

BUILDING A CITY WITHIN THE



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By Josh Reich

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INTRODUCTION

I am very excited that you picked up this study guide, each year at Revolution Church; we embark on a long series of a book of the Bible. In 2009, we spent 18 weeks going through the book of Hebrews. In 2010, we are starting the year off in the book of Nehemiah. This is an Old Testament book that I believe will be very important to us as individuals and as a church this coming year.

Before we move on, I want to look back. I know that many of you are new to Revolution and to better understand where we are, where we are going and how the book of Nehemiah fits into that, I want to share where we've come from.

In January 2010, Revolution turned 14 months old. At the end of 2008, when our church was 4 months old we began working on our budget for 2009. At the time, our weekly average in giving was \$800.¹ I was the only staff member and we were looking to add Paul Ingram² as our Pastor of Worship & Arts. Our dream at Revolution has always been to be a force in Tucson and to **help people find their way back to God**. As we finished the budget for 2009 our weekly need increased to \$3100. At the time, we were a church of 30 people and we believed that God was going to triple us in 2009 and our dreams, faith, prayers, and budget needed to reflect that. This seemed crazy and caused us as leaders to seek God to make sure that we were in line with Him, but also to ask Him to grow our faith and ultimately do what only He could do. He has done more than we even asked for.

In those 14 months we have seen God do some incredible things.

- We have grown as a church from 30 people to 100.³ That is triple the size!
- Our staff has grown from 1 to 4.
- We have seen our volunteer force triple.
- We baptized 7 people.
- 6 people have become Christians.

¹ This may seem like a numbers conversation, but follow me. We believe in numbers and count numbers at Revolution because every number represents a person. A person that God is crazy about and that Jesus died on a cross for.

² http://web.me.com/musicguyingram/Blog/Random_Thoughts/Random_Thoughts.html

³ The average church in America is 65 people

- Our small group movement has grown from 2 to 5 small groups. This is exciting because as our church has grown, we have been able to keep the same percentage of people in small groups.⁴
- We are planning to have 6 small groups in the summer semester.
- We were able to serve our city in a number of practical ways.
- One of the biggest missional projects we did was HalloWiin Revolution,⁵ which was a huge success. When we first started talking about this event, our goal was have reach 200 people. On the night of the event, we had almost 600 people attend!

As we move into 2010, our dreams and prayers are not any smaller. We are praying to be a force of Revolutionaries that impact our city and beyond. As the leadership of Revolution created the budget of 2010 (a process that begins in the summer) we started with this question, “Where does God want Revolution to be in December, 2010? What does God want to do in and through us in 2010?” We believe it is important to start with vision and dreams and then look to see how God plans to make those happen.

At the beginning of this process, as I thought and prayed about 2010, a few things became very clear. We have seen nothing yet. While God did unbelievable things in 2009, our best days as a church are ahead of us. Seeing God triple us as a church in 2009 I reflected on a question I have heard Bill Hybels say when it comes to vision and dreams for leaders. He says, “Don’t sit on your laurels, and don’t sit on the past. Is not the same God who brought you here the same God who will take you there? Yes!”

With that in mind we asked this question, “What if God tripled us as a church in 2010?” It happened in 2009, why can’t it happen again? I believe it can and that is the prayer of our leaders, which is the mindset of our church, and how we thought through our ministry plans for 2010. In December 2010, we want to be a church of 300!

A lot goes into making that happen; 300 people don’t just happen upon a church. It will take all of us and God working hand in hand. One of the best ways we talk about this is “invest and invite.” We invest in relationships with our neighbors, co-workers, family members and friends and then we invite them to Revolution. Working in concert we are able to help present the gospel to our city. We will also be making more of a concerted effort in the area of servant evangelism.⁶ This will be a great way for us to get outside the walls of our church and serve our city in hopes of sharing the love of Jesus with them.

⁴ <http://www.tucsonrevolution.com/get-connected/small-groups/>

⁵ We did this event on Halloween night

⁶ <http://www.sermoncentral.com/articlec.asp?article=Steve-Sjogren-Community-Servant-Evangelism&Page=1&ac=true&cspplit=9060>

We will also be starting a student ministry called Rev Up. Right now, Planet Rev does a great job with our kid's birth – 5th grades and ministering to those families but we need to look now to the area of middle school and high school students. Without a student ministry, we are not able to effectively minister to families with students in that age bracket, keeping us from effectively reaching those families.

These are just some of the ways that I believe God will move in our church this year and grow us to 300.

Enter the book of Nehemiah.

We plan our preaching calendar anywhere from 6 – 12 months in advance.⁷ So in the summer of 2009 as I was dreaming about 2010 and thinking through the future I “happened” upon the book of Nehemiah in personal time with God. I say happened because God knew what He was doing. I really felt that after preaching through Sermon on the Mount,⁸ which was an attractional series, we would need a missional series, something that will stir us as we think about why we exist as a church and would spur us to fulfill the mission we feel God has called us to.

Nehemiah is such a book. Nehemiah is a book about a group of people, led by a flawed man trying to rebuild a city wall. As I thought about this book, the wall represents the church. A wall for a city represents protection, community, identity and purpose. That is what a church is supposed to be and provide for the city. In Matthew 5:14 Jesus says that his followers are to be the light of the world, a city on a hill that cannot be hidden. The church is to be a city. Not a city that keeps people out, but a city within a city. The church is to be a city that loves Jesus, but ultimately a city that loves the city it is in and point that city to Jesus.

My prayer as we go through the book of Nehemiah is that God would stir in us a passion to love Jesus and that that passion would push us to love our city, and that our hearts would break for our city and the people in it. That through the book of Nehemiah, God would expand our dreams and faith and we would see Him move and grow our church to 300 in 2010.

The study guide in your hand starts with some background information on the book of Nehemiah: who he was, when it was written, what was happening in

⁷ Go here to learn more about this process:

<http://missionalthoughts.wordpress.com/2009/09/09/planning-a-preaching-calendar/>

⁸ We preached through Matthew 5 – 7 in the fall of 2009

the world at the time,⁹ as well as small group questions and questions for you to study through the book of Nehemiah on a daily basis.¹⁰ We are going to immerse ourselves in the book of Nehemiah until June 2010 and I believe God is going to blow us away with what He is going to do because of this series. I'm excited to be on this journey with you and to have you as part of our church (city).

Be Revolutionary,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joshua M. Reich', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joshua M. Reich
December 14, 2009

⁹ It is impossible to correctly apply a verse, passage or book of the Bible to our lives without understanding what was happening when that was written.

¹⁰ These questions can be used for you alone, with your spouse and/or with your whole family.

When Babylon's soldiers marched out of Jerusalem in 586 BC, they left a desolate city behind them. Its magnificent temple, built by Solomon four hundred years earlier, was reduced to heaps of fallen masonry and charred timber. The city's gates and all its important buildings were enveloped in flames, and its strong walls demolished to ensure that the impoverished citizens could not organize another revolt. Only the poorest of Jerusalem's people were left behind, the rest were led off as captives to distant Babylon.

As the despondent exiles trampled the thousand miles of desert highway their steps were heavy; a burning city was behind them and an unknown future lay ahead. Worst of all were the tormenting thoughts that their present desolation, frequently threatened by the sensitive and courageous Jeremiah, was nothing other than the chastising hand of God.¹¹ The punishment inflicted by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, was dwarfed by the intensity of their guilt and despair. If God was against them, who could be for them?

Yet, all was not lost.

Isaiah prophesied that God's people would emerge from exile, refined by suffering.¹² Across centuries, Israel had been led by great people. Although costly, Abraham¹³ obeyed God and a new race was born, a people destined to make their unique mark on world history. Overcoming adversity, Joseph¹⁴ saved not only his own people but other nations as well. Moses¹⁵, another imperiled by hardship, led the Israelites to freedom. Other great leaders had followed in their steps. Joshua¹⁶ conquered a hostile country. Gideon¹⁷ raised an unlikely army. David¹⁸ established a city. Solomon¹⁹ built a temple.

Nehemiah would rebuild the wall.

¹¹ Jeremiah 1:14 – 16; 2:16 – 30

¹² Isaiah 40:1 – 2

¹³ Genesis 12 – 25

¹⁴ Genesis 37 – 50

¹⁵ The book of Exodus – Deuteronomy

¹⁶ The book of Joshua

¹⁷ Judges 6 – 8

¹⁸ 2 Samuel 5 – 6

¹⁹ 1 Chronicles 28:9 – 21

God finds his servants in surprising places: an innocent sufferer in an Egyptian dungeon, a terrified farm-worker hiding behind a closed door in Ophrah, a young shepherd on the hills of Bethlehem. Though raised to prominence and plenty, such men did not begin so. But with Nehemiah it was different. His story opens in the luxurious surroundings of a Persian court. It is a dramatic narrative which exemplifies obedience, demonstrates heroism, encourages prayer, emphasizes partnership, and inspires confidence.²⁰

Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C., 140 years later, Nehemiah would return. He would give up everything, leave everything he knew, to follow a call on his life that God had called him to fulfill. He would go to a place he had never been (he was born and raised in Persia, not Jerusalem) and rebuild a city he had never seen. He was given a commission by the Persian king to return to Jerusalem, to leave his job as the king's cupbearer.

Nehemiah was very organized. When the king asked him his proposal to return to Jerusalem, the conversation (2:6 – 8)²¹ reveals that Nehemiah had prepared himself well for this discussion; he asked for several specifics: an amount of time for the project, for authorization for passage to Judah and for materials to be provided. The king readily granted his requests.

When he arrived in Jerusalem, he found the city to be the way it had been described to him. Destroyed. No one had attempted to rebuild the walls, it was still in disarray.

The difficulty of what he did lie in the fact that he rebuilt the city with people who already lived within its destroyed walls. Imagine, motivating people who lived amidst the destruction to not only rebuild a city that had lain destroyed, unmoved for 140 years, but to see that life could be different, better than what it was.

Nehemiah organized the people into groups whereby each man was responsible for repairing or rebuilding the walls of the city opposite the area in which he lived (chap. 3). Nehemiah also organized defenses for the project when it was threatened by opposition (4:9, 13 – 23).²² Few people have experienced the opposition and trials that Nehemiah experienced, yet 52 days later, the wall was rebuilt.

Nehemiah was a man full of self-confidence, as well as confident in God, and he combined the two in practical ways. A well-known verse illustrating this is 4:9, which tells of his response when he heard of the opposition to the rebuilding

²⁰ *The Message of Nehemiah*, Raymond Brown, p. 13

²¹ All passages are from Nehemiah unless otherwise noted

²² *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books*, David M. Howard Jr., p. 296

project: “We prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet the threat.” (Other examples of Nehemiah’s combination of spiritual faith with practical actions are found at 2:4 – 5, 4:14, 20).

Nehemiah also appears as a transparent man. He admitted to the Jews that he himself, and his household, had been engaged in lending practices that imposed hardships on people, practices he was urging the wealthy Jews to stop (5:10). This confession, and his personal identification with those he was admonishing, set an example that was hard to ignore.²³

Nehemiah was very active when he returned to Jerusalem. He saw the damaged walls as they had been described to him (2:11 – 16), organized the city’s rebuilding effort (chap. 3), and got to work. He did not wait for someone else to lead; one gets the idea that Nehemiah would have rebuilt the wall himself even if no one else wanted to join him.

²³ *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books*, David M. Howard Jr., p. 297

STUDY GUIDE

THE PURPOSE OF NEHEMIAH

Every book of the Bible was written, passed on and preserved for a reason. It was written during a specific time in history²⁴, to a specific group of people, to make a specific point. Not only that, each book of the Bible was written a certain way. The gospels²⁵ are written differently than the epistles in the New Testament. Some Old Testament books pass on the Law or are poetry.

The book of Nehemiah falls in the narrative genre.²⁶

One of the important things to remember when we read this genre is the question “Is Nehemiah prescriptive of life or is it descriptive?” Meaning, do we read the book of Nehemiah as a story of a man and a nation, as the history of God and his people or, are there principles applicable to our life and time, lessons we can and should learn. With the book of Nehemiah, we can learn leadership principles from the way Nehemiah led the rebuilding of the wall, but that is not the only thing we can or should take away from this book of the Bible. It has been pointed out by countless authors²⁷ that (and I agree) the Old Testament, each book, points to Jesus. While we can and should learn from the Nehemiah, we must continually ask the question “What does this passage say about God?”

