

Tapes For Growing Christians

Study Guide for
NEHEMIAH

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Lesson 1

A Broken Heart for Broken Walls Nehemiah 1:1-4

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching point

1. God desires to see strong spiritual walls.

practical application

1. Our first step in spiritual wall-building must be concern.

questions

1. Why is it important to understand the historical setting of events recorded in Scripture?
2. Approximately when did the events in this book take place?
3. Name the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, and to whom each one fell. Why did the kingdoms fall?
4. Discuss the return of the Jews to their homeland. Which prophets were instrumental in touching the hearts of the Jews? Who led the first group back? Who led the second group back?
5. Who was Nehemiah, and what was his response to the news of the walls of Jerusalem?

answers

1. In order to appreciate more fully the spiritual lessons and principles that God wants us to learn from each portion of His word.
2. Near the close of the Old Testament period, 445-430 BC.
3. The Northern Kingdom, Israel, fell to Assyria 722 BC, and the Southern Kingdom, Judah, fell to Babylon 586 BC, because they forsook the law of the Lord their God.
4. In 538 BC, the Persians conquered Babylon. Cyrus, the Persian Emperor, issued an edict which permitted 50,000 Jews to return to Judah under the leadership of Zerubbabel. A Jewish state was established under the Persian government (recorded in the book of Ezra). The prophets Zechariah and Haggai motivated the people to rebuild the temple in 516 BC. In 458 BC, Ezra, a great spiritual leader, led 2,000 more Jews back to Jerusalem, but the walls were still in ruins.
5. Nehemiah was the Hebrew cupbearer to the Persian King Artaxerxes I. He wept, mourned, fasted and prayed. He showed great concern for his city, Jerusalem, and his people, the Jews.

discuss\ consider

1. Review the “triple S” of wall-building.
 - Strength: How can we defend our faith against Satan and his attacks?
 - Stability: What methods help us to grow?
 - Separation: How can we become more separated (set apart) and less governed by attitudes and values of this world?
2. Read Nehemiah 1:4. How do you respond when you become aware of broken spiritual walls (either your own or another Christian’s)? When you see a job to be done at your church, what is your response? When you see or hear of a problem or need in another country, do you forget about it? Consider what you could do in each of these situations.
3. “Fasting is giving up something to spend more time with God.” What does this mean?

challenge

Write a specific resolve for building, re-building, or strengthening your spiritual walls.

memorize

“I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.” Nehemiah 1:4

Lesson 2

Praying on the Promises Nehemiah 1:5-11

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Biblical praying has definite characteristics.
 - a. Worship
 - b. Confession
 - c. Taking God at His word
 - d. Making requests in line with the Word of God

practical application

1. Let's pray more "Nehemiah-type" prayers.

questions

1. Approximately how far was it from Susa, the capital of Babylon, to Jerusalem, the capital of Judah?
2. What were Nehemiah's two main concerns?
3. Why did Nehemiah pray about talking to King Artaxerxes?
4. Name another Bible person who prayed about making a request to a king.
5. List four characteristics of biblical praying.
6. What did it mean to Nehemiah to pray on the promises of God? Compare Deuteronomy 30:8-10 with Nehemiah 1:9.
7. How did Nehemiah pray in line with God's word?

answers

1. It was a good 1,000 miles of travel between Susa and Jerusalem.
2. He was concerned for the physical walls of Jerusalem and for the spiritual walls of his people, the Jews.
3. No one dared burst into the presence of a Persian king, not even one in a prominent position. Such action would be taken at the risk of death. He prayed that God would grant him mercy in the sight of the king.
4. Esther asked the Jews to fast with her, before she sought an audience with the king (Esther 4:16).
5. Biblical praying is characterized by
 - a) worship of God
 - b) confession of sin
 - c) taking God at His Word
 - d) making requests in line with the Word of God.
6. Nehemiah quoted Scripture (Deuteronomy 30:8-10), where God promised that Jews would not be made a laughingstock or reproach if they returned to their homeland.
7. It was God's will for Israel to have a strong city, one that could defend itself from the enemy.

discuss\ consider

1. How can the points in this lesson help Christians build a deeper prayer life? Review the biblical characteristics of prayer.
2. Are you looking at circumstances from God's point of view? Discuss ways to do this in difficult situations.
3. Praying in line with God's Word places controls on our requests. Explain this concept.

challenge

Define worship. Consider ways to deepen your worship.

memorize

"O Lord, I pray, let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant..." Nehemiah 1:11

Lesson 3

Nehemiah's Prayer Answered Nehemiah 2:1-10

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. God does not always answer prayer requests immediately.
2. God always answers prayer requests in time.

