



THE BOOK OF

NEHEMIAH



**GOD BUILDS HIS
PEOPLE SO THEY
CAN BUILD HIS CITY**



THIS BOOK BELONGS TO



WEEK 01

WHEN THE WALLS ARE BROKEN

Colette



Week 01 Written By:



COLETTE HOEKSTRA

My family and I have been at Rise since 2021.

I love spending time in God's Word because He truly meets you where you are through Scripture. Whether you're a brand new believer discovering truths for the first time or someone who loves to go deeper by studying the original language and chasing cross references, there's always something that leaves you in awe of who God is.

No matter how many times I've read a passage, the Holy Spirit continues to reveal something new. God's Word truly is living and active and all about Jesus!

**“O Lord, let your ear be
attentive to the prayer of this
your servant and to the prayer
of your servants who delight in
revering your name.”**

NEHEMIAH 1:11



BE STILL

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Ask God to quiet your heart and help you focus on Him as you open His Word.

READ

Nehemiah 1:1-3

DEVOTIONAL

The book of Nehemiah takes place after years of exile and devastation for God's people. Jerusalem had once been a thriving city marked by worship, identity, and the presence of God among His people. But after Babylon invaded, the city was destroyed, the temple was burned, and the walls were torn down.

Years later, many of God's people had returned home, but Jerusalem was still vulnerable and exposed. In the ancient world, walls represented much more than protection. They symbolized identity, belonging, strength, and peace. A city without walls was defenseless.

Nehemiah was living far from Jerusalem serving as cupbearer to the king of Persia when he received news about the condition of the city. When he hears how broken things still are, his response is immediate. He weeps, mourns, fasts, and prays. Before he makes a plan or takes action, he brings his burden before God.

Sometimes we become so accustomed to broken things that we stop noticing them. Broken relationships, unhealthy habits, spiritual apathy, disconnection from community, or rhythms with God that have slowly faded into the background can begin to feel normal. But throughout Scripture, God often begins renewal by awakening holy burden in His people.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

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Before Nehemiah ever stood before a king, rebuilt a wall, or invited others into the work, he sat in the presence of God. And maybe that's where rebuilding begins for us too, not in striving or performance, but in surrender.

REFLECT

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What feels broken in your life right now?

Where have you been striving instead of surrendering?

Take a moment to surrender those areas honestly to God.

Where have you grown comfortable with something God may be inviting you to surrender?



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READ

Nehemiah 1:4

DEVOTIONAL

When Nehemiah heard what had happened in Jerusalem, his first response wasn't to make a plan. It was to pray.

The news broke his heart. He sat down, wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed before God. This wasn't a moment of emotional overwhelm that disappeared after a day or two. The burden stayed with him. In fact, Scripture suggests Nehemiah spent about four months seeking God before he ever approached the king.

God often works this way. Before He changes a situation, He first changes the heart of the person He's going to use. Nehemiah's burden wasn't just sadness over broken walls. God was preparing him for the assignment ahead.

When God places a burden on our hearts, it may be more than just a passing emotion. Sometimes those burdens are invitations. They are God's way of drawing us into His work. Instead of pushing them aside or becoming overwhelmed by them, we can bring them to the Lord and allow Him to shape us as we pray.

Nehemiah also knew exactly who he was praying to. He called on "the God of heaven," the sovereign God who rules over every king, every nation, and every impossible circumstance. His confidence wasn't in his own ability to rebuild Jerusalem. It was in the God who was able to do

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

.....
what effort alone couldn't accomplish.

Our prayers reveal where our confidence truly lies. If we believe God is able to move, we'll bring our burdens to Him first. Like Nehemiah, we can trust that while God is working in the situation, He is also doing a transforming work within us.

REFLECT

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Has God ever placed a burden on your heart that wouldn't go away?
How might He be inviting you to join Him in what He's doing?

Nehemiah believed God was greater than the obstacle in front of him. What impossible situation do you need to place back into God's hands today?



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



IN JESUS NAME
AMEN



PRAY.

PLAN.

BUILD.



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READ

Nehemiah 1:5-7

DEVOTIONAL

One of the most beautiful things about Nehemiah's prayer is where he begins. Before he asks God to do anything, he worships Him for who He is.

"Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awe-inspiring God who keeps His gracious covenant..." (Nehemiah 1:5).

Nehemiah's circumstances were overwhelming, but he didn't allow his circumstances to define his view of God. Instead, he let God's character shape the way he viewed his circumstances.

The names and descriptions Nehemiah uses are significant. He calls Him the God of heaven, recognizing God's authority over every nation, king, and impossible situation. He calls Him great and awe-inspiring, acknowledging God's power, holiness, and majesty. He remembers that God is faithful to His covenant, reminding himself that God always keeps His promises.

Only after lifting his eyes to God does Nehemiah look inward.

His confession is just as remarkable. Rather than pointing to everyone else's failures, he includes himself: "I confess the sins we have committed against You. Both I and my father's family have sinned."

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

Nehemiah doesn't approach God with excuses or blame. He comes with humility, recognizing his own need for God's mercy.

There's a pattern here that's worth slowing down to notice. Worship gives us the right perspective. Confession gives us the right posture. When we begin our prayers by remembering who God is and honestly allowing Him to search our hearts, we prepare ourselves to hear from Him and trust Him with whatever comes next.

REFLECT

What truths about God's character does Nehemiah declare?

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-
-
-
-
-

“ I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

What stands out to you about the way Nehemiah confesses sin?

Is it different from the way you approach God?



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READ

Nehemiah 1:8-11

DEVOTIONAL

After worshipping God and confessing sin, Nehemiah shifts his prayer in a remarkable way. He reminds God of His promises.

*"Please remember what You commanded Your servant Moses..."
(Nehemiah 1:8)*

At first glance, it might seem strange. Does God need to be reminded of what He said? Of course not. Nehemiah isn't refreshing God's memory. He's strengthening his own faith by praying God's Word back to Him.

Nehemiah recalls God's covenant with Israel. He acknowledges that God warned His people there would be consequences for disobedience. But he also remembers the promise that if they returned to the Lord, He would gather them, restore them, and bring them back to the place He had chosen.

This is one of the most powerful ways we can pray. Instead of basing our prayers on our emotions or circumstances, we can anchor them in the unchanging truth of God's Word. His promises remind us of who He is and give us confidence to trust Him, even when we can't yet see how He will work.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

Nehemiah also remembers who God's people are. He calls them "Your servants and Your people. You redeemed them by Your great power and strong hand." His confidence isn't rooted in Israel's goodness. It's rooted in God's faithfulness. The same God who rescued His people in the past was still able to restore them in the present.

By the time Nehemiah finally reaches his request in verse 11, his perspective has completely shifted. His eyes are fixed on God's character, God's promises, and God's faithfulness. Only then does he ask God to open the door for what comes next.

When we pray, God's promises don't just change our prayers. They change us. They remind us that the God who has been faithful throughout history will be faithful in our lives as well.

REFLECT

Read Matthew 6:9-13, where Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray. What similarities do you notice between Jesus' model of prayer and Nehemiah's prayer in Nehemiah 1?

Nehemiah begins by focusing on who God is before bringing his own requests. How might starting your prayers with worship and adoration change your perspective?

Nehemiah humbly confessed both his own sin and the sins of his people. Is there anything you need to honestly bring before God today?

Spend a few moments in prayer following Nehemiah's example. Begin by praising God for who He is, then confess anything He brings to your heart before moving on to your requests.



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READ

Nehemiah 2:1-10

DEVOTIONAL

Waiting is one of the hardest parts of following God.

By the time we reach Nehemiah 2, about four months have passed since Nehemiah first heard the news from Jerusalem. Four months of praying. Four months of fasting. Four months of waiting. Scripture doesn't tell us what happened during those months, but we know what God was doing. He was preparing Nehemiah's heart for the assignment ahead.

Then, in what may have seemed like an ordinary day, everything changed.

As Nehemiah served the king, his sadness was impossible to hide. When the king noticed and asked what was wrong, Nehemiah was terrified. Appearing sad before the king could have serious consequences, yet this was the very opportunity Nehemiah had been praying for.

Before answering, Nehemiah whispered what many call an "arrow prayer." It was short, silent, and immediate. After months of faithful prayer, he paused one more time to ask for God's help in the moment.

Then he spoke with courage.