Here is how Graeme Goldsworthy describes it:

The salvation-historical context of the book of Nehemiah involves us in a theological understanding of the historical events within Scripture. The return of the Jews after the decree of Cyrus in 538 B.C. was understood in both political and prophetic terms. The theological context is the prophetic hope for the restoration of all that had been lost in the exile. Furthermore, the prophets variously described what would transpire in such a restoration as the coming of the glorious kingdom of God. Predictions such as Jeremiah’s of a seventy year exile followed by the return would be taken as evidence that the decree of Cyrus was the instrumental means of the fulfillment of this hope. By the time of this edict all the eschatological oracles would have been heard. There was no reason to suppose that the return from Babylon would not be the prelude to the great day of the Lord and the glorious restoration of all things.

²⁴ See “When was Nehemiah written” to better understand the world and time that Nehemiah was written.

²⁵ Matthew, Mark, Luke & John

²⁶ Other Old Testament books in this genre are Genesis, Esther and Ruth

²⁷ Sidney Greidanus, Graeme Goldsworthy to name a few

The reality, as we discover from Nehemiah, and the postexilic prophets,²⁸ is another story. On the positive side there is indeed a kind of second exodus from captivity, but the returning exiles are, as some of the prophets had predicted, a remnant. With the encouragement of the Persians, the Jews are able to begin reconstruction of both the socio-political aspects of statehood, albeit under the oversight of the empire, and the religious identity focusing on a rebuilt temple and the law. The city of Jerusalem is at the center of both of these aspects, hence the concentration on its reconstruction in the book of Nehemiah. There is also intriguing figure of Zerubbabel, who is a descendant from the dynasty of David and functions in the rebuilding of the temple and as governor.²⁹

On the down side, the narrative of Nehemiah present a picture of a constant struggle to establish a Jewish identity in the face of opposition from local tribes and of intrigue in high places in the Persian empire. When the temple is finally rebuilt, it is such an unimpressive building that, far from being the temple of prophetic hope, it does not even measure up to the glory that was there before the exile. All kinds of problems beset the new community, not the least of which is the flouting of the law on mixed marriages. The prophet Haggai depicts a situation in which lack of fidelity is characteristic of the population. In short, this is clearly not the kingdom of God foretold by the prophets. The major aspects of prophetic hope are in place – land, returned remnant, new temple, rebuilt Jerusalem, and Davidic leadership – but there is no glory. The shadow of IChabod hangs over the land.³⁰ Thus, the book of Nehemiah in general, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem in particular, need to be seen in this wider historical context as it is interpreted for us by the prophetic word.

Reading it strictly as exemplary will almost certainly distort this perspective that points to the need for the true fulfillment to come while at the same time showing the faithfulness of God to sustain his people in the hope of the coming kingdom.³¹

It is important for us, as we study the book of Nehemiah, to understand that we are to read it from a descriptive **and** prescriptive view. It is describing a particular time in human history, shown through the eyes of a particular man (Nehemiah), looking forward to Jesus.

When Nehemiah begins, the nation of Israel is broken and dispersed. Some are in exile throughout the Persian Empire and some have been left behind in Jerusalem, struggling to make a way of life in isolation. The ones left behind do their best to make alliances with surrounding cities to survive, which leads

²⁸ Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi

²⁹ Ezra 3 – 5; Nehemiah 7:7; Haggai 1:1, 12, 14, 2:2; Zechariah 4:6 – 10

³⁰ 1 Samuel 4:21 – 22

³¹ *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, Graeme Goldsworthy p. 148 – 149

them to compromise in their relationship with God, specifically pluralism.³² All of this leads to questions about God, why has this happened and why didn't God stop it.

The purposes of the book of Nehemiah are as follows:³³ Sin & purity, the church (community), and prayer & worship.

Sin & Purity

Nehemiah opens with the nation of Israel in several different places; most of them are in exile in the Persian Empire. Exile was seen by the Jewish people as punishment from God. When Nehemiah was sent back to Jerusalem by the king, there are many things in the text to remind us of the Exodus³⁴ from Egypt. Nehemiah in many ways can be seen as a second "exodus."

Nehemiah is very concerned that the nation of Israel follows the Law of God. The exile came upon the nation of Israel because of unfaithfulness to God; Nehemiah spends much of the book³⁵ calling the nation of Israel back to God and to be faithful as they move forward.

Nehemiah's first step when praying is to confess. There is no forgiveness without confession.

The Church

Nehemiah is very concerned with unity. This is something the New Testament writers speak about continuously.³⁶ Throughout Nehemiah unity is stressed and shown through the various lists.³⁷

Unity is shown in the church today through a shared mission³⁸, generosity to God and to each other, sharing concerns, prayer, and burdens. This is best done through community and small groups. When needs arise in the church, the church at large is best suited to meet that need.

³² Pluralism says that there is not one way to believe, but a multitude of beliefs that are all valid and equal. This is contrary to what the Bible teaches (John 14:6).

³³ I am separating purposes from the section of themes to point out the theology of Nehemiah. Theology (beliefs) is important because what we believe and think shapes how we act. You cannot separate the two.

³⁴ Found in the book of Exodus

³⁵ Chapters 8 – 10 specifically deal with this

³⁶ Ephesians 4; 1 Peter 3:8

³⁷ Chapters 3, 7 and 11

³⁸ Our mission at Revolution is to "help people find their way back to God."

We are unified as a church when we are apart and gathered. This means, that when we walk out the doors of Revolution, we represent not only God but Revolution. The way we live our lives, spend our money, treat our spouse and children, the kind of employee or boss that we are, and the kind of friend we are reflects not only on God, but also on our church community when we identify ourselves with Revolution.

God calls us as individuals and as a church to be in the world but not of the world.³⁹ This means that we are to live our lives, do our jobs and through the way we live, influence the world in which we inhabit.

Prayer & Worship

Worship, scripture and prayer are front and center throughout the book of Nehemiah. The book opens with Nehemiah learning that the walls are still broken down in Jerusalem. He immediately fasts and prays, seeking the heart of God as to what he should do. It is through this time with God that Nehemiah is able to determine God's will for him. It is impossible for us to hear from God apart from scripture reading and prayer. This is the best way to discern direction from God in our lives.

Instead of immediately jumping in with his own plans, Nehemiah waits until God reveals His plans for him. Too many of us make plans and then ask God to bless them as we move forward or, we wait on God too long and miss an opportunity. Nehemiah shows us how to live in that tension, how to wait on God for plans and then act when it is time to act (2:1 – 8).

When Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem and lays out the plan for rebuilding the temple, he calls the Jewish people back to God. Nehemiah calls them to live according to the Scripture, and to honor God with their worship, finances and how they live.

As mentioned above, prayer is a major part of Nehemiah. Along with prayer Nehemiah continually practices confession. Not only personally for his sins, but he confesses to God the sins of the nation of Israel and he also calls the nation of Israel to confess their sins.

Through these areas, God's grace is able to shine through. God's grace is shown when Nehemiah is given permission, financial backing, horses and men to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the wall (2:8). Nehemiah exhibits the life of a man devoted to God. He is a man with flaws striving to follow God as best he

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http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByDate/2004/176_Do_Not_Be_Conformed_to_This_World/

can in the world in which he lives. God rewards him for this by working on Nehemiah's behalf, answering prayer, bringing unity among the nation of Israel to complete the rebuilding of the wall in 52 days and protecting them during this time.

Because of the trauma of the Exile – during which there was no Temple nor sacrifices, and the very existence of God's people was in question – the unity and purity of God's people is of major concern in Nehemiah. It is written, then, to show that God was still faithful and gracious to His people and that this people, who had their origins centuries earlier, still was alive and attempting to continue in the faithful traditions laid down by Moses.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books*, David M. Howard Jr., p. 274

There are many themes that make up the book of Nehemiah and they are interwoven throughout the book: Nehemiah's doctrine of God, passion for Scripture, experience of prayer, and example in leadership.⁴¹

Nehemiah's Doctrine of God

Nehemiah seems to be able to live in the tension of objective and subjective truth of God. Meaning, he is able to balance his experience of God (emotions) with what he knows about God (mind). This is something that is often lost in our culture and fought over. Each of us tends to uphold one over the other and we end up missing an important part of God, regardless of which one we emphasize.

God is *universally sovereign* (1:5; 2:4, 20). God is in heaven, and He alone is God (9:6). In his sovereignty, He not only can clear the way for those who honor Him, but he can also frustrate the ways for those who oppose Him (4:15). He can turn a cruel curse into an immeasurable blessing (13:2).

God is *totally reliable*. He keeps His covenant of love with those who love Him and obey His commands (1:5; 9:32).

God is *utterly holy*. To move forward in any aspect of life, regardless of the circumstance, we must acknowledge that our greatest need is not relief from our present situation, but eternal forgiveness (1:3 – 4). Nehemiah confesses not only his sin, but also sin of the entire nation (1:6 – 7; 9:2). Once we are forgiven, we are not to pattern our lives after the culture or what "fits" in that moment, but we are to pattern our lives after the holiness of God and His standards.⁴² Nehemiah determined to do everything in life 'out of reverence for God' (5:15), this was his guiding ambition (7:2).

God is *compassionately merciful*. When God entered into a covenant with us, He knew we would fail Him. In the book of Nehemiah, God shows that He is a God of forgiveness (9:17) by pardoning His people's offenses (9:16 – 19, 26 – 31) and by giving back their land (1:8 – 9).

God is *uniquely powerful*. There is nothing that is able to thwart the plans of God. He is the God who created the universe (9:6), enabled childless Abraham

⁴¹ *The Message of Nehemiah*. Raymond Brown, p. 17 – 25.

⁴² 1 Peter 1:14 – 17

to become the ‘father of a multitude’ (9:7), and ‘redeemed’ His oppressed people from slavery (1:10). In Nehemiah, during the rebuilding of the wall, despite feeling overwhelmed by their enemies, they believed that their God would ‘fight’ for them (4:20). Finding their true joy in their spiritual resources (8:12, 17), their physical strength would be perpetually renewed (8:10).

God is *infinitely gracious*. Nehemiah’s project was given royal approval, not because of coincidence or fate or because he was in the right place at the right time, but because of ‘the gracious hand’ of God (2:8, 18) was upon him. God does not deal with individuals or cities the way they deserve but desires and designs things for their highest good.

God is *infinitely near*. The God of heaven is not detached or distant, but draws close to His people (2:12). When they are in danger, He makes them sensitive to His promptings (6:12), and when they are uncertain of the way ahead, He reveals His will to them (7:5).

God is *completely just*. Like many men and women of God, Nehemiah was plagued with bitter opposition. Nehemiah, like those before him and after him knew that God is just and that God is the ultimate judge of the universe. Knowing this gave Nehemiah and those who worked with him the strength and courage to persevere in the face of opposition (4:4 – 5; 5:1 – 13; 6:12: 9:33).

Nehemiah’s life was totally devoted to God. He found delight (1:11) in seeking God’s face (1:4), revering God’s name (1:11), pursuing God’s will (1:11; 2:4 – 5), acknowledging God’s goodness (2:8, 18), serving God’s people (2:12, 17), trusting God’s power (2:20), confessing God’s holiness (4:14; 5:9, 15), sharing God’s word (8:9), showing God’s love (8:10), remembering God’s generosity (8:13 – 18), recalling God’s faithfulness (9:5 – 37), obeying God’s commands (10:29) and encouraging God’s servants (10:37 – 39; 13:10 – 13).

Nehemiah’s Passion for Scripture

At the heart of Nehemiah’s narrative is the story of a unique bible reading in the center of Jerusalem. It was not a temple gathering, thereby attendance was not restricted either to religious officials or to those privileged few who might gain entry to a restricted area. It was held in the city’s main square and everyone, young and old, men and women alike were eager to attend. Although Ezra leads this occasion, it is Nehemiah who joins with Ezra in encouraging the people’s response to Scripture (8:9 – 11). Nehemiah was *inspired, taught, and fashioned* by God’s word.⁴³

⁴³ *The Message of Nehemiah*. Raymond Brown, p. 20ff.

