many ox were killed each day to feed them? _____ How many sheep? _____
 - * Why is it not enough to not take advantage of others, but to take active steps to help them?
- D. Collaboration with "the enemy," neglect of tithes, violation of the Sabbath, mixed marriages
 - These will be analyzed in the last lesson when looking at chapter 13

Conclusion

- A. Which do you think is the greatest danger? External enemies? Or internal?
- B. What do you think of some of the biggest external enemies to God's people today?

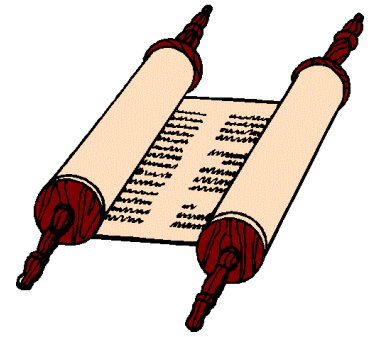
- C. What do you think are some of the biggest internal enemies to God's people today?

- D. What are some things you think you can do to help in the battles against both types of enemies among God's people?

- E. What are the biggest enemies you must face in your own life? (Combine external and internal)

- F. What are some specific steps you can take to battle your enemies, both internal and external?

Nehemiah- A Mind to Work
(Lesson 4 – Restoring God’s Ways)



Intro. Though it is essential to have spiritual walls to protect from enemies, they will be of no use if inside the walls, things are not done according to God’s will. Chapters 8 and 9 deal with spiritual renewal of God’s people.

I. The reading of the law (Chapter 8)

- The law had been neglected and yet these were still God’s people.

A. Read verses 1-4

1. How does verse 1 describe the attitude of the people as they gathered? _____
* Have we seen this phrase before in Nehemiah? Why is this important when we gather together today?
2. What day did Ezra bring out the book of the law to read? _____
* This would have been the gathering for the trumpets, which announced the coming day of atonement.
3. What three groups gathered to hear the reading? _____
4. From where (what position) did Ezra read the law? _____

B. Read verses 5-8

1. What did Ezra open? _____
2. What body position did the people assume as they praised God in the last part of verse 6

* Though this is not a law, why would it have been good and be good today?
3. According to verse 7, what did some of the Levites do as the law was being read?
4. According to verse 8, what two things did they do to make God’s will understandable?

C. Thought questions from the previous verses.

1. Here we see essential elements of good Bible teaching and preaching. What are they? Make a list. _____

2. Why do some Bible lessons and sermons not reach this ideal? Is the preacher sometimes to blame? The listeners? Both?

D. Read verses 9-12

1. What had the people been doing during the reading of the law? (last part of 9) _____
* Why do you think they were doing that?
2. Why did Nehemiah, Ezra and the others tell them that they didn’t need to do that?

3. What would help them to rejoice? _____

E. Thought questions from the above verses

1. Some should cry when considering God’s words (James 5:1-3). Here they are told to rejoice. What makes the difference?
2. When we realize what God wants us to do, why should that make us happy? How can we share that joy with others?

F. Read verses 13-15

1. When reading in the law, what feast did they find that they needed to celebrate? (Lev. 23:33-42)

G. Read verses 16-18

1. How long had it been since the children of Israel had celebrated the feast of tabernacles that way? _____
2. What did Ezra do on every day of the feast? _____
3. What did they do on the 8th day and why? _____
* Is it good or bad to do things “according to the rule” (ESV)? (Not a popular concept!)

II. Prayer of Confession – Chapter 9

A. Preparations (Read verses 1-5)

1. What were some symbols of their sadness for their sins? (Vs. 1) _____
 2. What did they do for the first quarter of the day _____ the second? _____
- * What are some ways we can prepare ourselves for a time of serious prayer?

B. The prayer

- A summary – The prayer makes a contrast between the power and faithfulness of God and the weakness and unfaithfulness of the Jewish people.