Nehemiah didn't just tell the king about the problem. He came prepared with a clear vision and a specific request. He asked for permission to go to Jerusalem, letters guaranteeing safe passage, and timber to rebuild the city.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

God had been preparing both the opportunity and the person who would step into it.

The king granted every request, and Nehemiah recognized why: "The gracious hand of my God was on me" (Nehemiah 2:8). The favor he received wasn't the result of luck, influence, or perfect timing. It was evidence of God's faithfulness.

Yet the story doesn't end there. As soon as Nehemiah stepped into God's calling, opposition appeared. Sanballat and Tobiah were disturbed that someone had come to seek the well-being of God's people. Obedience didn't eliminate obstacles. In many ways, it invited them.

The same is often true for us. God's answers don't always come quickly, but His delays are never wasted. He uses seasons of waiting to prepare us for the doors He will eventually open. And when those opportunities come, we can step forward with confidence, knowing the same God who prepared us will also go before us.

REFLECT

Nehemiah waited about four months before God opened the door. What area of your life requires patient trust instead of rushing ahead?

Why do you think Nehemiah paused to pray again before answering the king? What "arrow prayers" could you begin practicing throughout your day?



**RISING
SUN**



**RISE UP
GOD'S TIMING
GOD'S HELP**

**CHURCH
DOOR**

**OPEN DOOR
OPPORTUNITY**



SHADOW

**CHURCH
BUILDING**

**STAIR STEPS
BUILDING BLOCKS**



**"Let us rise and build.
So they put their hands to the
good work."**

NEHEMIAH 2:18



FORMATION PAUSE

Throughout this study, you'll occasionally come across a Formation Pause—a chance to slow down, notice how God forms His people through what you're seeing in Nehemiah, and consider how He may be shaping you.

Some pauses include prompts for **listening prayer**. If this is new to you, keep it simple. Find a quiet place, take a few slow breaths, and have a pen and paper nearby. Close your eyes if it helps you become present to God.

When you ask a question like **“God, what do You want me to know?”**, pause and pay attention. You may notice a thought, word or phrase, Scripture, picture, impression, or something about what you're thinking or feeling. Write it down before analyzing or dismissing it.

Don't force an answer or assume every thought is from God. Hold what comes to mind with humility: **Does it align with God's character and His Word? Does it lead me toward the way of Jesus?** When you're unsure, discern it with a trusted follower of Jesus.

You don't need to hear something dramatic. **Trust God to meet you as you practice paying attention to Him.**

Formation Pauses Written By:



KASSIE COX
Director of Discipleship Strategy

My family and I have been at Rise since 2021, and God has used this community to shape me in more ways than I can put into words. One of the things I care most about is helping people not only read Scripture, but experience God through it and be changed by it.

Scripture has become a foundation in my own life. A place I return to for truth, a way I've learned to know God and trust His voice, and a means through which He continues to reshape how I see myself and the life He's inviting me into. My hope in contributing to this study is that Nehemiah would help each of us open ourselves to the transforming work of the Spirit and become a little more like Jesus.



FORMATION PAUSE

LET GOD FORM YOU BEFORE YOU ACT

Nehemiah's story begins with a small but important detail: he asks.

He asks about the Jewish remnant and the condition of Jerusalem (1:2). He is willing to know, even though the answer may trouble him. And when it does, he doesn't look away. He allows himself to grieve what is broken (1:3-4).

But Nehemiah is also humble enough not to assume that because something troubles him, he immediately knows what it means or what he should do about it.

His first response is to bring it before God (1:4).

He remembers who God is—the great and awe-inspiring God who keeps His promises (1:5). He confesses where he and his people have gone their own way (1:6-7). He recalls what God has said (1:8-9). And over time, God begins to shape not only the situation, but Nehemiah himself.

This is part of what it means to **be shaped by Jesus**.

Our feelings can alert us that something matters, but they don't always tell us the whole truth. Our perspective is limited. We can be influenced by fear, assumptions, wounds, desires, or self-interest. Wisdom begins with the humility to remember that God sees what we cannot. He is God, and we are not.

Following Jesus means learning to bring what is happening within us into His presence and allowing Him to shape the way we understand it and respond—through His character, His Word, His Spirit, and the wisdom of trusted people around us.

PRACTICE: BRING IT BEFORE GOD

Think of something that has been getting your attention lately—a concern, frustration, grief, injustice, relationship, or situation you can't seem to shake.

PAY ATTENTION

What keeps getting your attention? What emotion or burden keeps surfacing?

COME HUMBLY

What might you not be seeing clearly? Where are you tempted to assume you already know what this means or what needs to happen?

LET GOD SEARCH YOUR HEART

What are you believing about God, yourself, or others in this situation? Is there fear, pride, resentment, control, self-protection, or something else God may want to reveal?

“Search me, God, and know my heart...” (Psalm 139:23-24)

REMEMBER WHAT IS TRUE

Close your eyes for a moment, or pause as you journal, and ask God: “What do You want me to know about this situation or about what I’m feeling?”

Then be still and pay attention. God may bring to mind a word or phrase, a thought, an impression, a picture, a Scripture, or something you hadn’t noticed before. Write down what comes to mind without immediately analyzing, editing, or dismissing it.

Then bring what you’ve written back to God. Does it align with His character and His Word? Does it lead you toward the way of Jesus? If you’re unsure, share it with a trusted Christian who can help you discern it (Proverbs 11:14).

RESPOND FAITHFULLY

Ask God directly:

“What do You want me to do about it?”

Again, notice what comes to mind and write it down before you evaluate it. God may be inviting you to take a step, have a conversation, make something right, ask for help, surrender something, or simply wait and keep praying.

Nehemiah eventually moves from prayer to a courageous next step (2:4-5), but only after a season of seeking God.

Not every burden becomes an assignment. But every burden can become a place where God forms us when we bring it humbly before Him.

WEEK 02

FACING THE RUINS



Week 02 Written By:



SHANE PLUCHOS

My name is Shane. I have been at Rise for four years.

I love how the Rise church family is so unabashedly focused on Christ and His Holy Word. No matter what I am experiencing in life there is scripture that will encourage me, compel me, nurture me or bring me great joy! It is the lifeline that always brings me back to aspiring to walk as Christ did in this beautiful but fallen world.

I'm so grateful for the human connections and fellowship that I have found in this beautiful community. I look forward to continuing to grow and serve here in the years ahead!

**“The God of heaven will give us
success. We his servants will
start rebuilding.”**

NEHEMIAH 2:20



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READ

Nehemiah 2:11

DEVOTIONAL

Nehemiah's journey from the Persian capital to Jerusalem was nearly 1,000 miles and took months to complete. Upon arriving, he rested for three days before starting work on the massive undertaking of rebuilding in Jerusalem. We know that when Nehemiah first received news of the desolation of Jerusalem's walls and gates, he wept, prayed, and fasted for days. Yet he chose to take time upon arrival to rest before starting this work.

The Bible is laden with examples of the importance of rest. The first chapter of the book of Genesis tells the story of God's creation of all things. Genesis 2 then tells us that after six days of creation, God rested on the seventh day. This established a biblical pattern for us as children of God to follow. Later in the Torah, God established the Sabbath commandment (Exodus 20:8-10) creating a time for people, even today, to relax and recharge, placing trust in God's provision.

Jesus Himself addressed the importance of this commandment. In Matthew 11:28-30 we learn that He promised the "weary and burdened" who chose to follow Him spiritual rest in place of personal striving and anxiety. Jesus even modeled a commitment to the idea of rest to His disciples. One memorable example came when he chose to take a nap on a boat while crossing the Sea of Galilee during a fierce storm! (Mark 4:35-41) Jesus knew that even in the midst of life's most threatening chaos, we can find rest when we put our trust in God.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

Another poignant example of the rewards of the decision to rest came in John 4 when Jesus was weary and thirsty after a long journey at a well in Samaria. He decided to stay behind alone at Jacob's well and rest. He encountered a woman at that well and offered her 'living water' that would cause her to never thirst again! His choice to rest that day provided the world's first ever evangelist with a compelling testimony on the coming of the promised Messiah!

REFLECT

When faced with adversity, is your first response to turn to God in prayer, or something else?

Can you think of a time when you were faced with a project that felt too big for you to tackle on your own?

When in life can you tend to be hasty in decision-making where restful reflection and prayer could be a wiser response?