Nehemiah was a man *inspired* by scripture. He was a man who knew the story of God and His people. He knew how God had called, equipped and used men and women over the centuries. This knowledge is what encouraged him to move forward and pushed him through some of his lowest times. Examples such as Abraham believing God's promise (9:7 – 8, 23), Moses sharing God's Word (1:7 – 8; 8:1, 14; 9:14; 10:29; 13:1), Aaron entering God's service (10:38; 12:47), David (12:24, 36 – 37, 45 – 46) and Asaph (12:46) encouraged God's praise and, more recently, Zerubbabel (7:7; 12:1, 47) built God's temple. Nehemiah not only took to heart the stories of courage and blessing, but he also took to heart the warning stories of Scripture – Solomon forgot God's holiness (13:26) and ignored God's warning, with disastrous consequences.⁴⁴

Nehemiah was *taught* by scripture. It was not just the stories in Scripture that attracted him. He took to heart the uplifting language, the truths, the clear warnings and the dependable promises that are found within God's Word. Nehemiah quotes a variety of Scripture throughout the book, everything from Genesis through the Psalms.

Nehemiah was *fashioned* by scripture. Like those before him and after him, Nehemiah knew that obedience to scripture is life's highest priority. He understood the authority, persuasiveness, power and relevance of scripture to every aspect of his life. Nehemiah centered his life on scripture, he was encouraged by its promises (1:5, 9; 4:20; 9:7 – 8, 17) and challenged by its warnings (1:7 – 8; 5:9; 9:30, 37; 13:17 – 18, 26 – 26).

Nehemiah's Experience of Prayer

Throughout Nehemiah, we are reminded of the importance of prayer and what prayer can do. Great prayer passages are found throughout the entire book, ranging a variety of topics and types of prayers. The book begins with prayer in Persia (1:4) and closes with prayer in Jerusalem (13:31). The story shows us the great dimensions of prayer: adoration (8:6; 9:3, 5), thanksgiving (12:24, 27, 31, 40, 46), confession (1:4 – 7; 9:33 – 34), petition (1:11; 2:4) and intercession (1:6).

There are prayers of anguish (4:4 – 5; 6:14; 13:29) and prayers of joy (12:43), prayers for protection (4:9), and prayers of dependence (6:9) and commitment (13:14, 22, 31).

It is a story of compassionate (1:4), persistent (1:4), personal (1:6) and corporate (1:7) prayer.

⁴⁴ 1 Kings 11:1 – 13

Prayer provides Nehemiah with perspective (1:11); it widens his horizons (2:4), sharpens his vision (2:12) and dwarfs his anxieties (4:8 – 9).

He is a believer who hurries to the place of prayer to share his present griefs (1:4), confess his past failures (1:6 – 7) and discover his future work (1:11).

Nehemiah's Example in Leadership

The book of Nehemiah has been called by many authors⁴⁵ the greatest book on leadership ever written. Christian and business books on leadership quote Nehemiah and point to the example of his life, it is relevant for leadership within the church, business and family.

Nehemiah was a leader with *infinite compassion*. On hearing of the needs of his people, he sat down and wept, mourned and fasted for the state of his people and he prayed for them (1:4). Love matters in leadership. The loveless leader achieves little significance.

Nehemiah was a leader *under greater authority*. Leaders must be led. Unsure of the right course in crisis, he sought the direction of God (1:5 – 11).

Nehemiah was a leader of *transparent integrity*. Nehemiah knew who God was and who he was as a man and his need for God, His help and His grace (1:6). This is the first step to being a great leader or person.

Nehemiah was a leader with *a vision for something great*. Vision is what separates leaders from followers. Leaders see a future; they see the possibilities and are the first ones to move. While everyone may see what to do and the direction that should be taken, leaders are the ones to go and the ones to get others to go with them. God planted in Nehemiah's heart (2:12) a vision for what Jerusalem could be, what it should be (1:3). When leaders, like Nehemiah, have a vision, they cannot imagine it not becoming a reality. They can't imagine not taking action.

Nehemiah was a leader *aware of his own vulnerability*. Leaders are not perfect; they are human, with imperfections like everyone else. They all have weaknesses and blind spots. For a leader to be successful, he/she must master the art of self-leadership.⁴⁶

Nehemiah was a leader with *the ability to inspire others*. As the leadership proverb goes, "a leader without any followers is just a man taking a walk." For any leader to be successful, especially Nehemiah, they must inspire others to

⁴⁵ To name a few: John Maxwell, Andy Stanley and Perry Noble

⁴⁶ *Courageous Leadership*, Bill Hybels

buy into this vision and help in the process. Nehemiah spoke realistically of the problems and the stakes, convincingly of the answer and confidently of the resources and how the outcome would look (2:17, 20).

Nehemiah was a leader who recognized *the necessity and advantages of delegation*. No leader can accomplish their vision on their own. It always takes a team to do something great for God. It is true that on any team, there is one person better known than everyone else, but if that person is honest, they will tell you that without the team they would not have accomplished the mission. In the process of re-building the wall, Nehemiah made sure that responsibility for each section of the wall was entrusted to responsible co-workers (3:1 – 22), and they in turn recruited their partners who, under agreed leadership ‘worked with all their heart’ (4:6).

Nehemiah was a leader who *did not balk at adversities* (4:1 – 12). Leaders expect adversity, they expect obstacles. What separates leaders and those who do something great for God is perseverance.

Nehemiah was a leader with *sensitive adaptability*. Things do not always go as planned. When problems arise, the effective leader regards them, not as intimidating deterrents, but as creative opportunities. After hearing complaints from the workers, Nehemiah emerged undaunted with a five-point plan. He mustered local protection squads (4:13), reminded them of their spiritual defenses (4:14), divided the team into builders and protectors (4:15 – 18), organized a plan whereby a mobile brigade of troops could be rapidly dispatched to any vulnerable part of the wall (4:19 – 20) and ensured that everyone in the city was guaranteed 24 hour protection (4:21 – 22).

Nehemiah was a leader *prepared to make personal sacrifices*. John Maxwell is famous for saying, “The higher the leader goes, the greater the sacrifice.” This separates leaders from followers; leaders make sacrifices others are not willing to make. Nehemiah surrendered personal safety and a home in the palace in Persia to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall (4:23). He was harassed (6:1 – 9), betrayed (6:10 – 13), had to deal with corruption (6:14), and halfhearted buy in (6:17 – 19), yet, he was not deterred. He pressed on, knowing what God had called him to, no matter the personal cost.

Nehemiah was a leader who *anticipated the next challenge*. Leaders are always looking ahead, they are forward thinking by nature. Leaders need to be able to see what the next step is, and to be able to see ‘around corners.’

Nehemiah was a leader blessed with *enviable tenacity*. While discouragement is part of any leader’s journey, a leader must be able to move past obstacles and endure whatever comes their way. In Nehemiah’s journey, he coped with a precarious employer (2:1 – 3), hostile neighbors (2:10, 29), insulting opponents

(4:1 – 3), determined adversaries (4:7 – 8), disheartened colleagues (4:10), terrified partners (4:11 – 12), loveless officials (5:1 – 13), persistent enemies (6:1 – 11), false prophets (6:12 – 14), disloyal priests (13:4 – 9, 28), and disobedient believers (13:23 – 37).

Nehemiah is a book that relates very closely to our own lives. Not just as a church, but as individuals. We are all called to have a Biblical view of God, integrate scripture into our lives, and spend time in prayer and to be a leader in our sphere of influence.

All of us are leaders; whether in the workplace, at home, or in the classroom. We all have influence over someone. What Nehemiah causes us to look at is “What kind of influence are we giving to those areas? What kind of impact are we making?”

STUDY GUIDE

WHEN WAS NEHEMIAH WRITTEN

There is a lot of debate among scholars as to when the book of Nehemiah was written, where it falls within the Bible and its relationship with the book of Ezra which precedes it. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah record the last events, chronologically, in the Old Testament period.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally considered a single literary work called Ezra. Although this work was already separated into two books by Origen and Jerome (in the 3rd century AD)⁴⁷, the division does not appear in the Hebrew Bible⁴⁸ until the fifteenth century.⁴⁹

The debate has surrounded around who came first, Ezra or Nehemiah? When did Ezra make his journey to Jerusalem? Under which King did they live? Were they in Jerusalem at the same time?

The traditional view holds that Ezra preceded Nehemiah, arriving from Babylon in “the seventh year of King Artaxerxes” (Ezra 7:7 – 8). If this ruler was Artaxerxes I (465 – 424 B.C.), this would mean that Nehemiah was written in 458 B.C.

This is important for a number of reasons.

All books of the Bible are written during a specific time, to a specific group of people, in a specific context and culture. This helps us to understand what the Bible is saying. Words in the Bible are not just random words put on a page, but they are words written to answer or address a specific situation.

The setting of the book of Nehemiah and the world he inhabited is incredible important to understanding the book of Nehemiah. The disastrous events of 587 B.C., which included the destruction of the temple, the end of the Davidic monarchy and Israel as a political entity, not to mention the deportation of the fruit and flower of the population to exile in Babylon, had necessitated a radical assessment of Israel’s identity and relationship to God. How should they understand what had happened to them? Had God sent them into exile, or had the gods of Babylon been victorious? Were they still the chosen people, or had God abandoned them? What had gone wrong? Was God able to deliver them?

⁴⁷ *The Books of Ezra & Nehemiah*, F. Charles Fensham, p. 1

⁴⁸ This is the Old Testament

⁴⁹ *The New Interpreter’s Bible, Volume III*, Ralph W. Klein, p. 663

Was God willing to deliver them? Would God remember the promises to Abraham and David?⁵⁰

The majority of Nehemiah is considered to be Nehemiah's personal journal, specifically chapters 1 – 7 and 11 – 13. Chapters 8 – 10 are considered to be a continuation of the book of Ezra, to show the overlap of the two books.

It is debated whether or not Nehemiah is the author of the book that bears his name. Most scholars do not believe the Nehemiah wrote the entire book.⁵¹ It is believed that one author wrote 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, simply called by historians as the Chronicler. He pulled together the relevant journals/memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah that make up the specific books.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Interpretation: Ezra & Nehemiah*, Mark Throntveit, p. 10

⁵¹ Most of Nehemiah is made up of his personal journal (chaps. 1 – 7, 12, 13), which he authored, but there is historical information that was added after the fact, that looks back on the life and times of Nehemiah. This is what scholars believe was written and compiled by someone (“the Chronicler”) after Nehemiah's life.

⁵² *The Books of Ezra & Nehemiah*, F. Charles Fensham, p. 4

Although we are separated from Nehemiah by two and a half thousand years, the problems he faced are not particular to the world of antiquity. In contemporary society, human problems may appear in a different guise, but they were found in ancient communities no less than in ours.

Changing Society⁵³

Our world is not the same as it was a month ago, let alone a year ago and certainly not a decade ago. New innovations change our world on a daily, sometimes hourly basis. The past few decades have witnessed unprecedented changes: collapsing political structures, astonishing technological advances, economic pressures and religious tensions.

While all of these changes are picked up by the media and stories are created and retold, they affect all of us on a daily basis. Family systems, employment, our worldviews are affected by all of these changes.

Consider this:

- China will soon be the number one English speaking country on the planet.
- 25% of India's population with the highest IQ's is greater than the total population of the United States. Meaning, India has more honors kids than America has kids.
- The top 10 in demand jobs in 2010 did not exist in 2004.
- We are currently preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist; using technologies that haven't been invented in order to solve problems we don't even know are problems.
- The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that today's learner will have 10 – 14 jobs by the age of 38.
- 1 in 4 employees have been at their current job for less than a year. 1 in 2 has been there less than 5 years.
- 1 in 8 couples married in the U.S. last year met online.
- By the end of 2009, there were 321.1 million people on Facebook. If Facebook were a nation, it would be the fifth largest on the planet, between Indonesia and Brazil.