1. Why is God praised in verse 6? He is _____ of everything!
2. After mentioning God's righteousness with Abraham in verses 7 and 8, the reason is given for his fulfilling of his promises. What is it? Last part of 8 _____

- Verses 9-12 Describe God's greatness in freeing the Israelites from Egypt.

3. How does verse 13 describe God's laws given to Moses? _____

- Verses 14-21 Make a contrast between God's faithfulness and mercy and the rebellion of Israel in Sinai.

* What were some of Israel's sins in this time period?

* What was God's attitude in the face of this rebellion? (vs. 19)

- Verses 22-25 refer to God's power in the conquest of Canaan

- Verses 26-31 give a summary of the goodness of God and disobedience of the Jews

4. How does the last part of 26 describe what they did with the law? Where did they "cast" it? _____ their _____

* How do people do that today?

Read verses 32-37

5. How had God responded in spite of their unfaithfulness? _____

* Does verse 35 remind you of people in the USA?

6. What was their true condition according to verse 36? _____

* How is that the condition of the people who do not follow God today?

III. The Solemn Agreement to do God's Will (Chapter 9:38 - 10)

A. Verses 1-29 give the names of the principle people involved in this solemn agreement. (Aren't you glad these weren't your memory verses?)

B. The agreement (Verses 30-39)

1. What did they promise about their children (30)? _____

2. What did they promise to keep in 31? _____

3. What did they promise to give for the upkeep of the temple? (vs. 32) _____

* This was about 5 grams or an eighth of an ounce of silver. (This is less than was specified in Exodus 30:13-15, probably because the people were so poor.)

* Jesus paid this tax in Matthew 17:24-27

4. What did they promise to bring for sacrifices? (This was implied in Lev. 6:12,13) _____

5. What did they promise to bring to God in 35 and 36? _____

6. What did they promise to give to the Levites in 37-39? _____

C. Thought questions

1. Why is it good to make solemn agreements with others about our service to God?
2. What are some examples of solemn agreements that we make.
3. Some might say that these solemn agreements have to do primarily with "externals." Why are "external" acts of obedience (baptism, Lord's Supper, Correct organization, etc.) important if accompanied by a pure heart? Why can they become a numbing routine if not accompanied by a pure heart?

Nehemiah- A Mind to Work

(Lesson 5 – Be careful after victory!)

Intro. Nehemiah's reforms had transformed Jewish society. The city of Jerusalem became transformed from a ghost town to a bustling city. Chapter 11 describes how it was repopulated.

I. The dedication of the wall (Chapter 12:27-47)

A. Preparations and purification (Verses 27-30)

1. What is the primary group mentioned in verse 27? _____ In verse 28 _____
2. What type of spirit did they have when coming together (vs. 27) _____
3. What did the priests and Levites do for themselves and for others before beginning? (vs. 29)

B. Thought questions

1. Do you ever go to worship services in a bad mood? _____ What are some things you can do to prepare your attitude as you go?
2. What are some ways we can "cleanse" our thinking as we prepare to worship God?

C. The great procession on top of the wall (Verses 31-39)

- Evidently there were two groups that marched on top of the wall, one going to the north and the other towards the south until they met at the temple.

D. They arrive at the temple and offer sacrifices (verses 40-43)

1. How does verse 43 describe the spirit of the people as they worshipped?

E. Thought question

1. Do we always have to be "solemn" as we worship? Should there be some solemn moments and some moments of rejoicing?

F. The completion of the organization of the temple work (Verses 44-47)

1. Which verses here refer to the commands of David? _____
2. Which verses here refer to the examples of David's time? _____

G. Thought question -

1. Why are both commands and examples important to knowing God's will?
2. Thought question for advanced students - Though instruments were used in worship under the Old Testament, were they used in any way they wanted to use them or were there prescribed rules from David on how to use them? If God wanted us to use instruments today, would he want us to use them any way we wanted? Or, would he give us some instructions on how to use them? Does the lack of instructions on how to use instruments in worship say anything about whether God wants them or not?