Is there a predictable cycle/season in your life that causes you to forego rest and 'grind' through on your own instead of resting and trusting in God?

Think about the times in life that you feel exhausted and spread too thin, and ask God to show you ways to find rest and rejuvenation in Him.



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READ

Nehemiah 2:12-16

DEVOTIONAL

After three days of rest, Nehemiah set out in secret at night to inspect the ruins of the destroyed walls and gates. Nehemiah did this strategically, knowing that this would be the same vantage point that Israel's enemies would have as they scrutinized the outer wall, searching for points of weakness. He also knew that these gates and walls provided more than just safety and protection.

Nehemiah knew that these walls were a symbol of the moral fortitude and the culture of God's chosen people, set apart from the outside world. Successful completion of this mission would replace disgrace with dignity for God's people. He understood that especially when it seems the world is crumbling all around us, we must trust in the truth and promises of God's faithful word.

For Nehemiah, this was a mission of planning and surveying. He wanted to know exactly what the project in front of him would require. He did not make rash decisions. A leader should understand all the potential difficulties and obstacles in front of him. Sometimes in life, we aren't aware of the ruins we ourselves are living in until someone comes along and points them out.

Nehemiah didn't want to propose his plan only to be surprised when someone pointed out a huge problem he knew nothing about. Hence, he wasn't ready to tell others his plan yet so he did his surveying at night.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

As a leader, he knew it was important to make a clear and complete proposal. That required not saying anything until he was ready to say everything.

It was wise and prudent for Nehemiah to carefully scrutinize the walls of Jerusalem for weaknesses and imperfections. But this is NOT how we are called to view people when we choose to follow Christ. We are called to accept one another despite imperfections, as Christ accepts us, even despite our sins (Romans 15:7). As Christians, we are taught to love each other deeply, even to forgive others' sins! Do everything in love. (1 Cor. 16:14)

REFLECT

What point of view may others have as they critically look at you and your actions for weaknesses?

How can you learn from Nehemiah's preparation and careful approach to leadership?

Are there elements of the way you are currently living you can reflect on that others may view as being 'in ruins?'

Is there someone in your life from whom you are withholding loving forgiveness because of a perceived sinful imperfection?

Think about your own responses to these questions and reflect on one intentional action that you can take in the week ahead to better align your walk with God's word.



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READ

Nehemiah 2:17-18

DEVOTIONAL

Now that Nehemiah fully understood the scope of the work that lay before him, it was time to start rebuilding. The remnant still living in Jerusalem had suffered great derision since the walls had been destroyed. His own heart had been stirred up by the Lord for this work, and now it was time to unite others in joining him.

Nehemiah left a life of comfort and privilege for one of danger and hard labor. He knew that God had called him to lead in completing this work. He knew that even Moses himself felt apprehension in God's call to lead His chosen people out of slavery in Egypt. But God equips the called. And the Lord had prepared him for such a time as this.

Nehemiah next began to address others, rallying those still in the city to rebuild together. He motivated them with testimonials of God's grace and provision, citing that even King Artaxerxes supported this work. Boldly sharing his God-given vision inspired those around him to unite, bringing glory to the Lord.

God was with them and this was all the reason they needed to just do it. The people realized that their present bad situation was not irreversible because God had power to change things. Nehemiah said, "Let us rise up and build." (ESV) Yet most people spend about one-third of their life sitting. They had to stop sitting down. They had to stop being complacent.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

As Christians, we learn that every work for God is like this. God had determined this moment as the time to take action. They had to be unified. They had to trust in the truth and promise of God's written word. He alone has the power to change any circumstance! So they strengthened their hands for the good work to come.

REFLECT

God intends for all of us to be builders of some kind. What might God be calling you to build?

People are willing, but they are looking for a leader. How big of an impact could you have if you stepped up in your calling as a leader?

Are there any 'comforts' God is nudging you to leave behind?

Is there a circumstance in your life that might feel too big for God to change?

Whatever God has put on your heart today, pray to Him throughout this week, asking Him to align your actions with His will.



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READ

Nehemiah 2:19-20

DEVOTIONAL

Once the people living in Jerusalem united under Nehemiah to rebuild the city walls, word spread fast. There were many people in Judah and the surrounding areas that did not want to see Jerusalem restored as a city of power and influence. It did not take long for naysayers to surface. Many who saw this work of rebuilding mocked the Jews while they labored.

Some of their detractors were men of power and influence. Sanballat the Horonite was a governor of Samaria, and Samaritans had a long history of war and contention with the Jews. Tobiah the Ammonite was a government official, and possibly a governor of Ammon, who wanted to use the temple storerooms for business profit. Gesham was likely an Arab chief or king and accused these Jews of conspiracy against the emperor!

When doing what God has put on our hearts to do according to His word, there will always be opposition. Nowhere are we told it will be easy to walk in obedience to God. In fact, Scripture tells us over and over that followers of Christ will be persecuted! But it also promises us that no earthly suffering can separate believers in the One True God from His eternal love!

Nehemiah's confidence was in God himself. He knew it was God's will for him to lead his people to rebuild this holy city. He told his people that the

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

.....

hand of God was upon him. This trust in God allowed him to walk and speak boldly to those who stood in opposition. It's almost as if he said, "This is God's work. If you don't want to be part of it, just move on."

There were many naysayers and doubters throughout the project that tried to thwart their work. But God had prepared Nehemiah for this calling, and he ignored their criticism and did not debate with them. Instead, he faithfully proclaimed that they have no portion or claim to Jerusalem. Focused on God's faithfulness and His promises, Nehemiah and the people refused to let opposition stop the work God had called them to do. Their willingness to trust and obey became the beginning of Jerusalem's restoration.

REFLECT

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When you face opposition, do you rely more on your own devices and knowledge as defense, or choose to trust God?

Can you think of any times when government rules or officials felt like they may be in opposition with the advancement of God's kingdom on Earth?

Have you ever been tempted to turn away from God's will because of scorn or fear you felt from others?

Was there a time in your life when you felt confidence in God's Word or His promises that allowed you to ignore criticism or doubt from others?

Meditate on these questions and consider talking with someone you trust about your reflections.



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READ

Nehemiah 2:11-20

DEVOTIONAL

Nehemiah chapter 2 is filled with leadership lessons, but they all point back to one central truth: obedience begins with trusting God.

Nehemiah rested before he acted. He carefully examined the work ahead. He sought wisdom before speaking. He invited others to join him. And when opposition came, he remained confident because he knew this was God's work, not his own.

Throughout Scripture, God rarely reveals every detail before asking someone to obey. Noah built the Ark before the rain came. Abraham left home without knowing his destination. Peter stepped out of the boat before he knew whether the water would hold him. Time and time again, God asks His people to trust Him one step at a time.

Nehemiah didn't know every challenge that lay ahead, but he knew enough to take the next faithful step. His confidence wasn't found in his own ability, the approval of others, or even the size of the task. It rested in the gracious hand of God that had been upon him from the beginning.

The same is true for us. God may not reveal the entire blueprint for our lives, but He faithfully gives us enough light for the next step. Our responsibility isn't to have every answer. It's to trust the One who does.

As we move into the next chapter of Nehemiah, we'll see that everyone had a part to play in rebuilding the wall. But before anyone picked up a stone, someone first chose to say "yes" to God's call.

REFLECT

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Looking back over this week's reading, what truth has challenged you the most?

Is there an area of your life where you've been waiting for certainty instead of taking the next step of obedience?

What is one practical step you can take this week to follow where God is leading?

Spend a few moments thanking God for His faithfulness and ask Him for the courage to trust Him with whatever He places in front of you.

WEEK 03

YOUR PART OF THE WALL



Week 03 Written By:



JULIE STICKNEY

My family has been at Rise for 12 years. I love the Word of God because spending time in it feels like being with my best friend. Every time I open it, I'm reminded that I'm fully known and deeply loved. Through it, God meets me with truth, comfort, wisdom, conviction, and encouragement. It helps me better understand who He is, who I am, and the world He created.

**BUILD WHAT'S
IN FRONT OF YOU**



BE STILL

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Ask God to quiet your heart and help you focus on Him as you open His Word.

READ

Nehemiah 3:1-5

DEVOTIONAL

At first glance, Nehemiah 3 feels like little more than a long list of names and construction assignments. But if we slow down, we discover something beautiful. This chapter tells the story of an entire community joining together to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Priests, rulers, merchants, goldsmiths, perfumers, families, and even daughters all stepped into the work. They came from different backgrounds, held different occupations, and possessed different skills, yet they shared one purpose.