⁵³ *The Message of Nehemiah*, Raymond Brown p. 25

- There are 31 billion searches on Google each month. In 2006, this number was 2.7 billion.
- The first commercial text message was sent in December of 1992. Today, the number of text messages received exceeds the total population of the planet.
- Years it took to reach a market audience of 50 million people:
 - Radio: 38 years
 - TV: 13 years
 - Internet: 4 years
 - iPod: 3 years
 - Facebook: 2 years
- The number of internet devices in 1984 was 1,000. In 2008 that number climbed to 1,000,000,000.
- There are about 540,000 words in the English language, about 5 times as many when Shakespeare was alive.
- It is estimated that a week's worth of information found in the N.Y. Times contains more information than a person was likely to come across in a lifetime in the 18th century.
- The amount of new technological information is doubling every 2 years. For students starting a 4 year technical degree this means that half of what they learn in their first year of study will be outdated by their third year.
- It is estimated that by 2013 a super computer will exist that exceeds the computational capabilities of the human brain.
- Predictions are that by 2049, a \$1000 computer will exceed the computational capabilities of the entire human species.
- While you've read these numbers...
 - 67 babies were born in the U.S.
 - 274 babies were born in China
 - 395 babies were born in India
 - 694,000 songs were downloaded illegally⁵⁴

This means that as followers of Jesus our world is rapidly changing. We as a church must figure out ways to reach this world. This does not mean we change our message. Our message is always the same: we are about pointing people to Jesus. We believe wholeheartedly that the Bible does not change; it is the authoritative word of God. But, this does mean that how we present it and reach this world must change with the times.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ All stats from <http://samrainer.wordpress.com/2009/01/30/living-in-exponential-times/> (Accessed December 14, 2009)

⁵⁵ Some great books on this topic are *Breaking the Missional Code*, Ed Stetzer and *The Radical Reformation*, Mark Driscoll

Individualism⁵⁶

In our culture, we think individually instead of communally. We have back decks instead of front porches. We have large garages that we drive into every night so that we don't have to see our neighbors. Many Americans don't even know who their neighbors are.⁵⁷ People in our culture have very little identity and connection anyone or anything. This is why there is such identification and passion associated with professional and college sports teams. We instinctively know that we want to be connected to something, we just aren't sure how.

Whether it is out of fear, lack of time or uncertainty of where to turn; many Americans settle to live a life of loneliness. This is where the church has a great opportunity to step up and show our world how to live a life of connection, a life of community.⁵⁸

The life of Nehemiah shows us a man, a group of people who put their own desires and dreams aside for the good of a community. Nehemiah was a prosperous man who did not need to rebuild the city of Jerusalem; yet, he put it all on the line for a community, a community of people that he did not know everyone in, but a community that he belonged to.

Not only did he do this, but the entire city (church) did this.

The book of Nehemiah has some compelling things to say about putting God first, about living unselfishly in the contemporary world, and about the joy and satisfaction of serving others.

Human Rights⁵⁹

In our culture, human rights are a hot button political issue. The rights of children, women, minorities, the use of sweat shops by corporations, fair working environments are front and center in the political and corporate arena.

Closely associated with this in our culture is materialism. We like our stuff, we like it cheap and we like a lot of it. For the amount of money that Americans spend each year on black Friday, we could give the planet clean drinking water.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ *The Message of Nehemiah*, Raymond Brown p. 26

⁵⁷ To understand how individualism has affected our society and churches, see *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert D. Putnam

⁵⁸ See *Making Room for Life: Trading Chaotic Lifestyles for Connected Relationships*, Randy Frazee

⁵⁹ *The Message of Nehemiah*, Raymond Brown p. 27

⁶⁰ <http://www.adventconspiracy.org/>

As followers of Jesus, we are to be a voice for those who don't have a voice. We are to stand up for those who can't stand up for themselves. This is what Nehemiah does (see chap. 5).

As followers of Jesus, we are to live with contentment with the things we have. Contentment is the opposite of materialism because it says, "I have what I need." In our culture, this is seen as backwards, yet, at the heart of materialism is this longing for contentment. We buy things to fill a need in our souls. We buy things to belong, to be somebody. We buy things to be happy and yet we are incredibly depressed as a nation. Freedom is not found in materialism, but in contentment.

The ideals of materialism are against the call of Jesus and the teachings of Scripture. Contentment sees God as the owner of all things and our lives as stewards of those things that we will make an account for.⁶¹

Pluralism⁶²

Our culture has become increasingly pluralistic and relativistic. Today, absolutes are seen as unnecessary and prejudice. The mantra of our society is, "As long as you are sincere, you are right." Jesus is widely seen as a good man, a good teacher, but not God. All religions are seen as equally valid and equally right, even though each of them contradicts each other on many levels.⁶³

As followers of Jesus, we need to firmly but gently show our culture a way forward. We must show our culture through our lives and conversations that there is such a thing as absolutes, that there is one way to heaven and it is through Jesus (John 14:6).

⁶¹ <http://www.tucsonrevolution.com/sermon/how-to-be-rich-whos-on-first-matthew-61-4/>

⁶² *The Message of Nehemiah*, Raymond Brown p. 28

⁶³ See *They Like Jesus but not the Church*, Dan Kimball: specifically chapter 9 on how the church can firmly but lovingly handle the question of "Do all paths lead to God?"

The storyline of the Bible opens with a beautiful garden paradise. It closes, however, with the vision of heaven as a dense urban city filled with people.⁶⁴ The ultimate goal of creation is an urban paradise called the New Jerusalem. Throughout the Bible, the city of Jerusalem (also called Zion) is set forth as the prototypical city that is supposed to belong to God and shine forth as a holy city in example to other cities of the earth. Jerusalem is so important that it is mentioned nearly one thousand times in Scripture.

Christianity is historically an urban religion. A reading of the history book of early Christianity, Acts, reveals that Christianity began as an urban movement led by Paul, whose itinerant church planting ministry was almost exclusively urban.

Historians like Rodney Stark⁶⁵ and Wayne Meeks say that by AD 300, upwards of half of the people living in major Roman cities were Christian, while more than 90% of those living in the countryside were still pagan. Our word *pagan* likely came from the Greek word *paganus*, which meant “someone who lives on the farm,” since most Christians lived in cities and most pagans lived on farms.⁶⁶

Indeed, the church should bring the gospel to any place where there are people because God loves all people. But since there are more people in the city, it also makes sense that bringing the gospel to cities would be a priority.⁶⁷

The book of Nehemiah is the account of one of the finest leadership initiatives in all of history: the restoration of the city of Jerusalem. The mission of Nehemiah in Jerusalem is a timely and important lesson for Revolution Church, which is seeking to build our church as a countercultural city within the city of Tucson.

The idea of this series comes out of the Sermon on the Mount⁶⁸ where Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Revelation 21 – 22

⁶⁵ www.rodneystark.com

⁶⁶ Some great books on the start of Christianity are *The Rise of Christianity* by Rodney Stark and *The First Urban Christians* by Wayne Meeks.

⁶⁷ *Notes on Nehemiah*, Mark Driscoll

http://cdn.marshallchurch.org/media/2007/02/18/20070218_building-a-city-within-a-city_document01.pdf

The national average for church attendance is 42%. Meaning, every weekend 42% of Americans attend church. In the state of Arizona, that number drops to 35%. In the city of Tucson, that number drops to 10%. In a city of a million people, only 10% (100,000 people) attend church.

Jesus called us as a church to be a city, a city that lives is within a city. We (as Revolution) are to be a city that lives within the city of Tucson. We are to love that city, serve that city, and do life within that city. We are not to separate ourselves to such a degree that we can't influence it. Too many churches and Christians want to create a bubble to keep the city out, in hopes of staying out of sin. This is understandable, but we are not called to do this.⁷⁰ On the whole though, we are to be a part of our city.

The only way to change a city is to be in the city.

Building a City Within the City

Because, we as a church, are called to be a city, we are to have structure, we are to have borders, and we are to function in a way that we are seen, as Jesus said, "like a city on a hill." We are not to be hidden, we are not to shy away, and we are to be visible. The city of Tucson should know that Revolution exists.

As a city, Revolution is not only to be visible, but we are to be attractive. Light in the darkness is attractive, it shows the way. This means, as a church, we are to show the way to our city. We are to show them how to do work, marriage, sex, family, hobbies, rest, conflict, dating, education, etc.

We are to take the gospel, as well as ask questions like, "How does the gospel of Jesus transform this?" Then we need to take that answer to the city of Tucson, the world we inhabit.

When we do this right, it is attractive.⁷¹ We are to live our lives as followers of Jesus in front of our city. Church or ministry is not something we do once a week, or something done by paid pastors. It is done each and every day on the basketball court, in the office building, on a play date, standing in the line at the grocery store.

⁶⁸ To access the sermons from Matthew 5 – 7, preached through at Revolution in the fall of 2009, go to <http://www.tucsonrevolution.com/sermons/>.

⁶⁹ Matthew 5:14

⁷⁰ This can however be prudent depending on temptations, addictions, etc.

⁷¹ See *Compelled by Love: The Most Excellent Way to Missional Living*, Ed Stetzer & Philip Nation

All of us have been placed by God in specific places, at this specific time for a reason. As followers of Jesus, we are all to be missionaries in the world we inhabit, in the office we work in and the neighborhood we live in.⁷²

The book of Nehemiah is an ideal book for us to use as a guide. Nehemiah's detailed discussions of the stone-by-stone and gate-by-gate reconstruction of the wall of Jerusalem allow for a more figural and literal exploration of the visible church, just as Nehemiah's more detailed discussions of the life of community allow for perhaps a richer reflection on what it means to live, in Christ, as the people of God.⁷³

Nehemiah helps us to understand not only who we are as followers of Jesus, but the message of the Bible. A sense of guiltiness developed that could only be removed by atonement of sins. With the destruction of the temple, this privilege had been taken away. This must be regarded as one of the major catastrophes which had overtaken the Jews. Their whole religious life was disorganized by it. It is not surprising that the first act after the restoration was to build an altar and to begin reconstruction of the temple. Now for the first time since the Exile the Jews were able to atone properly for their sins. The rebuilding of the temple was not simply an act of restoration of a venerable old building, but was of the highest religious significance.⁷⁴

The Importance of the Wall/City

The roots of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam can be traced back to the city of Jerusalem. The city was great because it was the place from which God's name went out to the world,⁷⁵ it was the throne of God on the earth,⁷⁶ and it was home of the Temple where sin was atoned for and God was worshipped. Much of Jesus' ministry occurred in Jerusalem, and He wept over the city much like Nehemiah had.⁷⁷ After His resurrection from death, Jesus walked back toward Jerusalem⁷⁸. Before ascending back into heaven, Jesus commanded His followers to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit.⁷⁹

Not only are cities important in the Bible, but throughout history cities have been important. *Cities are about identity*, they are where we are from, where

⁷² For some great books on this topic, check out *Breaking the Missional Code*, Ed Stetzer; *The Forgotten Ways*, Alan Hirsch; and *Exiles*, Michael Frost.

⁷³ *Ezra & Nehemiah*, Mathew Levering, p. 118

⁷⁴ *The Books of Ezra & Nehemiah*, F. Charles Fensham, p. 16

⁷⁵ Deuteronomy 12:5; 1 Kings 11:36, 14:21; 2 Kings 21:4

⁷⁶ Psalm 48

⁷⁷ Luke 19:28, 41 – 44

⁷⁸ Luke 24

⁷⁹ Acts 1 – 2

we live. We identify with others from that city. When you meet someone from the city you live in or you grew up in, there is a natural, almost automatic connection. This is important to understand in the book of Nehemiah. This fuels the passion to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Walls do not simply keep unwanted people out; in ancient times they set boundaries and therefore gave *identity* to a city and its people.⁸⁰

Cities are about protection. Within a community, there is not only identity, but there is protection. A city may be about physical protection, while a church can be about that, it is more about spiritual and relational protection. As followers of Jesus, we are called to hold each other accountable, to share our burdens, and to protect each other. In the church, protection is crucial in the area of spiritual things. The leaders of a church are called to protect the church doctrinally and from false teachers.⁸¹

Cities are about community. The church is called to be a community, a community of relationships that are akin to a body⁸² where all the parts are needed to function. In our culture, relationships and community is something everyone desires and very few people find. The city in which we live is a place for people to gather around shared interests for community, the church is to be a city that shows our culture how to do that. We should be a model of what community looks like, why we crave it, how it plays out in life and ultimately, this is one of the things that attracts our culture to begin a relationship with God.

Cities are about purpose. Cities exist for a reason. Most cities today do not exist for the reason they were founded, but every place exists for a reason. It may have been about families, religions or land, but all places were founded at one time for a purpose. The city (Revolution) was founded for a purpose. It began on September 13, 2008 to be a place that would “help people find their way back to God.” This is still why Revolution exists. This is our heartbeat and our purpose. Everything about us drives from this point.

