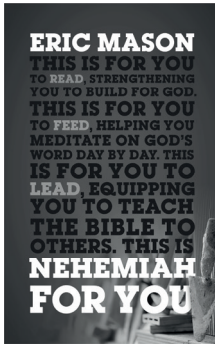




God's building project

Nehemiah

by Eric Mason



Nehemiah For You

If you are reading *Nehemiah For You* alongside this Good Book Guide, here is how the studies in this booklet link to the chapters of *Nehemiah For You*:

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Study One → Ch 1-2 | Study Five → Ch 6 |
| Study Two → Ch 2-3 | Study Six → Ch 6-7 |
| Study Three → Ch 3-4 | Study Seven → Ch 8-9 |
| Study Four → Ch 5 | Study Eight → Ch 10 |

Find out more about *Nehemiah For You* at:
www.thegoodbook.com/for-you

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The Good Book Guide to Nehemiah

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Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, moms and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That's why we've designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the “big picture” of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let's take a look at what is included:

- ☞ **Talkabout:** Most groups need to “break the ice” at the beginning of a session, and here's the question that will do that. It's designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. The **Leader's Guide** contains **guidance for questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional “follow-up” questions.
- ⋮ **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that's not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and, your church. ☞ **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ↑ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God's word—in line with his concerns, purposes, and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader's Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God's word.

Why study Nehemiah?

Nehemiah tells the story of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. God's people had been in captivity, but God had intervened so that they were allowed to come back to their own land and rebuild their broken city. It's a key moment in the history of God's people.

But we won't walk away from this book with just a rebuilt wall. There are far more riches than that in these pages!

Jerusalem was supposed to be a city on a hill, a light to the world, a representation of the rule of God. But its people had forgotten this. So the book of Nehemiah shows us the work it takes to rebuild representation of the glory of God. Nehemiah doesn't just rebuild the city walls; he rebuilds the social and spiritual character of the people, too. He deals with justice issues, resists the distractions of enemies, and reinstates the word of God in its place at the center of the life of the city.

This story has an obvious relevance to any type of rebuilding we might do for God—from our homes and families to our local churches, communities, cities, and government. It teaches us about gospel mission. It shows how, even in the midst of great need, opposition, rebellion, encumbrances, and sins, God still works through his people and motivates us to complete his work.

Only a few generations after Nehemiah, the Savior would come. Jesus would live, die, and rise again, and would guide the people of God—including you and me—beyond the walls of Jerusalem in mission, to establish his reign over the nations. It's with that perspective that we read the book of Nehemiah today.

We can see ourselves and our lives in the book of Nehemiah. But most of all we can see God's intentions, his glory, and his Son.

1

Nehemiah 1:1 – 2:8

REDEEMED TO REPRESENT



talkabout

1. Imagine the capital city of your country, or the place where you live, has been destroyed. How would you feel? What would you do?



investigate

Read Nehemiah 1:1-10

The Israelites had been in exile—scattered far from their homeland. But God had intervened and the people had begun to be allowed to go back to Jerusalem. At the start of the book of Nehemiah, some exiles have already returned, while others remain in Persia.

2. Among those who have already returned is Hanani, the brother of Nehemiah. What does he say about the state of Jerusalem (v 3)?

- What is Nehemiah's immediate reaction to the news (v 4)?

DICTIONARY

Chislev (v 1): a month in the Hebrew calendar, corresponding to our November and December.

Susa (v 1): the capital of Persia.

Judah (v 2): the region around Jerusalem.

Remnant (v 3): a small remaining amount.

Covenant (v 5): a binding agreement.

3. How does Nehemiah address God (v 5)?

- How do you think that might have helped him to pray?

4. What's the contrast between God and the people (v 5, 6-7)?

5. What did God say he would do if the people were unfaithful (v 8)?

- But what promise is Nehemiah hoping he will fulfill now (v 9)?

Jerusalem was the place where God had chosen to make his name dwell (v 9). It was the center of the whole nation, the center of their worship. It was the place where God's people were supposed to represent God's reign to the nations around them.

6. What has God done for his people that makes this possible (v 9, 10)?



Today we are the people who represent God to the world, wherever we are. He has redeemed us and is dwelling in us. He is rebuilding us into a better reflection of himself.



explore more

optional

Jesus compares his followers to a city in Matthew 5:14: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.” The church today is like Jerusalem. That’s why Revelation 21 talks about a new, future Jerusalem.

▶ Read Revelation 21:1-4

What does the new Jerusalem have in common with the old Jerusalem (v 3)?

But what makes it better (v 4)?

The new Jerusalem is the community that every community is ultimately supposed to look like. And God wants us to be like movie trailers for that city. We want to be a reflection of the beauty of the new Jerusalem—and to see the gospel rebuild the lives of those around us, too.



getting personal

How does Nehemiah’s passionate concern for the faithful representation of God challenge you personally? What would it look like in your life to care as much as Nehemiah does about obeying God and making his name known?



apply

7. What do you think it looks like for us to represent God’s rule today?



- Where do you see brokenness in the representation of God's rule today? What will you ask him to rebuild?



investigate

▶ Read Nehemiah 1:11 – 2:8

After praying and fasting for four months (from Chislev, which is our November and December, to Nisan, which is our March and April), Nehemiah is finally ready to take action.

8. How does Nehemiah's conversation with the king begin (2:1-2)?

DICTIONARY

Nisan (2:1): a month in the Hebrew calendar, corresponding to our March and April.

Artaxerxes (v 1): the king of Persia.

The province Beyond the River (v 7): the part of the Persian Empire which lay west of the River Euphrates.

9. In verses 4-8, how do we see Nehemiah's dependence on the Lord?

- How do we see his own hard work and initiative?



10. What does the king grant Nehemiah?

• Why?

Nehemiah's interaction with the king is a case study in how to speak to unbelievers. He speaks with respect; he has prepared his request; he contextualizes what he says so that it makes sense to the king (who wouldn't understand about Jerusalem being God's city, but who would care about family legacy). And he is ready—he is willing to take any opportunity for God's glory.



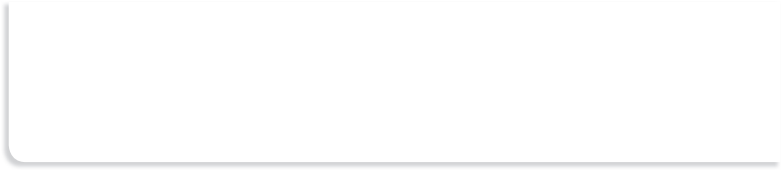
apply

11. How can we use Nehemiah's example in our own conversations with unbelievers?

12. What do Nehemiah's actions throughout 1:1 – 2:8 teach us about what it looks like to prepare to represent God's rule to those around us?



- How can we put these things into practice today?



pray

Spend some time in prayer for yourselves, your church, and the worldwide body of Christ. Thank God for redeeming you in Christ. Ask for his help and guidance in representing his reign to the world.