It's a reminder that God's work has never depended on one person doing everything. It advances as His people faithfully do the part He has entrusted to them.

Team sports illustrate this well. A volleyball player can't pass, set, and spike the ball alone. A quarterback needs receivers. A pitcher needs fielders. Every player has a role, and the team succeeds when each person contributes what they have been given to contribute. The same is true in God's kingdom.

The beauty of Nehemiah 3 isn't found in extraordinary individuals. It's found in ordinary people working together for God's glory.

REFLECT

.....

What stands out to you about the variety of people who participated in rebuilding the wall in Nehemiah 3?

Have you ever believed that God could use someone else more effectively than He could use you? What contributed to that belief?

What would it look like this week to faithfully contribute your part rather than comparing yourself to someone else's?





BE STILL

Be still for a moment before you begin.

Become aware of God's presence. Set aside distractions, worries, and your to-do list. If something is pulling for your attention, grab a piece of paper, write it down and return to it later.

Ask God to quiet your heart and help you focus on Him as you open His Word.

READ

Nehemiah 3:10, 23, 28-30

DEVOTIONAL

One phrase appears repeatedly throughout Nehemiah 3: many of the people repaired the section of wall nearest their own homes.

They weren't responsible for rebuilding the entire city. They simply took responsibility for the portion God placed in front of them.

We often assume God's work is happening somewhere else, through someone more gifted, more experienced, or more influential. But Nehemiah reminds us that God's kingdom often grows through quiet faithfulness in ordinary places.

Your section of the wall is found in the places you already occupy: your neighborhood, workplace, classroom, favorite coffee shop, dining room table, or gym. It's the people God has already placed in your life: family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, classmates, and teammates.

God's calling often begins much closer to home than we realize. Instead of asking, "Where else could God use me?" perhaps the better question is, "Who has God already placed in front of me today?"

REFLECT

Who are the people and places God has already entrusted to your care and influence?

What are the unique experiences or past hurts that allow you to reach people in ways that others couldn't?

Do you tend to overlook the ordinary opportunities God has placed in front of you while wishing for something bigger or different? Why do you think that is?

What is one practical way you can intentionally love, encourage, or serve someone in your "section of the wall" this week?



BE STILL

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Ask God to quiet your heart and help you focus on Him as you open His Word.

READ

Nehemiah 3:5

DEVOTIONAL

Not everyone joined the work.

Nehemiah tells us that some of the nobles refused to serve. They considered the task beneath them.

Throughout Scripture, however, God consistently works through people who are willing rather than people who are impressive.

Nehemiah 3 reminds us that God delights in using ordinary people. He doesn't reserve His kingdom work for pastors, missionaries, or church leaders. He invites every believer to participate.

If you have breath in your lungs, God has given you a section of the wall.

Faithfulness, not status, is what God values.

The question isn't whether your contribution is important enough.

The question is whether you're willing to offer it.

REFLECT

.....
What does the example of the nobles who refused to work reveal about the attitudes that can keep us from serving?

Which is more of a struggle for you: believing a task is beneath you or believing you have nothing valuable to offer? Why?

Where might God be inviting you to simply say "yes" in faithful obedience today?

SAY YES IN
FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE
TODAY



BE STILL

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Become aware of God's presence. Set aside distractions, worries, and your to-do list. If something is pulling for your attention, grab a piece of paper, write it down and return to it later.

Ask God to quiet your heart and help you focus on Him as you open His Word.

READ

Nehemiah 3:31-32

DEVOTIONAL

The people in Nehemiah 3 weren't all doing the same work.

Some repaired gates. Others rebuilt walls. Some served alongside family members, while others worked with neighbors. Every assignment looked different, but every assignment mattered.

The same is true in the body of Christ.

The Apostle Paul describes the church as one body with many parts. Every member has a unique role, and every role strengthens the whole.

Author Tim Keller writes:

"You have a gift that is needed. You have certain people whom you can speak to. You have certain hands you can hold because of your past experiences. You have certain hearts you can reach. Unless all the gifts are used, the community cannot do the work God has given it to do."

Just as a volleyball team doesn't need six setters or six hitters, God's church doesn't need everyone serving in the same way.

He simply asks each of us to faithfully contribute what He has entrusted to us.

REFLECT

.....
What gifts, experiences, or relationships has God uniquely given you that could bless others?

How does remembering that the church is one body with many parts change the way you view your own role?

Is there a gift you've been holding back because of fear, comparison, or insecurity? What would it look like to begin using it faithfully?





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Ask God to quiet your heart and help you focus on Him as you open His Word.

READ

Nehemiah 3:1-32

DEVOTIONAL

Nehemiah 3 ends with a completed picture of many people faithfully serving together.

No one rebuilt the entire wall by himself or herself.

Each person simply built the section God assigned.

Jesus modeled this same invitation. Although He could have accomplished His mission alone, He chose to call fishermen, tax collectors, and ordinary men and women to join Him. Through Christ, we are not spectators of God's work; we are partners in it.

The same invitation stands today.

There are people God has uniquely positioned you to love.

There are conversations only you will have.

There are opportunities for ministry that belong to you and no one else. God isn't asking you to build the whole wall.

He's asking you to faithfully build the section He has placed in front of you.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

.....

The question isn't whether God has given you a section of the wall.

The question is whether you're willing to build it.

REFLECT

.....

Looking back over this week's readings, what has God been teaching you about your unique "section of the wall"?

Is there an area where you've been waiting for someone else to do what God may be asking you to do?

What is one specific step of faith you can take this week to build where God has placed you?





FORMATION PAUSE

FIND YOUR PLACE IN WHAT GOD IS BUILDING

Chapter 3 gives us a remarkable picture of God's people at work: different people, different assignments, one shared purpose. No one person rebuilt the wall. Each faithfully contributed their part to something much bigger than themselves (3:1-32).

But the wall they were rebuilding belonged to a particular moment in God's redemptive story. The story didn't end with a rebuilt Jerusalem.

Through Jesus, God is building something even greater: **a people**. Scripture describes followers of Jesus as living stones being built together into a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:4-5). Paul also describes the Church as the body of Christ, where every person has a part to play in helping the whole body grow toward maturity—until together we increasingly reflect the fullness of Christ. As each person faithfully contributes, the body grows and **"builds itself up in love"** (Ephesians 4:11-16).

This is part of what it means to **live your purpose**.

Ministry isn't reserved for pastors. To minister simply means to serve, and every follower of Jesus is called to use what God has entrusted to them for the good of others and the building up of His people.

Our purpose isn't simply to accomplish something meaningful with our lives. It's to offer what God has entrusted to us for the good of others, the building up of His people, and the glory of God. As we are formed into people of love, we help create the conditions for others to be formed into people of love too.

God isn't asking you to build your own wall. He's inviting you to find your place in what He is building.

PRACTICE: DISCERN YOUR PART

Take a few minutes to quiet yourself before God. You've already spent this week noticing the people, gifts, experiences, relationships, and opportunities He has placed around you. Now bring those things into conversation with Him.

ASK GOD:

“God, what do You want me to know about the part You’ve given me to play in what You’re building?”

Pay attention to what comes to mind. It may be a person, a need, a relationship, a skill, gift or experience you carry, an opportunity already in front of you, or something you've been overlooking. Write it down without overthinking or dismissing it.

THEN ASK GOD:

“What do You want me to do about it? What is my next faithful step?”

Your next step doesn't have to be big. It's one of many steps ahead —toward God and toward His people.



WEEK 04

BUILDING THROUGH RESISTANCE



Week 04 Written By:



JANESSA DAVIS

My name is Janessa. My family and I have been attending Rise for three years.

I love the story of God's redeeming love through His Word. Regardless of the season we are in or the cultural climate, His Word remains the same throughout generations. I love to geek out over the Word of God; Whether it's taking a deep dive into a particular book or theme or reading as a whole—I love continuing to discover God's love for us and His faithfulness to all of His people.

**“Don’t be afraid of them.
Remember the Lord, who is
great and awesome, and fight for
your families, your sons and your
daughters, your wives and your
homes.”**

NEHEMIAH 4:14



BE STILL

Be still for a moment before you begin.