While the Bible starts in a garden, it ends in a city. One day, Jesus will return to Jerusalem,⁸³ at that time He will establish the New Jerusalem.⁸⁴ That city, unlike the former, will not have a Temple because Jesus fulfills the functions previously met in Jerusalem.⁸⁵ Subsequently, today we gather not to worship in

⁸⁰ *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, p. 110

⁸¹ See Titus and 1 Peter 2

⁸² 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Ephesians 1:22 – 23

⁸³ Zechariah 14:1 – 5

⁸⁴ Revelation 3:12, 21:2

⁸⁵ Revelation 21:22

Jerusalem, but rather to worship in Jesus by God the Holy Spirit.⁸⁶ In Jesus we now have the fulfillment of the intent of Jerusalem as Jesus is the name of God, Jesus is the Word of God, Jesus is the King of Kings, Jesus is the Temple of God, Jesus is the sacrifice for sin, and Jesus is our place of worship. We gather as the church to be the city within our city, living countercultural kingdom lives of worship and inviting others in our city to Jesus.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ John 4:1 – 45

⁸⁷ *Notes on Nehemiah*, Mark Driscoll

http://cdn.marshallchurch.org/media/2007/02/18/20070218_building-a-city-within-a-city_document01.pdf

- I. Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls (1:1 – 2:20)^{88 89}
 - a. Nehemiah learns of Jerusalem’s dilapidation (1:1 – 11)
 - b. Nehemiah gains permission to return and inspects Jerusalem’s walls (2:1 – 16)
 - c. First signs of opposition (2:17 – 20)
- II. The wall is built, despite difficulties (3:1 – 7:4)
 - a. The people work systematically on the walls (3:1 – 32)
 - b. Opposition intensifies, but the people continue watchfully (4:1 – 23)
 - c. Nehemiah deals with injustices in the community; Nehemiah’s personal contribution to the project (5:1 – 19)
 - d. A conspiracy against Nehemiah, but the wall is finished (6:1 – 7:4)
- III. A record of those who returned from exile (7:5 – 7:3)
- IV. The reading of the law, and covenant renewal (8:1 – 10:39)
 - a. The law is read (8:1 – 8)
 - b. The people are to be joyful (8:9 – 12)
 - c. The people keep the Feast of Booths (8:13 – 18)⁹⁰
 - d. A prayer of confession, penitence, and covenant commitment (9:1 – 38)
 - e. Signatories and specific commitments (10:1 – 39)
- V. The population of Jerusalem and the Villages; Priests and Levites (11:1 – 12:43)

⁸⁸ *ESV Study Bible* p. 822

⁸⁹ The outline of the book of Nehemiah mirrors that of the book of Ezra. Both books begin with preparations for a return to the land. The first six chapters of both books are devoted to rebuilding what the Babylonians destroyed and detail the numerous persecutions endured by those involved with the work of rebuilding. The second half of both books are dominated by Ezra the Scribe, a priest in the Aaronic line. In both books, Ezra the Scribe focuses on restoring the people’s obedience to the commandments of the Torah and in particular to the separation of the people of Israel from the surrounding peoples (*Ezra & Nehemiah*, Matthew Levering, p. 117).

⁹⁰ For more information on the Feast of Booths check out <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/feasts-and-festivals-of-israel.html>

- a. Those who lives in Jerusalem and the villages of Judah (11:1 – 36)
- b. High priests and leading Levites since the time of Zerubbabel (12:1 – 26)
- c. Dedication of the walls (12:27 – 43)

VI. Nehemiah deals with problems in the community (12:44 – 13:31)

- a. The administration of offerings for the temple (12:44 – 47)
- b. Ejection of Tobiah the Ammoniate from the temple (13:1 – 9)
- c. Dealing with neglect of the offerings (13:10 – 14)
- d. Dealing with Sabbath breaking (13:15 – 22)
- e. The problem of intermarriage again (13:23 – 29)⁹¹
- f. Summary of Nehemiah’s temple reforms (13:30 – 31)

⁹¹ Intermarriage in Nehemiah is referring to marrying those of a different religion (2 Corinthians 6:14)

SERMON SCHEDULE

- January 9: *Two Cities* (Nehemiah 1)
January 16: *Prayer & Planning* (Nehemiah 2:1 – 8)
January 23: *Mission & Mockery* (Nehemiah 2:9 – 20)
January 30: *Leading & Laboring* (Nehemiah 3)
February 6: *Pain & Progress* (Nehemiah 4:1 – 14)
February 13: *The Sword & the Trowel* (Nehemiah 4:15 – 23)
February 20: *Greed & Grace* (Nehemiah 5:1 – 13)
February 27: *Humility & Hospitality* (Nehemiah 5:14 – 19)
March 6: *Diversion & Deception* (Nehemiah 6:1 – 14)
March 13: *Completion, Critics & Continuation* (Nehemiah 6:15 – 7:4)
March 20: *Participation & Progress* (Nehemiah 7:5 – 73)
March 27: *Air War & Ground War* (Nehemiah 8:1 – 12)
April 3: *Partying that Provokes* (Nehemiah 8:13 – 18)
April 10: *The God Who Reaches* (Nehemiah 9:1 – 37)
April 17: *Change & Covenant* (Nehemiah 9:38 – 10:39)
April 24: *(Sub)Urban & Missional* (Nehemiah 11)
May 1: *Movement & Bricks* (Nehemiah 12:1 – 26)
May 8: *Dedication & Delight* (Nehemiah 12:27 – 43)
May 15: *God & Money* (Nehemiah 12:44 – 47)
May 22: *Anger & Action* (Nehemiah 13:1 – 14)
May 29: *Life & Work* (Nehemiah 13:15 – 22)
June 5: *Fathers & Fighting* (Nehemiah 13:23 – 31)

ABOUT SMALL GROUPS

What is a small group?

Small groups are small gatherings of people (Christian and not-yet) that meet regularly for friendship, accountability, study and prayer, laughter and occasional tears. Small groups are an essential part of the mission of Revolution Church. They're a place where we learn more about Jesus and life together. They're the place where we wrestle with the truth of the Bible and encourage one another toward the life that God intends for us.

Each small group is unique. Our small groups meet on a semester schedule, meaning they meet for 12 weeks and then take a break for 4 weeks. Each small group meets at a different time, most of our small groups meet in a home, over a meal. Each small group involves food, conversation, prayer, discussing the sermon from Saturday night and figuring out how to apply the Bible to our lives.

Why should I join a small group?

We are created in the image of God and we are told in Genesis 1 that God is a God of community and relationships. The Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) are a perfect example of what community and relationship looks like. We are to model ourselves after God as followers of His.

We are also created with a deep longing for community, a deep longing for relationships. Small groups are a great way to fill this need in our lives. Also, it is impossible to fully engage in Revolution Church without being a small group. Small groups are where relationships are formed, accountability takes place, and care happens. Each of our small group leaders see themselves as the pastor to their small group, as each small group member walks with each other through the highs and lows of life.

How do I get connected to a small group?

The easiest way is on Saturday. Check the box on your connection card or sign up at the next steps table. You can also sign up on our website: <http://www.tucsonrevolution.com/get-connected/small-groups/>.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES ON NEHEMIAH

TECHNICAL COMMENTARIES⁹²

- F. Charles Fensham, *NICOT: Ezra & Nehemiah* (119 pages)
- Hugh Williamson, *WBC: Ezra & Nehemiah* (237 pages)

NON-TECHNICAL COMMENTARIES⁹³

- James Montgomery Boice, *Nehemiah: An Expositional Commentary* (141 pages)
- Raymond Brown, *The Message of Nehemiah* (256 pages)
- Matthew Levering, *Brazos Theological Commentary: Ezra & Nehemiah* (84 pages)
- Mark Throntveit, *IBC: Ezra & Nehemiah* (68 pages)

OTHER RESOURCES⁹⁴

- Robert D. Lupton, *Renewing the City*⁹⁵
- John C. Maxwell, *The Maxwell Leadership Bible*⁹⁶
- Chuck Swindoll, *Hand Me Another Brick*⁹⁷
- The ESV Study Bible*⁹⁸
- Acts 29 San Diego Boot Camp⁹⁹

⁹² Technical commentaries focus more on language, the original context, what the text says.

⁹³ Non-Technical commentaries relegate the grammatical, textual and historical problems to the footnotes. The main point of Non-Technical commentaries is to take the text and directly apply it to our world.

⁹⁴ These are books that focus more on the overview of Nehemiah, the man, the time period and the book itself. Each week in the sermon notes, there will be specific book recommendations to go with specific sermons and topics.

⁹⁵ Lupton makes the book of Nehemiah into a novel and extracts some great leadership principles, as well as principles in the area of urban development and city renewal.

⁹⁶ The Maxwell Leadership Bible is a Bible specifically designed for leaders, it goes through the Bible pulling out specific leadership principles in each passage.

⁹⁷ Chuck Swindoll looks at the specific leadership principles in the book of Nehemiah.

⁹⁸ If you do not have a good study Bible, I highly recommend you pick one up. The translation we use at Revolution is the ESV and they have the best study Bible on the market. For more information, check out <http://www.esvstudybible.org/>.

⁹⁹ Acts 29 Network is a church planting organization. They put on several boot camps each year around the world specifically designed for church planters, pastors and leaders. This boot camp focused specifically on the book of Nehemiah and issues as they relate to leadership in the church and business world. To access the main sessions audio, go to <http://www.acts29network.org/multimedia/event-type/bootcamps-main-sessions/2009-san-diego-boot-camp/>.

SACRED SPACE

As followers of Jesus, we need to spend time with Him. There are a variety of ways to do this: being part of a weekly worship service, participating in a small group, reading the Bible each day and spending time in prayer. As followers of Jesus, we are to do all of these. Many people today only do a few of these because of time constraints or poor time management. This leads to frustration in our spiritual journey, questions and ultimately it raises the possibility of us “giving up on Jesus.”

To combat that, we encourage you to create time in your schedule for these things.

While we go through Nehemiah on Saturday nights and in our small groups, I want to encourage you to do what we call 10 + 10. To commit to spending 10 minutes each day reading Nehemiah and answering the questions provided in a journal and spend 10 minutes praying.¹⁰⁰

Here is what you will need:

- The questions for each day of the week that follow this page. Each Saturday night, we will be preaching line by line through Nehemiah. The following week, starting on Sunday, we want you to spend time in the passage we preached on and answer the provided questions.
- Buy a journal. Use this to answer the questions and write down your answers. Also, create a prayer list of people and situations you are praying for. To the left of the request write down the date you started praying for that and to the right of the request, write down the date when you see God move and answer that request. This will be a great resource to see how God is working your life and world, but also in those times of discouragement for you to look back on and see how faithful God is.
- Schedule the time. Many of us live on strict schedules. Our lives are scheduled from the time we wake up to the time we go to sleep. The reason we don't meet with God regularly is because we don't schedule the time. When are you most alert? When are you the least likely to be disturbed? Schedule it then and protect it.

¹⁰⁰ Special thanks to Mark Driscoll and David Fairchild for help with questions in the sacred space section of the study guide, specifically the context portions.

Many people ask me how to grow closer to God or to see Him move in their lives. Simple answer? 10 + 10. We can't know God unless we spend time with Him.

Big Idea

The Church is to be a city within a city (Tucson) that loves and serves the city and whose heart breaks for the city.

Weekly Memory Verse¹⁰¹: Matthew 5:14

Context

First the Israelites returned to Judah from Babylonian captivity in 538 B.C. Ezra returns to Judah and calls the people to repentance. Approximately 80 years later, Nehemiah returns to rebuild the wall. Fourteen years after Ezra returned to Judah (444 B.C.). Nehemiah is a cup bearer, this was a high position in the court that tested the win for poison before serving the king. Despite the seeming disposability of this position, the cup bearer had rare access to the king and generally lived a very comfortable lifestyle in the palace.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 1; what spoke to you last night?
2. Think about how Nehemiah responds to the news of Jerusalem. How would respond to that news? Why does Nehemiah care?
3. Where in our world/culture is something broken?
4. When was the last time your heart broke for something?
5. Why is this here?¹⁰²

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 1:1 – 4; why does Nehemiah care about Jerusalem?
2. What does the condition of Israel say about God and the nation of Israel?

¹⁰¹ Each week we highlight a verse to memorize. Scripture memory is a great way of not only learning scripture, but also by letting it into our lives. When we memorize a verse, it becomes a part of us and the promises of Scripture become something we can turn to in times of need.

¹⁰² The Bible says that if all of the words about Jesus were written down, the pages would fill the earth. So the question we have to ask about each passage is “why is this here?” Of all the things God could have put here or could have lasted 2500 years, why this passage? Why these words?

3. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 1:5 – 7; why does Nehemiah confess his sins along with the sins of Israel?
2. What does that indicate about the view of community and sin?
3. How is that different from your view of community and sin?
4. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 1:5 – 7; what is Nehemiah's motivation for asking for forgiveness?
2. How is seeking forgiveness to fix our circumstances or relationships different than asking forgiveness out of a genuine remorse for the pain you caused an individual?
3. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 1:5 – 7; how does action relate to repentance?
2. What is the difference between remorse and repentance?
3. Where in your life do you need in faith?
4. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 1; what was your biggest takeaway from this passage?
2. What specifically jumped out at you?
3. Are there any sins in your life that you need seek forgiveness for to move forward in relationships with others and God?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 2:1 – 8 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

Many people pray too much and have no action. Others plan and plan and never seek God. Nehemiah shows us the balance we are to have between prayer and planning.

Weekly Memory Verse¹⁰³: Nehemiah 2:8

Context

Kislev: Month in Israelite calendar around November/December.

Nissan: Month in Israelite calendar around March/April.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 2:1 – 8; what spoke to you last night?
2. Think about the risk Nehemiah was taking, leaving his comfortable job as a cupbearer, to leave and rebuild a city. What risks have you taken in life? What risks have you taken for God?
3. If the answer is nothing, why not? What is stopping you?
4. Why is this here?¹⁰⁴

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 2:1 – 8.
2. What burden keeps you awake at night?
3. What thing that God has asked you to do; if you don't do it before you die will make you die with regrets?
4. If nothing burdens you, why is that?
5. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 2:1 – 8.
2. In verse 2b it says Nehemiah is afraid. Why is that?
3. Is fear an acceptable reaction?

¹⁰³ See footnote 101.

¹⁰⁴ See footnote 102.

4. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 2:1 – 8.
2. What fears do you have?
3. What do you think God thinks of your fears?
4. Do you see God as powerful enough to handle your fears?
5. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 2:4 – 8.
2. What can you learn from how Nehemiah responds to the King?
3. How and when do you pray?
4. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 2:1 – 8; what was your biggest take away from this passage?
2. What specifically jumped out at you?
3. What fears do you need to let go of to do all that you can for God?
4. What thing have you put off that you need to take that step and do?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 2:9 – 20 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

When we follow after God, we can and should expect adversity; it is in those moments of pain that we are most able to glorify God.

Weekly Memory Verse¹⁰⁵: Nehemiah 2:20

Context

Nehemiah has just arrived in the city with blessing and provision if the king of Persia after a major reversal of policy toward rebuilding Jerusalem. It would have taken around 3 to 6 months to travel to Jerusalem.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 2:9 – 20; what spoke to you last night?
2. What excites you, scares you about Revolution’s vision to build a church that is a force in the city of Tucson?
3. Why is this here?¹⁰⁶

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 2:9 – 10.
2. Why were Sanballat and Tobiah opposed to what Nehemiah wanted to do?
3. Have you experienced hostility or ridicule for your faith? What did that feel like? If not, what do you think that would feel like?
4. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 2:9 – 10.
2. With all the ridicule Nehemiah was feeling, it is conceivable that he could’ve thrown in the towel. What would make you consider throwing in the towel when it comes to your relationship with Jesus?
3. Why would that make you want to give up?

¹⁰⁵ See footnote 101.

¹⁰⁶ See footnote 102.

4. Prayer for today: Ask God to give you the strength to get through whatever you wrote down, ask Him for the passion, desire and faith it will take for you to finish strong in your relationship with Him.
5. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 2:11 – 16.
2. What was going through Nehemiah’s mind as he surveyed the walls of the city?
3. What is the state of the city of Tucson that we are trying to reach?
4. What roadblocks do you see that we will have to overcome?
5. Prayer for today: That God would bless us as a church and allow us to be a force in Tucson. That we would see thousands of people in the city of Tucson become followers of Jesus because of our church and the life that we each live.
6. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 2:11 – 16.
2. What are you doing to help build Revolution?
3. Who are you building relationships with who are not followers of Jesus?
4. Are you praying everyday for those family members and friends who don’t know Jesus?
5. Prayer for today: Ask God for opportunities to share your faith with unsaved friends and/or invite them to Revolution. Ask God what you need to be doing at Revolution to help us “build the city within the city.”
6. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 2:17 – 20.
2. What is your response to Revolution’s dream to reach the city of Tucson?¹⁰⁷
3. Are you willing to be a part of this vision?
4. What are you doing, what is God calling you to, to see this vision become reality?
5. Does this excite you or scare you?

¹⁰⁷ Our dream is to one day launch new sites around the city of Tucson and plant churches around the city. We want to make sure that everyone is within a 10 mile driving distance of one of Revolution’s sites or church plants.

6. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 3 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

Any successful organization or church must function as one unit. For Revolution to fulfill what God has called us to, we must work as one, within healthy teams.

Weekly Memory Verse¹⁰⁸: 1 Corinthians 12:12

Context

Eliashib the high priest: The grandson of Jeshua, and the first high priest after the return from Babylon.

Sheep gate: Generally this gate is understood to be where the sheep for sacrifices were brought into the city. The fact that he starts with this gate and mentions the consecration reflects the focus on glorifying God as they begin the work.

Tribe: Social division of people with common interest and affinity.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 3. Note who works with who on the wall. What is their connection to each other?
2. What connects everyone who is working on the wall?
3. Why is this here?¹⁰⁹

Monday Questions

1. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12.
2. If the church is a body and everyone plays a part, what part you playing in the body of Revolution?
3. Is this the area you feel you should be in?
4. If you are playing a part, why not?
5. Action step: If you are not serving on a team at Revolution, to contact the church office to do so. For more information contact, Josh Reich at josh.reich@tucsonrevolution.com to get involved.

¹⁰⁸ See footnote 101.

¹⁰⁹ See footnote 102.

6. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. In Nehemiah 3, everyone is connected by the desire to build the wall. What connects us together at Revolution?
2. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Spend some extended time today praying for the teams at Revolution: Elders, Staff, Planet Rev, Rev Up, Worship & Arts, First Impressions, Small group leaders and hosts, Set up and tear down.
2. Ask God to use them in big ways, to give them team unity and wisdom as they function and ultimately to “help people find their way back to God?”

Thursday Questions

1. In chapter 1, we discussed two issues that Nehemiah was concerned with, the wall and the people, how does chapter 3 address each?
2. Are you excited to help build the church within the city (Nehemiah 3:20)?
3. What excites you about that prospect?
4. What discourages you about that prospect?
5. What is the name of your gate?
6. Pray for your gate (ministry area).

Friday Questions

1. What are your excuses that keep you from helping to build the church?
2. What are your excuses that keep you from loving the city of Tucson?
3. What are your excuses that keep you from addressing your relationship with Jesus?
4. How do those excuses reflect your view of God?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 4:1 – 14 in preparation for tonight’s service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight’s service.

Big Idea

There can be no progress in life without pain, but it is in the Christian life that our pain becomes meaningful.

Weekly Memory Verse¹¹⁰: Nehemiah 4:14

Context

Chapter 3 described the work of the wall and the unity of the people in Judah. As the work of God begins to show progress the opposition to His work begins to escalate. This tests the faith of the people of Judah just as it tests our faith today.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 4:1 – 14; what spoke to you last night?
2. One author said, “If you aren’t experiencing any opposition from the devil, you might be going in the same direction as him.” Do you agree? How does that make you feel about some of the trials and opposition you have experienced?
3. Why is this here?¹¹¹

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 4:1 – 6.
2. What is the root of Sanballats anger?
3. How do he and his friends attempt to undermine what Nehemiah and the workers are doing?
4. Have you ever faced taunting or mocking in your life as you have tried to live your life for Jesus?
5. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 4:1 – 6.

¹¹⁰ See footnote 101.

¹¹¹ See footnote 102.

2. As you think about the taunting and mocking that you have experienced. Where did it come from? What was the root of their anger?
3. What thoughts and emotions do you have in those moments?
4. Are you surprised by Nehemiah's response?
5. Is he justified in cursing his enemies (See Genesis 12:3; Joshua 1:5; Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:14, 20)?
6. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 4:7 – 10.
2. What do you think of their tactic of intimidation?
3. Look at the two responses in verse 9, how are both parts important?
4. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 4:11 – 14.
2. Have you ever felt threatened for your faith?
3. Where have you experienced the pressure from friends or family seen in verse 12?
4. How is your resolve strengthened by verse 14?
5. Does remembering God and His attributes give you courage for living a life in Jesus against opposition?
6. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 4:1 – 14.
2. What stood out the most to you this week? What one thing did God teach you this week through Nehemiah 4:1 – 14?
3. How is your response to opposition different or the same from Nehemiah's?
4. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 4:15 – 23 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

We must make sure to continually defend that which we've been called to build – whether it is our marriage, family, business, and/or ministry.

Weekly Memory Verse¹¹²: Nehemiah 4:20

Context

In the beginning of chapter 4, we saw the opposition against Nehemiah and the building of the wall escalate to actual threats against their lives. The people were discouraged but reminded to place their faith in God and to remember His attributes in the face of opposition.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 4:15 – 23; what spoke to you last night?
2. Why is this here?¹¹³

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 4:15 – 18.
2. How do you think it felt to work under this pressure?
3. How can a heightened sense of danger help in building the wall (Revolution)?
4. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read 1 Peter 5:8.
2. As followers of Jesus, who do we battle against?
3. How do you arm yourself against the attacks of Satan (Read Ephesians 6:10 – 20 for the answer)?
4. What dangers do you face when you put your sword (Bible) down?
5. Do you feel these dangers are real? How does impact how you react to them?

¹¹² See footnote 101.

¹¹³ See footnote 102.

6. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 4:19 – 20 & Galatians 6:1 – 10.
2. What does it mean to you to belong to a church body?
3. What things can you do to encourage other Revolutionaries?
4. What are the implications of calling Revolution your church home?
5. Does it excite you or scare you to be a part of community?
6. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 4:21 – 23.
2. Why were the workers encouraged to sleep inside the wall?
3. How do you stay prepared for battle?
4. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 4:15 – 23.
2. What stood out the most to you this week? What one thing did God teach you this week through Nehemiah 4:15 – 23?
3. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 5:1 – 13 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

Followers of Jesus love people and use money, instead of loving money and using people.

Weekly Memory Verse¹¹⁴: 1 John 3:17 – 18

Context

In chapter 4, the increased danger from external forces prompted new strategies to insure that work on the city continued. Guards were posted. Workers carried their swords. They were aware of the enemy and were prepared to fight. Unfortunately, danger is not always outside the walls.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 5:1 – 13; what spoke to you last night?
2. What can you do personally to protect the unity of Revolution?¹¹⁵
3. Why is this here?¹¹⁶

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 5:1 – 5.
2. How had building the wall made people vulnerable to be taken advantage of?
3. Where does that happen in our culture?
4. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Ephesians 4:2 – 3 and Hebrews 10:23 – 25.
2. What do these verses say about unity in the church?
3. How do we protect unity?

¹¹⁴ See footnote 101.

¹¹⁵ This week, pray each day for the unity and protection of Revolution Church. That God would keep us on mission and unified as we move forward.

¹¹⁶ See footnote 102.

4. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 5:6 – 8.
2. Does it bother you that Nehemiah got angry? Why or why not?
3. What makes you angry?
4. What is the difference between righteous anger and anger that is sin?
5. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 5:9 – 13.
2. What does Nehemiah do to right the injustice he sees?
3. How does he practice what he preaches?
4. What should we do with our righteous anger about things in our world?
5. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Romans 7.
2. Write down an example of when you struggle like Paul struggles in this passage.
3. Does your sin make you angry? Why or why not?
4. Where do you find hope to save you from your struggles (see Romans 7:24 – 25)?
5. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 5:14 - 19 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

God looks for and uses those who are humble and willing to let Him work through them (instead of the other way around).

Weekly Memory Verse¹¹⁷: Nehemiah 5:19

Context

In this section, we get a glimpse of Nehemiah's personal journal. It is a view into the motivations of a man called by God to a good work. We see this as a contrast to the motives of the nobles last week who were taking advantage of the people in a time of heavy burden.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 5:14 – 19; what spoke to you last night?
2. How do you define integrity?
3. Why does integrity matter?
4. Why is this here?¹¹⁸

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 5:14 – 19.
2. What is Nehemiah's motivation for the way he leads the people?
3. How does this reflect his heart?
4. Do our actions always reflect our heart?
5. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read 1 Timothy 6:17 – 18.
2. Where is Nehemiah's hope?
3. Where do you find your security and hope?
4. Why is this here?

¹¹⁷ See footnote 101.

¹¹⁸ See footnote 102.