II. Backsliding and more needed reforms (Chapter 13)

_ With all the encouraging reforms under Nehemiah, the Jewish people quickly went back to their old ways, especially when Nehemiah was called back temporarily to Babylon (vss. 6,7)

A. Separation from foreigners (Chapter 13:1-3)

1. Who did they find that they should exclude themselves from (Deut. 23:3-5) _____
* Ruth is an interesting exception, perhaps she came to Israel not as a someone seeking to influence Israel with her idolatry, but as someone seeking God.
2. What did they then do? _____

B. Thought question.

1. What should we do when we find out when reading the Bible that we've been doing something wrong? Why is that sometimes difficult?

C. Infiltration of Tobias (Verses 4-9)

1. What had Eliashib the priest given to Tobias? _____
2. Where was Nehemiah when this occurred (vs.. 6)? _____
3. What did Nehemiah do with this things of Tobias? _____
4. Then what did Nehemiah do according to verse 9? _____

D. Thought questions

1. Why do some Christians not see the seriousness of allowing sin into their lives?
2. Why do some Christians not see the seriousness of allowing sin into a local church?
3. Why might Eliashib have not felt concerned about Sanballat and Tobias? (13:28)

4. Have you ever known anyone who had to oppose someone who was a family member because they represented a threat to God's people?
 5. Have you ever known someone who refused to oppose someone who was a spiritual threat because they were also a family member?
- E. Temple service neglected (verses 10-14)
1. Where did the Levites and singers go when they weren't paid? _____
 2. Why did Nehemiah put Shelemiah, Zadok and Pedaiah in charge of making sure that contributions were given and distributed? _____
 3. What did Nehemiah request of God in verse 14? _____
- F. Thought questions
1. What are some tasks in the church that require great responsibility?
 2. What can you do starting now to make sure you are a responsible person?
 3. Much of this abuse began when Nehemiah was away. Why is it sad when God's people don't seem to function well without an influential leader? What can be done solve this?
- G. Sabbath regulations neglected (Verses 15-18)
1. What were some ways they were violating the Sabbath? _____
 2. When men were leaders in this violation of the Sabbath? _____
 3. What does Nehemiah refer to in rebuking the leaders (vs. 18) _____
- H. Thought questions
1. How can we avoid the bad influence of those like the "men of Tyre." Those who aren't disciples and yet seem to affect Christians around them?
- I. The problem addressed (Verses 19-22)
1. What were some solutions Nehemiah promoted in verse 19?) _____
 2. Then, where did the merchants stay before the Sabbath? _____
 3. What did Nehemiah threaten to do to them? _____
- J. Foreign wives (Read verses 23-29)
1. How does verse 24 describe language did the children of the mixed marriages spoke? _____
 2. How did Nehemiah respond in 25A? _____
 3. What did he make them swear not to do? _____
 4. What name from history did Nehemiah use to illustrate the danger of foreign wives? _____
- K. Thought questions
1. Does Christians have a certain kind of language? Do worldly people? Do you know of Christians who talk like people of the world? What are some things in their language that indicate too much influence from the world?
- K. Summary (Verses 30, 31)
1. What did Nehemiah do to the son-in-law of Sanballat? _____
- Malachi wrote about this time. Looks like he may have been talking about priests who were this way in chapter 2 verses 1 and 2. Maybe he's talking specifically of Eliashib.
 2. What did he request from God? _____
- L. Final thought questions
1. Nehemiah refers to a lot of historical figures. Why is a knowledge of history important?
 2. What is the difference between righteous indignation (like Nehemiah's) and the sinful anger of man? (James 1:20)

Conclusion

1. What are some things you can do to build good spiritual defenses?
2. How can you allow the word of God to change you more? How can we help?
3. What are some dangers of backsliding that might affect you?
- A final prayer for strength in building defenses, fighting enemies, putting God's word into practice and avoiding backsliding.