practical application

1. Our short prayers should be backed up by our prayer lives.
2. Let's walk through the doors that God opens for us.

questions

1. What was Nehemiah's reaction when the king asked about his sadness? Why did he react this way?
2. What did Nehemiah do when the king asked what he wanted?
3. Besides asking to go to Jerusalem, what did Nehemiah request? Why did the king grant Nehemiah's petitions?
4. Who were Sanballat and Tobiah? Why didn't they want the walls rebuilt?
5. How long did Nehemiah pray before an opportunity came to speak to the king about rebuilding the walls in Jerusalem?
6. Is answered prayer solely God's responsibility?

answers

1. He was afraid. No one was to show sad feelings before the king. Also, Jerusalem was not a popular topic. King Artaxerxes had stopped earlier attempts to rebuild Jerusalem (see Ezra 4).
2. He sent up an “arrow” prayer to the Lord before he answered the king.
3. He requested letters of permission to pass through the region beyond the river to Judah, and for timber from the king’s forest to make gates, walls, and his house (verse 8). The king was pleased to send him (verse 6), and the good hand of the Lord was upon him (verse 8).
4. They were enemy officials from surrounding Persian provinces. They resisted the rebuilding of the walls lest Judah become a stronger province than theirs.
5. Four months (compare the dates of Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1)
6. No. It is both God’s responsibility and ours. God will direct and provide as we walk through the doors that He opens.

discuss\ consider

1. Do you believe that God answers our prayers? What are some of His answers? Why doesn’t God always answer our prayers immediately?
2. Discuss the answer to Nehemiah’s prayer in light of Daniel’s prophecy. Refer to Daniel 9:25.

challenge

Recall a time when God opened a door for you, but you didn’t walk through it. Confess this omission to God. Recall a time when God opened a door for you, and you did walk through it. Praise God for giving you this opportunity. Recall a time when God closed a door that you wanted opened, but you were thankful later on for that closed door. Give thanks to God for His infinite wisdom.

memorize

“The good hand of the Lord was upon me.” Nehemiah 2:8

Lesson 4

Night Rider Nehemiah 2:11-16

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Biblical leadership involves careful planning.
2. Inspection is an important step in spiritual wall building.

practical application

1. Check out your spiritual walls.
2. Don't rush into Christian service projects.

questions

1. Who destroyed the walls of Jerusalem? Under whose leadership were the walls rebuilt?
2. What does the term "post-exilic" mean?
3. Why did Jeremiah make his inspection of the walls of Jerusalem in secret and at night?
4. What does biblical leadership involve? Why is Nehemiah considered a model for biblical leadership?
5. Inspection is an important step in both physical and spiritual wall building. Explain.

answers

1. Destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian armies, and rebuilt under the leadership of Nehemiah.
2. "Post-exilic" means "after the exile." After the Jews were in exile in Babylon for seventy years, God allowed them to return to their homeland in 538 BC. Some Jews remained in Persia, but they chose to do so.
3. He didn't want to attract a lot of attention or arouse suspicions by the people in the surrounding pagan provinces.
4. Careful planning, prayer, getting the lay of the land, and checking things out. Nehemiah modeled leadership because he didn't just jump in with his own preconceived ideas. He prayed, assessed the situation, and made plans accordingly. Then he shared his calling with a few trusted friends.
5. God wanted Jerusalem to be a strong city, one that could defend itself against the enemy. Similarly, God wants us to be strong Christians, having strong spiritual walls. We need to inspect our lives to see where our walls are broken down as individuals, as families, and in our churches. What needs repairing? What needs weeding out?

discuss\ consider

1. Check out your spiritual walls. As an individual, what debris needs to be cleared out? (Consider amount and type of TV you watch, what you read, leisure activities. Are you materialistic? Where are your priorities for spending money?) Where do you need to rebuild? (Prayer and Bible study time? Discipline in other areas?)
2. We are exhorted to be zealous. What are the restraints on zeal? Beware that zeal doesn't take precedence over or prevent wise planning. We should not get carried away, and we should count the cost. We need to "think big," but not rush ahead of the Lord.

challenge

If God were to begin a revival with you, where would He start?

memorize

"Test me O Lord...examine my heart and my mind." Psalm 26:2

Lesson 5

Standard Operating Procedure Nehemiah 2:17-18

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. God's SOP is to achieve through many, the vision He gives to a few.
2. It's a disgrace for the believer not to have strong walls.

practical application

1. Sometimes it takes a new voice to open up your eyes.
2. Your own Christian testimony can challenge and motivate others.

questions

1. How did Nehemiah use his place of power in the palace for the glory of God?
2. Read 2 Chronicles 36:15-21. Who were the Chaldeans? Locate their empire on a Bible map.
3. Name 3 reasons from 2 Chronicles 36 for the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile.
4. What does SOP stand for, and what does it mean in this lesson?
5. Review Paul's Macedonian call, an example of SOP. See Acts 16:9-10.
6. Review Nehemiah's testimony before the people. Did he abuse his authority? Did he shout at the people to get them going? What did he do and say?