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 5:14 – 19.
2. What does it mean for you to live with integrity?
3. Are you doing anything or involved in anything right now that would make someone question your integrity?
4. Do you have any secret sin(s) you need to confess to God or another person?
5. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 5:14 – 19.
2. What privileges or rights are you willing to set aside to move the gospel forward in Tucson? Is there any right or privilege you are not willing to give up?
3. What does it mean for you to fully surrender to God?
4. Do you need to rearrange how you spend your time, money or talents to do this?
5. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 5:14 – 19.
2. What did God teach you this week through Nehemiah 5:14 – 19?
3. Are there any changes to your life that you need to make?
4. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 6:1 – 14 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

When positive change and growth occur, resistance and criticism from others are inevitable.

Weekly Memory Verse¹¹⁹: Nehemiah 6:9

Context

In the middle of accomplishing the work God sent Nehemiah to do, he begins to be attacked by his enemies. As we read this text, let us remember, the enemy of the Church is Satan, not the people of this world. Our task is to preach the good news of salvation to non-believers, and Satan is actively working to thwart our efforts.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 6:1 – 14; what spoke to you last night?
2. Do you believe that Satan is real and he wants to deceive you (See Genesis 3:4; John 8:4; 2 Corinthians 11:3)?
3. Why is this here?¹²⁰

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 6:1 – 4.
2. What tricks of deception are being employed here?
3. How does Nehemiah discover it?
4. How does he decide this was a set up?
5. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 6:1 – 4.
2. How did Nehemiah's understanding of purpose protect him from being deceived?
3. What is Nehemiah's response to deception?

¹¹⁹ See footnote 101.

¹²⁰ See footnote 102.

4. What deceptions are keeping you from fulfilling God's work and a deeper relationship with Jesus?
5. How will you respond to these deceptions?
6. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Job 1 and Revelation 12:10.
2. What do these verses say about Satan and God?
3. Read Revelation 12:11.
4. What does this verse teach us we should think when it comes to deceptions and accusations?
5. What does Jesus' blood that was spilled for us mean when it comes to freedom?
6. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 6:5 – 9.
2. What is the accusation against Nehemiah?
3. What is the intent of the accusation? What does his enemy hope to gain?
4. How does Nehemiah respond to the accusation?
5. What lies and accusations are you believing that is keeping you from going deeper with Jesus?
6. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 6:5 – 9; Matthew 4:1 – 11 and 1 Thessalonians 3:5.
2. What is the temptation for Nehemiah? How is this similar to Matthew 4:8?
3. How does Nehemiah respond to the temptation? How does Jesus?
4. What tools do you have to resist temptation? How will you resist temptation?
5. Are there temptations you are giving into that you need to confess to God or to someone else?
6. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 6:15 – 7:4 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

When positive change and growth occur, resistance and criticism from others are inevitable.

Weekly Memory Verse¹²¹: Nehemiah 6:9

Context

In the middle of accomplishing the work God sent Nehemiah to do, he begins to be attacked by his enemies. As we read this text, let us remember, the enemy of the Church is Satan, not the people of this world. Our task is to preach the good news of salvation to non-believers, and Satan is actively working to thwart our efforts.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 6:1 – 14; what spoke to you last night?
2. Do you believe that Satan is real and he wants to deceive you (See Genesis 3:4; John 8:4; 2 Corinthians 11:3)?
3. Why is this here?¹²²

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 6:1 – 4.
2. What tricks of deception are being employed here?
3. How does Nehemiah discover it?
4. How does he decide this was a set up?
5. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 6:1 – 4.
2. How did Nehemiah's understanding of purpose protect him from being deceived?
3. What is Nehemiah's response to deception?

¹²¹ See footnote 101.

¹²² See footnote 102.

4. What deceptions are keeping you from fulfilling God's work and a deeper relationship with Jesus?
5. How will you respond to these deceptions?
6. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Job 1 and Revelation 12:10.
2. What do these verses say about Satan and God?
3. Read Revelation 12:11.
4. What does this verse teach us we should think when it comes to deceptions and accusations?
5. What does Jesus' blood that was spilled for us mean when it comes to freedom?
6. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 6:5 – 9.
2. What is the accusation against Nehemiah?
3. What is the intent of the accusation? What does his enemy hope to gain?
4. How does Nehemiah respond to the accusation?
5. What lies and accusations are you believing that is keeping you from going deeper with Jesus?
6. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 6:5 – 9; Matthew 4:1 – 11 and 1 Thessalonians 3:5.
2. What is the temptation for Nehemiah? How is this similar to Matthew 4:8?
3. How does Nehemiah respond to the temptation? How does Jesus?
4. What tools do you have to resist temptation? How will you resist temptation?
5. Are there temptations you are giving into that you need to confess to God or to someone else?
6. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 6:15 – 7:4 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

God knows each of us by name and has an important role for us in building Revolution and rebuilding our own city of Tucson.

Weekly Memory Verse¹²³: Luke 10:20

Context

At this point in the story the city has been fortified, the wall is finished but the city had few people in it. Nehemiah sets out to organize the people by genealogy. While doing so he discovers the register of exiles who returned from Babylon. He reconciles the people in the city with this original list to verify their land (vs. 6) and to verify their claim to membership in the city (vs. 61 – 65). We see that the people who populate the city are those who were redeemed from captivity in Babylon. As a church, we seek to do the same, however we do not have a list. Therefore, we preach the Gospel and invite all who will put their faith in Jesus as their Savior to join us within the city of the church.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 7:5 – 73; what spoke to you last night?
2. Why is this here?¹²⁴

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 7:5.
2. Why does Nehemiah assemble the people into their genealogies?
3. How does God factor into this decision?
4. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

5. Read Nehemiah 7:5.
6. How do you make decisions?

¹²³ See footnote 101.

¹²⁴ See footnote 102.

7. Is it different or the same as how Nehemiah makes decisions?
8. How does the way you make decisions reflect your relationship with God?
9. How do you know that the direction you are taking is from God?
10. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 7:6 – 65.
2. What does it mean to have your name listed here (refer to the context)?
3. What is the consequence of not being found on the register (vs. 61 – 65)?
4. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 7:66 – 73.
2. If Revolution had a list, where would your name be?
3. What part do you play at Revolution?
4. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12.
2. Are you doing what you should be doing at Revolution?
3. If you aren't serving at Revolution, what is keeping you?
4. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:1 – 12 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

It is vital to know and understand God's word, allowing it to convict and encourage us.

Weekly Memory Verse¹²⁵: Nehemiah 8:9

Context

In chapter 7 Nehemiah used the existing register from the exodus of Babylon to allocate land to the inhabitants of the city. We looked at our place within the body just as Nehemiah took stock of the particular people within the city. Now that the people have found their place in the community, they now turn to hear from God through the reading of His revealed Word.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:1 – 12; what spoke to you last night?
2. What are your thoughts on the air war and ground war idea?¹²⁶
3. Are you supportive of this idea?
4. Why is this here?¹²⁷

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:1 – 4.
2. Do you long to open the word of God? Why or why not?
3. If someone asked you to define the Bible, what would you say?
4. What do you do when you want to hear from God?
5. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:1 – 4.

¹²⁵ See footnote 101.

¹²⁶ The air war is Saturday night when we gather as the church at large for corporate worship and teaching. The ground war is when we gather in small groups throughout the week.

¹²⁷ See footnote 102.

2. What is the difference between wanting know about God and wanting to know God?
3. Which one best describes you right now?
4. What will it take for you to want to know and not just information about Him?
5. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:5 – 8.
2. How often do you read your Bible?
3. How does your response to question #2 make you feel?
4. What do you need to do to increase that number?
5. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:5 – 8.
2. What is the authority in your life?
3. What brings you the greatest joy?
4. What do you think keeps you from experiencing all that God wants you to experience?
5. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:9 – 12.
2. What appears to be the natural response to hearing the Word of God? Why do you think this is the case?
3. What is your natural response to hearing the Word of God?
4. Why can we have joy in the face of conviction of sin and repentance?
5. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:13 – 18 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

The people of Jerusalem observe the Day of Atonement¹²⁸ and the Feast of Booths. It is these reminders in Israel's history of God's love and forgiveness that show us that we need Jesus, not religion.

Weekly Memory Verse¹²⁹: Hebrews 10:19

Context

The Feast of Booths was one of the three pilgrim festivals or holidays prescribed in Leviticus 23:33 – 44. The point of the festival was to remind Israel of God's faithfulness in bringing them out of Egypt. It is a reminder of redemption after years of captivity and even years of wandering in the desert.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:13 – 18; what spoke to you last night?
2. Why is this here?¹³⁰

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:13 – 15.
2. How has the authority of Scripture been used to direct your life?
3. What has God revealed to you through His Word recently?
4. What does it feel like to see God moving and speaking into your life?
5. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:13 – 15.
2. What does conviction of the Holy Spirit look like for you? How does it feel?
3. How do you typically respond to conviction?

¹²⁸ To better understand the Day of Atonement, listen to Josh's sermon on it from May 16, 2009 found at <http://www.tucsonrevolution.com/sermon/perfect-hebrews-101-18/>.

¹²⁹ See footnote 101.

¹³⁰ See footnote 102.

4. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:13 – 18.
2. What motivates you to follow God?
3. In what ways does God want you to change the way you respond to His word?
4. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:16 – 18.
2. Why would this particular festival have significance to the people in book of Nehemiah?
3. What was God calling them to remember through the observance of this festival?
4. What is God calling you to remember?
5. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:16 – 18.
2. What has Jesus redeemed you from?
3. How does remembering what Jesus has rescued you from help you to continue following Him?
4. Take a moment and think about what your life would be like without Jesus. What comes to mind?
5. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 9:1 – 37 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

Prayer must be radically biblical, God-centered and truly repentant.

Weekly Memory Verse¹³¹: 1 John 1:9

Context

After celebrating the redemption of Israel from Egypt by observing the Feast of Booths, the people of Israel gathered in a solemn assembly. After a celebration of God's faithfulness and the victory of completing the city, they now come to a place of confession and repentance.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 9:1 – 37; what spoke to you last night?
2. Why is this here?¹³²

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 9:1 – 5.
2. Why do you think the people of Israel take the time to confess their sins?
3. Does it surprise you that they confessed the sins of their fathers as well as their own? Why or why not?
4. Why is this here?
5. Spend a minute in silence confessing your sins to God.

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 9:1 – 5.
2. What is the first reaction you have to confession? What comes to mind when you hear the word confession?
3. How often do you confess your sins? To God? To a spouse or friend?
4. Why is this here?
5. Spend a minute in silence confessing your sins to God.

¹³¹ See footnote 101.

¹³² See footnote 102.

Wednesday Questions

1. Spend a minute in silence confessing your sins to God.
2. Read Nehemiah 9:6 – 15.
3. Why do you think the people of Israel focused on the mighty acts of God after confessing their sin?
4. What is the theme of the great acts of God that is being confessed?
5. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Spend a minute in silence confessing your sins to God.
2. Read Nehemiah 9:6 – 15.
3. What great things has God done in your story of redemption?
4. How does remembering these acts of God encourage you after a time of confessing your sin?
5. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 9:16 – 21.
2. What was Israel's response to all that God had done after being brought out of captivity?
3. How have you been stiff-necked in your walk with God? What ways are you rebelling against God?
4. Take a moment to confess these things to God.
5. How did God respond to the stubbornness of the people of Israel? How does God respond to us?
6. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 9:38 – 10:39 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

The people of Israel renew their commitment to walking in God's law by entering into a covenant. With this covenant comes an assessment of the resources needed to continue on in ministry.

Weekly Memory Verse¹³³: Nehemiah 9:38 & 10:29

Context

The people of Israel have confessed their sin and recalled the faithfulness of God through His acts of mercy and grace even in the face of rebellion and disobedience. In light of God's mercy, the people of Israel now covenant with God to live in obedience.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 9:38 – 10:39; what spoke to you last night?
2. Why is this here?¹³⁴

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 9:38 – 10:32.
2. How would you describe the makeup of the people listed under the covenant?
3. Does this have significance for you? Why or why not?
4. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 9:38 – 10:32.
2. Is it important for you that the leaders were named as well as the general community?
3. Why do you think the people were compelled to make this covenant?
4. Why is this here?

¹³³ See footnote 101.

¹³⁴ See footnote 102.