Reflect on “Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10.

Know that He is good when things are well, when there is ache in your heart, when there is trial before you—He is God, He is Good.

Invite Him to create in you a patient and tender heart for His purpose and plan in your life.

READ

Nehemiah 4:1-10

DEVOTIONAL

Let’s set the scene for chapter 4. A godly man has been called on a special assignment to rebuild the city wall for God’s chosen people. People from all walks of life, both men and women, are working together to accomplish a good work for the Kingdom of God. There’s something powerful about watching people unite around a common purpose. But whenever God is at work, opposition is never far behind.

Enter Sanballat.

The enemy may be crafty, but his tactics are not new. He uses ridicule and mockery in verses 1-6, plots attacks in verses 7-8, and sows discouragement in verse 10. One of his greatest strategies is to discourage God’s people, because discouragement distracts us from the work God has called us to do.

Nehemiah remains steady. He prays and entrusts both his enemies and the work to the God who called him. He trusted that the God who gave him the assignment would also give him everything he needed to complete it.

If you’re pursuing what God has called you to do, don’t be surprised when opposition comes. You’re in good company. Nehemiah faced it, and so did Jesus. He was ridiculed, mocked, rejected, and plotted against, yet He never lost sight of the mission His Father had given Him.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

Be alert, and don't allow opposition to distract you from what God has called you to do. Surrender your fears, your enemies, and every obstacle to Him, then keep moving forward in faith.

REFLECT

*"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."
Ephesians 6:12*

In what areas of your life are you trying to rebuild but are facing opposition? Friendships, marriage, parenting, work, finances...

Can you name the enemy's tactic? Discouragement, fear, ridicule..

Pray for your enemies. Understand, trust and know that God has you and will fight for you. Write your prayer out.

SURRENDER AND CONTINUE TO DO THE GOOD WORK



BE STILL

Be still for a moment before you begin.

Reflect on “Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10.

Know that He is good when things are well, when there is ache in your heart, when there is trial before you—He is God, He is Good.

Invite Him to create in you a patient and tender heart for His purpose and plan in your life.

READ

Nehemiah 4: 11-15

DEVOTIONAL

Verse 11 begins with the enemies, plotting to kill the Jewish people. If you look closely, the verse emphasizes that the Jewish people will not know their enemies are there.

1 Peter 5:8, “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

Nehemiah appears unfazed. Nehemiah is immovable. Just as God equips us for the work He sets before us, Nehemiah equips the workers. There is an intention to be on guard while they continue working.

We have an enemy that is watching and waiting out of sight. I say this to remind you to stay alert in the middle of daily life and busy schedules. It isn't doom and gloom; it is a reality of living in a broken world where there is a spiritual battle for our hearts, our minds and where we posture our eyes and ears.

“Don't be afraid,” Nehemiah says! Reminding the Jewish people of who God is. He won't leave you or forsake you. Remember His goodness in your life.

From our vantage point, reading about the story, we see victory in verse 15—God frustrates the plans of the enemy. The people can keep working.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

.....

In our flesh, fear can feel like it's the end of something, but really when we arm ourselves with the power of the Holy Spirit and trust in the Father, we can keep laboring for the Kingdom.

REFLECT

.....

Take time to journal about a circumstance where God has been faithful to you.

Knowing that the evil one wants to disrupt the plans of God, in what ways in your current assignment do you need to be on guard?

How has God equipped you for your assignment?



BE STILL

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Invite Him to create in you a patient and tender heart for His purpose and plan in your life.

READ

Nehemiah 4:16-23

DEVOTIONAL

As we continue serving the Lord throughout our lives, chapter 4 offers several important reminders.

As we live and serve, may we continually invite God into all we do. May our hearts desire His will, our eyes remain fixed on what is eternal, and our ears stay attentive to His voice.

Don't allow opposition to distract you or become a stronghold. Recognize it for what it is: an attempt by the enemy to stall the work God has called you to do. Pray for those who oppose you, trust God's sovereignty over every situation, and continue moving forward in faith.

Be alert and intentional. When distractions or threats arise, stand firm. Guard what God has entrusted to you, remain faithful in prayer, and continue the work before you.

As you serve others, be an encouragement. Remind those around you of God's goodness and faithfulness. He walks with us, fights for us, and strengthens us for every step.

Nehemiah was both a leader and a servant. He faithfully served God and the people of Jerusalem, refusing to let opposition distract him from his calling. Even in the face of trial, he continually reminded the people of the greatness and faithfulness of their God.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

.....

Jesus is the ultimate example of a servant. He came to do the will of His Father. Mockery, rejection, discouragement, and even the cross did not distract Him from His mission. He remained faithful, prayed for His enemies, and continually loved and encouraged those around Him.

REFLECT

.....

How are you inviting God into your daily work?

What guardrails are you creating for your work?

In what ways are you encouraging those around you to continue the good work?



BE STILL

Be still for a moment before you begin.

Reflect on “Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10.

Know that He is good when things are well, when there is ache in your heart, when there is trial before you—He is God, He is Good.

Invite Him to create in you a patient and tender heart for His purpose and plan in your life.

READ

Nehemiah 5:1-13

DEVOTIONAL

Chapter 5 begins with an outcry and a confrontation of sin. After facing opposition from the outside, God’s people now face opposition from within. The greatest threat to the work is no longer the enemy outside the walls, but the condition of the hearts inside them.

Nehemiah responds with righteous anger as he confronts the selfishness and greed of his own people. He gathers the assembly, calls out their sin, and reminds them of God’s law.

Obedience to God’s commands matters, but so does the condition of our hearts. The people of Judah were rebuilding the wall while neglecting to love one another. They were taking advantage of their own brothers and sisters for personal gain. Their actions didn’t reflect the God they claimed to follow.

The same question is worth asking today. Do our lives reflect the heart of God? Are we loving others in a way that points them to Him?

Before God could continue rebuilding the city, He first addressed the hearts of His people. The same is true for us. Lasting transformation begins when our hearts are surrendered to the One who has called us.

REFLECT

.....

What motivations do you need to surrender and repent of?

How are you loving other Christians?





BE STILL

Be still for a moment before you begin.

Reflect on “Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10.

Know that He is good when things are well, when there is ache in your heart, when there is trial before you—He is God, He is Good.

Invite Him to create in you a patient and tender heart for His purpose and plan in your life.

READ

Nehemiah 5:14-17

DEVOTIONAL

Nehemiah has demonstrated remarkable leadership throughout this book. He planned carefully, sought God’s wisdom, and led with both courage and humility.

In Nehemiah’s day, many officials used their position and authority for personal gain. Nehemiah chose a different path. He refused to burden the people by using his official allowance for personal expenses or taxing them to support his household. Instead, he generously used his own resources to care for others, regularly providing meals for more than 150 people at his table.

Generosity, hospitality, integrity, and steady leadership all marked Nehemiah’s life. But above all, he was a man who feared God. He waited for God’s direction, surrendered to His leading, and faithfully trusted Him through every challenge.

Nehemiah also understood that whenever people work together, conflict is inevitable. We live in a broken world, and broken people sometimes hurt one another. Rather than ignoring problems or allowing bitterness to grow, Nehemiah addressed conflict with courage and wisdom. He prayed, confronted the issue, and continued the work God had called him to do.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

.....

Nehemiah was a leader of integrity. Every challenge became another opportunity to trust God and invite Him to work. His example reminds us that faithful leadership isn't about avoiding conflict. It's about honoring God in the way we respond to it.

REFLECT

.....

How quickly do you address conflict so that bitterness doesn't take root?

Money aside, how can you be generous with the spiritual gifts, skills, and talents God has given you?

Write down the people God has entrusted you to lead and serve.

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FORMATION PAUSE

PRESSURE REVEALS WHAT WE FEAR

Chapters 4 and 5 reveal that finishing the wall isn't the only thing that matters. **Who God's people are becoming as they build matters too.**

In chapter 4, pressure comes from outside: ridicule, threats, fear, and discouragement. Nehemiah tells the people, **"Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome"** (4:14).

In chapter 5, the threat comes from within as God's own people begin taking advantage of one another (5:1-13). Again, Nehemiah points them back to God: **"Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God?"** (5:9).

Pressure has a way of revealing what we fear. When our fear settles on earthly things rather than God, it turns us inward toward self-protection and self-promotion. And those instincts don't stay private—they shape how we treat other people and create conflict.