answers

1. He requested that the king allow him to return to Judah to rebuild the ruined walls of Jerusalem. The king appointed him governor of Judah.
2. The Chaldeans is another name for the Babylonians .
3. They mocked God's messengers, despised God's words, and did not observe the land's Sabbath rests.
4. SOP stands for Standard Operating Procedure, which is to achieve through many the vision that God has given to a few.
5. Paul's ministry to carry out the great commission took him from Asia to Europe, where he established churches throughout the Roman Empire. He led others to help in this work.
6. Nehemiah did not abuse his authority, nor shout at the people. His testimony aroused the people. He linked himself with them, challenging, and motivating them with encouraging words.

discuss\ consider

1. Do you know someone who has been given a vision and acted on it? Have you helped someone carry out their vision? Have you ever been given a vision to start something for God?
2. Read Jude 3. Can you defend your faith? Do you know how to lead someone to Christ? Have you led someone to Christ?
3. Sometimes it takes a new voice to open our eyes. Have you heard a new voice lately that has challenged you to have greater concern for the kingdom of God?

challenge

List some areas of desensitization in your life. (Have you become used to something that would have shocked you a few years ago?)

memorize

"Come, let us rebuild the wall." Nehemiah 2:17

Lesson 6

Overcoming Opposition Nehemiah 2:19-20

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Separation must be maintained when it comes to the work of the Lord.
2. The Jews have a biblical right to the land in the Middle East.

practical application

1. Maintain a positive attitude when opposition arises.
2. Always put God first in the way you think about everything.

questions

1. Who were Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem? Why did they oppose Nehemiah?
2. How did these men threaten Nehemiah?
3. Separation must be maintained when it comes to the work of the Lord. How did Nehemiah maintain separation? Why should believers maintain separation?
4. Who was given the biblical right to the Promised Land in the Middle East?
5. What was Nehemiah's reaction to ridicule and threat?

answers

1. Sanballat and Tobiah were leaders of Samaria and Ammon, surrounding provinces, and Geshem was a leader of a large Arab territory. A strong Jewish province could be a threat to their authority, and a threat to trade monopolies under their control.
2. They threatened to notify the king that the Jews were planning a rebellion and would no longer be subject to the Persian Empire.
3. He told the enemies that they had no heritage or right in the work (verse 20). There was no compromise, clear lines were drawn, and separation was maintained. Believers must maintain separation or error will be mixed with truth, strings will be attached by the unbeliever, and the gospel will be watered down.
4. God gave the Jews this right (Genesis 13:15).
5. He said, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; we will arise and build." (verse 20). He didn't run scared or back off from what he knew was God's will.

discuss\ consider

1. What do you do in the face of opposition? What should you do?
2. Define "covenant." What is the Abrahamic Covenant? A covenant is a formal agreement between two or more persons. In the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 13:15) God made an unconditional agreement (promise) that Abraham's seed would be given the Land forever.

challenge

Resolve to put God first in all your decisions.

memorize

"The God of heaven will prosper us; we will arise and build." Nehemiah 2:20

Lesson 7

Operation Wall Nehemiah 3:1-16

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Unity and blessing go together.
2. Spiritual wall building is continuous.

practical application

1. We should aim to have a balanced Christian life.
2. Don't be surprised if some of your brothers and sisters don't join you in the work of the Lord.

questions

1. Why shouldn't we just skip over the long lists of unpronounceable names and get to the message of the passage?
2. Why is the "Sheep Gate" so named?
3. How long did it take to complete the work of the wall? Why was it done so quickly?
4. What is the importance of the often-repeated phrase "next to him/them" or "after him/them"?
5. What kinds of people worked on the wall, side by side?
6. Define unity and uniformity. What is the difference?

answers

1. Because God places an importance on individual people, and records them for our learning.
2. It was the gate through which the animals were led to be sacrificed.
3. Two months, because people worked together in unity and with purpose
4. The people worked side by side, in unity, each accomplishing his own area of service.
5. Priests, goldsmiths, perfumers, district leaders, Levites, temple servants, merchants, and whole families.
6. Unity means “a harmonious combination of different parts.” Uniformity means “having the same form and appearance; the same throughout at all times.” The Bible calls for unity, not uniformity. People differ in abilities and tastes, but they can unite in singleness of purpose to serve the Lord.

discuss\ consider

1. Have you found that unity and blessing go together? Why is this so? What should you do when some believers refuse to get involved in serving the Lord with you? Should you spend time trying to convince them of the value of the work?
2. Has your spiritual wall-building ever been “put on hold”? Have you discovered that disruption means neglect? What does it take to get you back on track?

challenge

A balanced Christian life involves continuous wall building: Bible study, fellowship, prayer, worship and service. Are you living a balanced life?