Wednesday Questions

1. After thinking about confession last week and spending time confessing your sins. How have you realigned your life with God this week?
2. If you were to write a covenant to God, what issues would He want you to personally address?
3. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 10:32 – 39.
2. Why does the covenant spend so much time on the issue of tithing?
3. What is your first response to a conversation about giving? Why?
4. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 10:32 – 39.
2. What is the purpose of giving to the house of God?
3. What does it mean to bring your first fruits to God?
4. Why is that important?
5. In what ways have you “neglected the house of our God?”
6. How do you fix that?
7. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 11:1 – 36 in preparation for tonight’s service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight’s service.

Big Idea

Living missional lives in the city of Tucson is a matter of sacrifice in order to see the gospel of Jesus take root and flow downstream to all areas of culture.

Weekly Memory Verse¹³⁵: Nehemiah 11:2

Context

The people of Israel have just made an oath to separate themselves from the worship of other gods and the intermarrying with people who worship other gods. As this point, they will now go on with their common lives, some will live in Jerusalem and others will live in the outlying towns.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 11:1 – 36; what spoke to you last night?
2. Why is this here?¹³⁶

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 11:1 – 6.
2. What does it mean to live in Jerusalem in terms of the covenant just made?
3. What does it mean to live in the neighboring towns?
4. What are the benefits and drawbacks to each?
5. Which area best describes where you live in relation to Tucson?
6. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 11:1 – 6.
2. How does verse 3 speak to the faithfulness of God?
3. How has God been faithful to you?
4. Why is this here?

¹³⁵ See footnote 101.

¹³⁶ See footnote 102.

Wednesday Questions

1. Who in your circle are you praying for to have an opportunity to share your faith or to invite to Revolution? A neighbor? Co-worker? Family member?

Thursday Questions

2. Read Nehemiah 11:7 – 36.
3. What can you learn from the descriptions of the people listed?
4. If you and your family were described in this way, what would it say?
5. How do you feel about that?
6. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 11:7 – 36.
2. From verse 17 we see Mattaniah giving thanks, what does that look like in your life?
3. How is your daily life different when you pause to thank God?
4. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:1 – 26 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

All of us build a wall; all of us leave some kind of legacy. Right now, we are influencing those around us to either get closer to Jesus or move away from Him.

Weekly Memory Verse¹³⁷: Psalm 39:4 – 5

Context

In the last chapter, we looked at the leaders of Jerusalem as they settled the city. In preparation of the wall dedication, Nehemiah gives us a list of those priests that have returned to perform their priestly duties.

Levite: a member of the priestly Hebrew tribe of Levi.

Priests: the specially designated officials who served in the Temple performing ritual functions and conducting the sacrificial services limited to the Levites.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:1 – 26; what spoke to you last night?
2. Why is this here?¹³⁸

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:1 – 26.
2. What does this list say about the importance of the priests in reestablishing Jerusalem?
3. How do you see this relating to the Revolution's mission to reach Tucson?
4. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:1 – 26.

¹³⁷ See footnote 101.

¹³⁸ See footnote 102.

2. What has the potential to distract you from your focus on Jesus even in the midst of mission?
3. How do you keep your heart from wandering toward those things?
4. How can we encourage each other toward our calling in Jesus and away from these distractions?
5. Who is holding you accountable to stay on mission?
6. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:1 – 26.
2. When you read the names of generations of faithful priests, does that bring hope or disappointment?
3. How have you been a part of a legacy?
4. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:1 – 26.
2. What do you want your legacy to be?
3. How can you start creating that legacy today?
4. If your funeral was today, what would people say about you?
5. How do you feel about that?
6. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:1 – 26.
2. What obstacles do you face toward seeing the legacy you want to leave from becoming a reality?
3. How will you get past those obstacles?
4. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:27 – 43 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

We need to remove all of the idols in our lives so that we can fully follow Jesus and be on mission with Jesus in our world.

Weekly Memory Verse¹³⁹: Romans 12:1 – 2

Context

The city has been resettled; the people have confessed their sins and recommitted their lives to serving and obeying God. At this time, the people of Jerusalem gather to thank God for the success they have had in rebuilding the city and to dedicate the wall to Him and His purposes.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:27 – 43; what spoke to you last night?
2. Why is this here?¹⁴⁰

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:27 – 37.
2. What are the people celebrating?
3. How do you see this relating to Revolution's mission to reach Tucson?
4. What part do you play in seeing Revolution's mission become reality?
5. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:27 – 37.
2. What has God given you that you have dedicated to Him?
3. What has God given you that you have not dedicated to Him?
4. Why have you not dedicated these things to God?
5. How would dedicating these things to God change the way you experience them?
6. Why is this here?

¹³⁹ See footnote 101.

¹⁴⁰ See footnote 102.

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:38 – 43.
2. Compare the scene in verses 37 – 39 with Nehemiah 4:3. What is the significance?
3. What response does seeing God’s work bring up in you?
4. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:38 – 43.
2. What brings you joy?
3. What prevents you from taking joy in the worship of God?
4. How are those things a reflection of your orientation toward God?
5. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:38 – 43.
2. List the things God has done in your life that are worthy of thanks.
3. Take a moment to thank God for each of the things on your list.
4. What do you need to do to be more aware of the gifts God has given you? How can you be more thankful today?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:44 – 47 in preparation for tonight’s service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight’s service.

Big Idea

How we view God and money will directly affect whether or not we worship God with the resources He provides or pursue idolatry.

Weekly Memory Verse¹⁴¹: Matthew 6:21

Context

Last week we looked at the dedication of the work of God and finding joy in seeing Him glorified. This week we continue this theme with the support of the ministry. The people of Israel give their resources to support the priests and they find joy in it because the priests they support are faithful.

Steward: one appointed to supervise the provision and distribution of goods and services.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:44 – 47; what spoke to you last night?
2. Did you participate in the 90 day tithing challenge? Why or why not?
3. Why is this here?¹⁴²

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:44 – 47.
2. What were the men in this passage collecting? For what purpose were they collecting it?
3. How does this relate to the dedication and worship we saw in the last chapter?
4. What does this say about the value of the priest and their work to the people of Israel?
5. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

¹⁴¹ See footnote 101.

¹⁴² See footnote 102.

1. Read Matthew 6:19 – 24.
2. What do you value most in your life?
3. Where do you spend your money?
4. On what do you spend the bulk of your free time?
5. How does this reflect what is in your heart according to verse 21?
6. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:44 – 47 & Matthew 6:19 – 24.
2. What does it mean to have a “kingdom mindset?”
3. How do your values (where you spend your time and money) line up with God’s values? Are they the same? Different?
4. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 12:44 – 47.
2. What has God entrusted you to steward?
3. In what ways do you need to realign your thinking and actions with Christ?
4. How has God called you personally to support the mission of Revolution?
5. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Look over your answers for this past week. Are you honoring God with how you spend your time and money?
2. What changes do you need to make to be a better steward of what He has entrusted you with?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:1 – 14 in preparation for tonight’s service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight’s service.

Big Idea

We often take for granted the things God has done for us. We need to be on our guard for threats to Godly living and ministry in addition to righteous responses when faced with godless living.

Weekly Memory Verse¹⁴³: Ephesians 6:12

Context

Nehemiah's governed Judea for 12 years, after which he returns to Susa. During his absence, the people gradually abandon their covenant (10:28 – 39), turn their back on God and His law. They set Tobiah up in the temple while shutting down temple services and stop tithing. At the same time, they marry worshipers of false god's diluting their faith and forsaking God's law.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:1 – 14; what spoke to you last night?
2. Why is this here?¹⁴⁴

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:1 – 5, 10.
2. Why was God so animated that any Ammonite or Moabite enter the assembly of God (see Numbers 22 – 25)?
3. Does this mean there is no redemption for these people?¹⁴⁵
4. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:1 – 5, 10.
2. What inspired the people to realign with the will of God?

¹⁴³ See footnote 101.

¹⁴⁴ See footnote 102.

¹⁴⁵ For more on the answer to this question, read the book of Ruth. It is a short book (2 pages in the Old Testament). Great story of redemption and God's grace.

3. How does your consistency with being in Scripture affect your daily obedience to Christ?
4. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:1 – 5, 10.
2. How do you think it felt for Nehemiah to see Tobiah living in the temple of God?
3. What would be a righteous motivation for his anger? What would be an unrighteous motivation?
4. What makes you angry: an offense against God or an offense against you? Why?
5. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:6 – 14.
2. What does Nehemiah do when he hears of the direction that Jerusalem has taken?
3. What is your natural response to Nehemiah physically kicking Tobiah out of the temple?
4. What in that description makes you uncomfortable?
5. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:6 – 14.
2. Where in your life is God calling you to stand up and defend the Gospel?
3. When are you prone to passivity when you should be angry? What keeps you from acting?
4. How does Nehemiah's prayer in light of his actions change your understanding of anger?
5. Would you be comfortable praying that prayer personally? Why or why not?
6. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:15 – 22 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

We can too quickly fall into idolizing work and wealth, at the expense of worshiping God and resting with family and friends.

Weekly Memory Verse¹⁴⁶: Matthew 11:28 – 29

Context

Nehemiah's governed Judea for 12 years, after which he returns to Susa. During his absence, the people gradually abandon their covenant (10:28 – 39), turn their back on God and His law. They set Tobiah up in the temple while shutting down temple services and stop tithing. At the same time, they marry worshipers of false god's diluting their faith and forsaking God's law.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:15 – 22; what spoke to you last night?
2. What is your first reaction to the idea of rest and Sabbath?
3. Do you rest well? Why or why not?
4. Why is this here?¹⁴⁷

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:15 – 22.
2. In what way is breaking the Sabbath a heart condition?
3. What does it reveal about the hearts of the people of Judah?
4. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:15 – 22.
2. When do you Sabbath?
3. What distracts you from taking a Sabbath day?
4. Why is this here?

¹⁴⁶ See footnote 101.

¹⁴⁷ See footnote 102.

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:15 – 22.
2. What deeper issues are revealed by our casual view of the Sabbath?
3. Moving forward, what day will you Sabbath on? What will this day look like? How will it be different from the other 6 days of the week?
4. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:15 – 22.
2. How does Nehemiah respond to the people breaking the Sabbath?
3. What surprises you about his response?
4. How does your view of Scripture affect your perception of the appropriateness of his response?
5. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:15 – 22.
2. Think about Nehemiah's response that we looked at yesterday.
3. Would you feel comfortable rebuking a brother or sister in Christ? Why or why not?
4. What offenses would stir you to rebuke someone?
5. In what areas of your life do you need a rebuke?
6. How are the concepts of restoration, redemption, and rebuke related?
7. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:23 – 31 in preparation for tonight's service.
2. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.

Big Idea

God's people continue to live sinful lives. The men married godless women, their children could not understand the Scriptures because they were not taught Hebrew, and the fathers were giving their daughters to godless men and allowing their sons to marry godless women. In response, Nehemiah confronts and fights with the men, cleanses the church of unfit leaders, and holds the men accountable as covenant heads.

Weekly Memory Verse¹⁴⁸: Ephesians 5:22 – 24

Context

At the end of Nehemiah, we are not left with a neat resolved ending. Instead, we see Nehemiah still embattled with the people of Judah who are prone to wander from God. In this last study, reflect over the high's and low's of Nehemiah's work in Jerusalem and consider the battle you face to be faithful in your walk with Jesus.

Sunday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:23 – 31; what spoke to you last night?
2. What are 3 things that you have learned through our study in the book of Nehemiah?
3. Why is this here?¹⁴⁹

Monday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:23 – 31.
2. How were the Israelites sinning against God this time?
3. In what ways did they break their oath in chapter 10?
4. Why is this here?

Tuesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:23 – 31.

¹⁴⁸ See footnote 101.

¹⁴⁹ See footnote 102.

2. Consider your answers from yesterday.
3. How does this history reflect reality in your life today?
4. What sin in your life makes you angry?
5. Why is this here?

Wednesday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13:31b: "Remember me, O my God, for good."
2. What would keep you from praying this prayer today?
3. What do you want God to remember you for?
4. Why is this here?

Thursday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13: 31b: "Remember me, O my God, for good."
2. In what areas do you need to repent in order to be remembered well?
3. Why is this here?

Friday Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 13: 31b: "Remember me, O my God, for good."
2. How has the book of Nehemiah impacted your view of God and your world?
3. What attributes of God have you seen displayed in the book of Nehemiah?
4. Why is this here?

Saturday Questions

1. Ask God to move in a powerful tonight and speak to you and the rest of Revolution through tonight's service.