The answer to our worldly fears isn't simply trying harder not to be afraid. **It's the fear of the Lord.**

The fear of the Lord isn't being afraid that God will harm or reject us. It's recognizing His greatness, holiness, goodness, and authority and responding with awe, trust, and reverence.

It's the recognition that He is God and we are not—and that our lives are safe in His hands. Even in circumstances we wouldn't choose, God is at work for the good of those who love Him, forming us into the likeness of Jesus (Romans 8:28-29).

Jesus gives us the fullest picture of this. Faced with suffering, He experienced real anguish, yet entrusted Himself to the Father and chose obedience and love rather than self-protection.

This is part of what it means to be shaped by Jesus. As we follow Him, the assignments He gives us will sometimes unearth fears we didn't know were there. Those fears can become invitations to deeper trust and dependence on God. And as our fear is rightly placed in Him, we become freer to love others rather than protect or promote ourselves at their expense.

PRACTICE: FOLLOW THE FEELING TO THE FEAR

Bring to mind something that has been weighing on you lately. Maybe it's stirred worry, anxiety, anger, frustration, shame, or sadness. Or maybe you've just felt stressed, pressured, stuck, avoidant, or in conflict with someone.

ASK GOD:

“What am I afraid of here?”

Don't force an answer. Pay attention to what comes to mind and write it down. What are you afraid might happen? What are you trying to protect, control, hold onto, or prove?

Then bring that fear honestly to God and ask:

“What do You want me to know about this fear?”

Listen for the truth He wants to bring into it—about who He is, who you are, who else is involved, or what is actually true about the situation.

THEN ASK GOD:

“What do You want me to do in light of what is true?”

The hard places in our lives aren't simply interruptions. If we'll let Him, they can become the very places where Jesus forms us most deeply.

WEEK 05

STAY ON THE WALL



Week 05 Written By:



TONI MORGAN

My name is Toni. I've been at Rise since May 2019.

The more time I spend in God's Word, the more I fall in love with Him. I'm able to see His heart toward us — and I'm able to see myself more clearly too. Not in a way that condemns, but in a way that reminds me how much I need Him. How much I need a Savior. What keeps drawing me back is the way He chose to speak to us: through poetry, story, song, and parable. He knew we weren't all made the same, so He gave us His Word in every language of the human heart.

**“But I prayed,
‘Now strengthen my hands.’”**

NEHEMIAH 6:9



BE STILL

Before you begin reading, resist the urge to rush. Sit quietly for a moment with your hands open in your lap as a posture of surrender. Take a few slow breaths and simply pray, "Lord, I'm here. Help me hear Your voice today." Allow your body and your mind to settle before opening His Word.

READ

Nehemiah 6:1-4

DEVOTIONAL

Come meet us. Just a conversation. Nehemiah knew better. These were the same men who had mocked his people, plotted to attack them, and tried to stop this wall from going up since the very first stone was laid. For years a wallless Jerusalem had worked in their favor. They had borders to protect. Trade to control. A broken Jerusalem threatened nothing. But a rebuilt one threatened everything they'd grown comfortable with.

And now, suddenly — an invitation. Come out to the plain of Ono. Just a conversation. Away from Jerusalem. Away from his people.

Nehemiah was close. The wall was finished. Every gap sealed. Just the doors left to hang. And that's exactly when the invitations started.

These men had been watching this project from the beginning - the way you watch a neighbor building something in their backyard, craning to see what's going up, what it means, how big it's going to get, and whether it's going to infringe on your property line. But they hadn't just been watching from a distance. They'd been walking through the door uninvited for years. And now that door was about to close.

And four times Nehemiah gave them the same answer: "I am carrying on a great work and cannot come down."

He saw through it. He knew what he'd been called to do. And he knew who he was dealing with.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

.....

Most of us know that voice. The one that shows up right when we're closest to finishing something. Come away. Just for a minute. It won't take long. You've done enough. Look how far you've come. You can stop here.

Nehemiah knew this. And he stayed on the wall.

REFLECT

.....

Is there something pulling you away from what God has called you to finish?

What pulls you away most: opposition or something that looks like opportunity?

What is God calling you to finish right now?

Take a moment to write down what God is stirring in you — a prayer, a next step, or simply an honest word to Him.



BE STILL

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READ

Nehemiah 6:5-9

DEVOTIONAL

It is reported among the nations... When the invitation failed, they went after something bigger.

The mockery had failed. The attacks had failed. The subterfuge had failed. Come down, let's talk — that hadn't worked either. So now they tried something else entirely.

Sanballat sends his aide this time. And the letter is unsealed, deliberately. In that culture an unsealed letter was meant to be read by everyone who handled it along the way. This wasn't just a message to Nehemiah. It was a calculated move.

Because what was inside that letter wasn't just embarrassing, it was dangerous. He was plotting a revolt. He wanted to be king. He was a traitor to Persia. Any one of those accusations reaching King Artaxerxes, the same king who had sent Nehemiah there, could have ended everything.

None of it was true. And Nehemiah knew it. But that almost doesn't matter when something is already spreading.

His response? Two sentences. Nothing like what you are saying is happening. Then: Now strengthen my hands, O God. That second sentence is a prayer — spoken straight to God before he did anything else.

Most of us need to process. We call a friend. We lose sleep. We talk it

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

through before we ever take it to God.

But Nehemiah didn't call a meeting. He didn't respond with emotion. He stated the truth plainly. He recognized what they were really after—they wanted all of them too frightened to finish. And he prayed one sentence. Then he kept building.

REFLECT

When someone says something about you that isn't true, what's your first instinct?

What does the way Nehemiah responded reveal to you about God's character?

Is there a situation in your life right now where you're trying to defend yourself instead of handing it to God?

Is there something that was said about you that you're still carrying? Write it down and hand it to God.



BE STILL

Before you begin reading, resist the urge to rush. Sit quietly for a moment with your hands open in your lap as a posture of surrender. Take a few slow breaths and simply pray, "Lord, I'm here. Help me hear Your voice today." Allow your body and your mind to settle before opening His Word.

READ

Nehemiah 6:10-13

DEVOTIONAL

Let us meet together in the house of God. They are coming to kill you. Fear has a way of making things sound reasonable that aren't.

Shemaiah was likely someone Nehemiah trusted - connected to the priests, part of the religious community. Nehemiah went to his house. And that's when Shemaiah shared the warning. It probably felt like concern. Like friendship. Come with me. Let me keep you safe. They're coming for you tonight.

But the hiding place he suggested was the temple. And only priests were allowed inside. Nehemiah wasn't a priest. Entering would have broken God's law and broken his standing among the people in a single moment. That was the whole point. Sanballat and Tobiah had hired Shemaiah to do what open letters and invitations couldn't. Get Nehemiah to disqualify himself.

Nehemiah's response was immediate. Should a man like me run away? He knew who he was. He knew what he'd been called to do. And he knew God's Word well enough to know that God would never ask him to break His own law to save his life.

That's why knowing God's Word matters. Nehemiah didn't test Shemaiah's words against how they felt. He tested them against what he already knew to be true.

Then I perceived that God had not sent him at all.

REFLECT

.....

Is there an area of your life right now where you've been relying on your feelings instead of what God has already said?

Have you ever received advice or a warning that felt urgent but something told you it wasn't right? What did you do with it?

What are some ways you can test whether something you're hearing is really from God?

Take a moment to ask God for wisdom and discernment. Write down what He shows you.



BE STILL

Before you begin reading, resist the urge to rush. Sit quietly for a moment with your hands open in your lap as a posture of surrender. Take a few slow breaths and simply pray, "Lord, I'm here. Help me hear Your voice today." Allow your body and your mind to settle before opening His Word.

READ

Nehemiah 6:14

DEVOTIONAL

Remember them, O God. That's it. That's the whole prayer.

After the smear campaign. After the false prophet dressed in the clothing of a friend. After all of it, Nehemiah doesn't plot. He doesn't plan his retaliation. He doesn't lose sleep figuring out how to make it right.

He just hands them over — the offenses against him, the attacks against God's people, all of it.

And notice what he doesn't say. He doesn't ask God to destroy them. He doesn't call down fire. He simply says, you saw it. You know what they did. I'm not carrying this anymore.

The word remember in the ancient world wasn't just a mental note. In Hebrew, *zakar* meant to bring something before God for His attention and action. When Nehemiah said remember them, he was saying, God, you see this. You be the judge. Not me. I'm stepping out of the way.

That's not weakness. That's one of the most courageous things in this entire story. To be wronged that deeply, to feel it fully, and still look up and say, this is yours, God. Not mine.

He understood that some things were never meant to be carried forward. So he made the choice. He handed it over. And he kept building.

.....

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



BE STILL

Before you begin reading, resist the urge to rush. Sit quietly for a moment with your hands open in your lap as a posture of surrender. Take a few slow breaths and simply pray, "Lord, I'm here. Help me hear Your voice today." Allow your body and your mind to settle before opening His Word.

READ

Nehemiah 6:15

DEVOTIONAL

The wall was finished. They had gotten so used to broken that it started to look normal. They stopped noticing it. They stopped expecting anything different. Broken had become the way things were.

And a city without walls meant something. It meant no one slept easily. Enemies walked in whenever they wanted. Food taken. Worship interrupted. Children exposed. A city without walls isn't really a city. It's just people living in the open, waiting.

They had been waiting for over a hundred years. And at some point you have to wonder — did they even remember what they were waiting for? The older ones maybe. But the ones born into the rubble? You can't long for something you've never seen.

For the first time in over a century they could close a gate. They could say this is ours. They could sleep. Just before their holiest season, a time of reflection, repentance, and renewal, the wall went up.

And then in fifty-two days God finished what a hundred years couldn't touch. The enemies saw it and lost their nerve. They knew this wasn't human effort.

Before God could reach their hearts He gave them something whole to look at. It's hard to believe restoration is possible when everywhere you look is rubble.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

.....

The wall meant everything. Safety. Identity. Dignity. The ability to trade, to worship, to raise their children without fear. It told every surrounding nation — these people are not forgotten. And it told God's people something even more important.

After a hundred years of silence and rubble, God had not forgotten them. He had not forsaken His people.

REFLECT

.....

Is there an area of your life that feels so broken you've stopped believing it could ever be different?

What would it mean to let God into that place, even just enough to believe restoration is possible?

Take a moment to write down what you're asking God to restore. And ask Him to help you believe it's possible.



LOOK WHAT GOD HAS BUILT.

LOOK BACK.

**What was broken
when you began?**

**Where have you seen
God at work?**

**What has He
rebuilt in you?**

**What are you still
trusting Him to restore?**





THE WORK ISN'T OVER.

LOOK FORWARD.

**What has God
entrusted to you now?**

**What needs
to be protected?**

**What needs
to be strengthened?**

**Who is God inviting you to
build alongside?**



WEEK 06

THE BATTLE BEHIND THE WALL



Week 06 Written By:



JORDAN FAHLMAN

My name is Jordan, and I'm the Youth Pastor at Rise. I love the Word of God because in it we hear God's voice and are told the story of His relentless love for us. Through Scripture, we see who God is, what He has done, and ultimately how His whole story points us to Jesus. I've had the privilege of being at Rise for 10 years, and I love getting to serve this church and our city alongside my wife, Autumn.

**The mission
was never
the wall.
It was
always the
people.**



BE STILL

Before you begin reading, pause for a moment and become aware of God's faithfulness.

Take a slow, deep breath and thank Him for one specific way you've seen Him at work during this study or in your life this week.

Then open your hands as a simple posture of surrender and pray:

"Lord, thank You for meeting with me. Continue shaping my heart through Your Word, and help me respond with faithful obedience."

READ

Nehemiah 6:17-19

DEVOTIONAL

The wall was finally finished.

After all the opposition, threats, and attacks, Nehemiah and the people of God had accomplished what seemed impossible.

But the story doesn't end there.

Even after the wall was complete, Tobiah was still working behind the scenes. He couldn't break through the walls from the outside, so he worked from the inside.

He influenced the leaders of Judah, spread his message through them, and continued trying to intimidate Nehemiah.

If we're honest, it's not much different today.

We do our best to protect ourselves from outside influences. We set boundaries, avoid unhealthy situations, put safeguards on our devices, and try to keep things that pull us away from God at a distance. Those are all good things.

But have you ever stopped to ask what voices you've allowed to shape your heart?

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

Every day we're surrounded by voices telling us who we are, what matters, and where our worth is found. Some come from culture. Some from people around us. Some from our own past. And behind all of them is an enemy who would love nothing more than to pull our hearts away from God.

The enemy whispers lies like, You're not enough. God doesn't really care about you. You'll never change. That sin isn't a big deal.

The more we listen to those lies, the easier they become to believe.

Nehemiah reminds us that the greatest battle wasn't over once the wall was finished. Tobiah kept speaking. He kept trying to influence God's people and intimidate Nehemiah.

The question became whose voice Nehemiah would act on: the faithful God who had led him this far or the enemy trying to rally people against him.

That is the same question we face every day. Will we trust the lies of the enemy, or will we trust what God says is true?

God's truth tells us a different story about ourselves.

When the enemy tells you God doesn't care, the cross declares His love (Romans 5:8). When he says you'll never change, God promises to complete the work He began in you (Philippians 1:6). And when he tells you sin isn't a big deal, God reminds you that Jesus gave His life to set you free from it (1 Peter 2:24; Romans 6:22-23).

REFLECT

Today, take a moment to evaluate what is shaping your heart. Are you spending more time listening to the voices of culture, comparison, fear, or social media than you are listening to God's Word? The voices you consistently listen to will eventually shape what you believe and what you believe will shape the way you live.

Today, choose to replace the enemy's lies with God's truth. As God rebuilds your life, don't just guard the walls around you, guard the voices shaping your heart.



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Read slowly today, asking not only, "What is God saying?" but also, "How is He inviting me to respond?"

READ

Nehemiah 6:17-19

DEVOTIONAL

You would think that after the wall was finished, Nehemiah could finally relax.

The opposition had ended. The gates were hung. The city was secure. If there was ever a time to step back and enjoy the moment, this was it.

But that's not what Nehemiah does.

Instead, he immediately begins appointing gatekeepers, singers, Levites, and leaders. Before anyone moves in, before the city begins to fill, Nehemiah is already establishing systems to protect what God has rebuilt and cultivate a life centered on worship.

It's important to slow down and notice the order of things.

The first people appointed aren't builders because the building is finished. Now the focus shifts to stewardship.

The gatekeepers would guard what God had entrusted to them. The singers would lead God's people in praise. The Levites would help the people worship faithfully. Nehemiah understood that rebuilding wasn't complete when the wall went up. It was complete when God's people learned how to faithfully live within it.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

Perhaps God has done something similar in your own life.

We often pray for God to restore what has been broken. We ask Him to rebuild a marriage, restore a relationship, renew our faith, or help us overcome a season of struggle. But once God begins to answer those prayers, our responsibility changes. We become stewards.

Stewarding God's gifts means more than simply protecting them. It means protecting what God has entrusted to us while joyfully using it for His glory.

Stewardship looks different depending on what God has restored. If He's rebuilt your marriage, steward it by pursuing your spouse, communicating honestly, and refusing to take them for granted. If He's renewed your faith, protect time with Him in His Word and in prayer. If He's restored a relationship, continue choosing forgiveness and humility. If He's given you freedom from a pattern of sin, don't return to the habits that once enslaved you. What God rebuilds isn't something to admire from a distance. It's something to faithfully cultivate every day.

Don't assume the work is finished just because the walls are standing.

Protect what God has entrusted to you. And never lose your sense of wonder and worship for what He has done.

REFLECT

Take a moment to thank God for the ways He has been rebuilding your life. What has He restored? A relationship? Your faith? Your family? Your purpose? Maybe He's given you a fresh start after a difficult season or renewed your hope in Him.

Now ask yourself: How am I stewarding what God has entrusted to me? Are you protecting what He has rebuilt, or have you begun to take it for granted? Ask God to show you one way you can faithfully steward His work today.

Maybe God is inviting you to return to a habit that helped your faith grow, maybe it's make time for a conversation you've been putting off, establish a healthy boundary that protects what He's restored, or simply thank Him instead of taking His work for granted. Faithful stewardship is rarely found in one big decision. It's built through small acts of obedience repeated over time.

Whatever God has rebuilt in your life, don't simply enjoy it. Faithfully steward it for His glory.



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READ

Nehemiah 7:5

DEVOTIONAL

Nehemiah 7:5 So my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials and the common people for registration by families. I found the genealogical record of those who had been the first to return. This is what I found written there:

It's one of the quietest sentences in the entire book of Nehemiah.

No miracle.

No dramatic sign.

No audible voice from heaven.

Just a simple statement that reveals something beautiful: before Nehemiah made his next move, God led him.

After months of rebuilding, defending the city, and overcoming opposition, Nehemiah didn't simply rely on his experience or instincts. He paused long enough to let God direct his next step.

God often leads His people the same way today.

He speaks through His Word. He shapes our hearts in prayer. He uses wise counsel from other believers. And through the Holy Spirit, He gives

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

gentle convictions that move us toward obedience.

Most of us don't mind following God. We just wish He'd tell us where we're going first. But more often, He simply shows us the next faithful step.

Learning to follow Jesus means learning to recognize His quiet leadership. The question is whether we're making room to listen.

Sometimes we've become so accustomed to filling every quiet moment with music, podcasts, notifications, or endless scrolling that we rarely leave room to hear Him.

Nehemiah teaches us that before moving forward, we should first seek God's direction.

What if, before making your next big decision, responding to that conflict, or planning your future, you first made room to ask, "God, what are You putting on my heart?"

God still delights in leading His people today. The question is whether we're slowing down long enough to listen.

Like Nehemiah, we don't have to understand everything God is doing. We simply have to trust the One who knows where He's leading.

REFLECT

Take 10 minutes today to get somewhere quiet with your Bible, a piece of paper, and a pen.

Before you do anything else, simply pray, "God, I'm listening. Would You show me what You want me to see?"

Read Nehemiah 7:5 a few times and sit with the phrase, "My God put it into my heart."

As you spend time with the Lord, write down anything—and truly, anything—He brings to mind through His Word or by His Spirit.

Is there a decision you need wisdom for? A relationship that needs attention? A step of obedience you've been avoiding? Don't worry about having the whole plan figured out. Instead, ask God to show you your next faithful step, and before you finish, write down one practical thing you will do today in response to His leading.



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READ

Nehemiah 7:6-69

DEVOTIONAL

Let's be honest, this probably isn't the chapter you were most excited to read.

It's page after page of names that are difficult to pronounce and easy to skip over. But this list isn't here to test your patience. It's here to reveal God's priorities.

Up to this point, Nehemiah has been about rebuilding walls. The city has been secured, the gates have been hung, and the enemies have been held back. If the story were only about construction, it could have ended there.

Instead, the next sixty-eight verses are filled with names.

Why?

Because the wall was never really the point. The people were.

Every name represents someone God had brought home from exile. Every family is a reminder that God kept His promise to restore His people. What looked like a list to the original readers was a testimony to God's faithfulness.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

As you read through the chapter, you'll notice it isn't just priests or leaders who are mentioned. There are singers, gatekeepers, temple servants, officials, and entire families. Some served in visible ways. Others worked quietly behind the scenes. Together they formed the community God was rebuilding.

It's easy to wonder where we fit into God's story.

God isn't only interested in what you can accomplish for Him.

He is interested in the person you are becoming and the role you will play in building His kingdom. Before He asks us to build His Kingdom, He invites us to belong to His family. Before He gives us a role to play, He gives us an identity as His people.

The world teaches us to chase recognition, success, and influence. God's Kingdom values something different. He delights in ordinary people who faithfully follow Him, whether anyone else notices or not.

You may never see your name in a history book. But if you belong to Jesus, your life is part of the greater story God has been writing from the very beginning. He is still rebuilding a people for His glory, and by His grace, you are one of them.

REFLECT

Read Psalm 139:1-18 and thank God that He knows you completely and loves you deeply.

Spend a few moments reflecting on what it means to belong to God's family. Your identity isn't found in your accomplishments, your popularity, or what others think of you. If you have placed your faith in Jesus, you have been welcomed into God's family, and nothing can change that.

Thank Him for calling you His child and for giving you a place among His people. Then ask Him to help you live from that identity instead of chasing recognition from others.

Finally, think of one person who faithfully serves behind the scenes. Take a moment this week to thank them and remind them that their faithfulness matters to God.



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READ

Nehemiah 7:6-69

DEVOTIONAL

After months of rebuilding, the wall was finished. The gates were in place. The people had returned home. You might expect this section to end with a celebration or a victory speech.

Instead, it ends with this incredible moment of generosity.

Nehemiah gave.
The family leaders gave.
Then the rest of the people gave.

Not because anyone forced them. Not because they were trying to earn God's favor. They gave because they had experienced His faithfulness.

Throughout the book of Nehemiah, God had been the One working behind every victory. He stirred Nehemiah's heart to rebuild. He protected the workers from their enemies. He frustrated the plans of those who opposed them. He faithfully brought His people home.

Now the people respond.

DEVOTIONAL (cont.)

Their gifts were different, but their hearts were the same. Some had more to give than others, yet everyone participated. God wasn't comparing the size of their offerings. He delighted in a community that recognized His goodness and joyfully gave back to Him.

The gospel invites the very same response.

When we truly understand all that God has done through Jesus, worship and generosity become our natural response. We don't obey so God will love us. We obey because He already does. We don't serve to earn His grace. We serve because we have already received it. We give because He gave all for us.

God has rebuilt something even greater than the walls of Jerusalem. Through Jesus, He has forgiven our sin, welcomed us into His family, and given us new life.

So the question is no longer, "What do I have to give God?"

Instead, ask, "How can I joyfully respond to everything He has done for me?" Whether it's your time, your gifts, your resources, your worship, or your obedience, a heart transformed by grace cannot help but respond.

REFLECT

God has been teaching you. Where have you seen Him rebuilding your life? What truth has challenged you the most? What step of obedience has He been calling you to take?

Don't let this simply become another Bible study you've completed. Let it become a turning point.

Just as the people in Nehemiah's day responded to God's faithfulness with open hands and willing hearts, choose one way you will respond today.

Maybe it's committing to spend regular time with God, reconciling a broken relationship, serving in your church, giving generously, sharing your faith with someone, or finally saying yes to something God has been stirring in your heart.

Before you finish, tell someone what that step is. Ask them to pray for you, encourage you, and lovingly hold you accountable. Then thank God for what He has rebuilt in your life, and ask Him to continue the work He has begun. The story of Nehemiah may be ending, but God's work in you is just beginning.



FORMATION PAUSE

FORMATION DOESN'T END

After years of brokenness, the wall is finally finished (6:15). But Nehemiah's work isn't over.

The attention immediately turns from rebuilding the city to the people who will live within it. Leaders are appointed. Worship is restored. What has been rebuilt must now be guarded and faithfully stewarded (7:1-4). Then the story slows down to record name after name of the people God has brought home (7:6-73).

The wall mattered. But **the wall was never the point. The people were.**

God wasn't simply restoring a city. He was restoring a people to live as His people.

The same is true of discipleship. Following Jesus isn't ultimately about finishing a study, serving on Sundays, or checking off a spiritual practice. These are places where God forms us as we **are shaped by Jesus, do life with His people, and live with Kingdom purpose.**

And that work is never finished. Seasons change. We change. The people and circumstances around us change. **One wall may be completed, but there will always be another.**

As you look back over Nehemiah, a pattern begins to emerge. Nehemiah pays attention to what is happening, brings it honestly before God, returns to what is true, and then responds faithfully. These are the same practices you've been using throughout this study—and they're practices you can carry with you long after the study ends:

Notice what's happening.

Pay attention to what God may be bringing to your attention.

Tell God the truth.

Bring Him what you're honestly thinking, feeling, believing, and experiencing.

Return to what is true.

Ask, "What do You want me to know?" and let God's truth reorient what you've been believing.

Respond faithfully.

Ask, "What do You want me to do?" and take your next step from that place of truth.

PRACTICE: WHAT WILL YOU CARRY FORWARD?

As this study comes to a close, quiet yourself before God and ask:

"God, what have You been showing me or changing in me through this study?"

Notice what comes to mind and write it down.

THEN ASK:

"What do You want me to keep practicing so this becomes part of who I am?"

The study may be ending, but the formation isn't.

**KEEP ASKING, KEEP LISTENING,
AND KEEP TAKING THE NEXT FAITHFUL STEP.**



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Rise City Church
1220 NE Kelly Ave
Gresham, OR 97030





RISE UP AND BUILD