memorize

“...be likeminded, one in spirit and purpose.” Philippians 2:2

Lesson 8

Knowing Your People Nehemiah 3:17-32

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. God keeps a record of everything believers do for Him.
2. Good spiritual leadership motivates people.

practical application

1. If you want to be a good spiritual leader, know your people.
2. Start serving the Lord in an area where you're interested, or in "your own back yard."

questions

1. What is the point of this chapter?
2. How does good spiritual leadership motivate people?
3. What does good leadership not do?
4. Was it important that Nehemiah knew his people? Why?
5. What is mentioned about Eliashib and his fellow-priests (verse 1)? Did they perform "religious" service only, leaving the repair work to the "laity"?
6. Who were Shallum's fellow-workers (verse 12), and why are they significant?

answers

1. It records the names of the workers, the sections they worked on, and how the work was accomplished. It teaches that God records what we do for Him and provides a lesson in attitude toward work and fellow workers.
2. Good leadership motivates people by example and involvement.
3. It does not brag or distance itself, nor does it force others into a work.
4. Yes. The way Nehemiah worked with the people is a good example. He took the time to learn their names; he learned their strengths, weaknesses, and interests. He assigned the work so they would be challenged and successful. Without this kind of leadership there is discontent and a lack of interest, purpose, and unity.
5. The priests did the same repair work as those who were not priests, and performed their priestly duties as well.
6. His daughters helped build. Women are important and valuable in the Lord's service.

discuss\ consider

1. Is your attitude important to God? Is it important to His work? Have you ever entered into a work begrudgingly or reluctantly? Consider the impact of your attitude on the heart of God and on your fellow-workers.
2. Discuss ways that spiritual leaders can get to know the people who work with them so the leaders can serve them better.

challenge

God keeps a record of all we do for Him. Does this encourage you to “put your hand to the plough,” regardless of the “smallness” of the field before you? What work are you doing that will count for eternity?

memorize

“Stand firm in one spirit, striving together for the faith.” Philippians 1:27

Lesson 9

Mounting Opposition Nehemiah 4:1-6

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. There will always be opposition to the work of the Lord.
2. Imprecatory praying is biblical.

practical application

1. Expect to be ridiculed as a Christian.
2. Your best defense is a good offense.

questions

1. Who are the Samaritans? Why is there friction between Jews and Samaritans?
2. Why is there always opposition to the work of the Lord?
3. What surprising things does Nehemiah pray?
4. Define imprecatory prayer.
5. On what basis is imprecatory prayer used?
6. How effective were their insults in stopping the repair of the walls?

answers

1. When the northern ten tribes of Israel were conquered and taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 BC, the Assyrians repopulated the northern area of Israel with captives from foreign lands. The Samaritan people were the result of intermarriages of foreigners and the remaining Jews. They developed their own system of worship and made Mt. Gerizim their official place of worship. Since the Samaritans' bloodline was not "pure" and they did not worship at the Temple in Jerusalem, there was constant friction between them and the Jews. In Jesus' time the "Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4:9).

2. Satan becomes active when he sees a work of the Lord doing well and prospering.

3. He asked God to retaliate! *"Give them as plunder...do not cover their guilt or blot out their sins."*

4. It is prayer invoking the opposite of a blessing, calling for judgment to fall on God's enemies, and that they will not prosper or be blessed.

5. It is based on divine justice, with God's standards being upheld (not based on personal grudges!)

6. The insults motivated the people to work harder (verse 6)!

discuss\ consider

1. What should we do when we are ridiculed for our faith? What did Nehemiah do?

2. What gives you the most trouble: external criticism or internal doubts and fears?

challenge

We read that "the people had a mind to work" (verse 6). What happens when people do not have a mind to work? How could you turn this kind of a situation around?

memorize

"So we built the wall, for the people had a mind to work." Nehemiah 4:6

Lesson 10

Prayer and Precaution Nehemiah 4:7-9

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Satan's tactics are the same in every age.
2. Prayer and precaution go together.

practical application

1. Be prepared for increased opposition.
2. Make sure you watch as well as pray.

questions

1. What new tactics did the enemy use in trying to stop the rebuilding of the wall?
2. From what direction did the opposition come?
3. What did the Jews do in response to this new form of opposition?
4. What tactics is Satan using in the Creation/evolution controversy?
5. Is "setting a watch" evidence of a small faith and a lack of trust in God?
6. What is the difference between the prayers recorded in Nehemiah 4:4 and 4:9?

answers

1. Ridicule, indignation, mockery, and conspiracy
2. From every side
3. They prayed and posted guards to keep watch – night and day!
4. The same as he did in Nehemiah's day – ridicule and scorn, open threats, and even political action.
5. No. God expects believers to work as well as to pray. Prayer and action go together while trusting God. Setting a watch is using the means that God gives us to fight the enemy. See Habakkuk 2:1.
6. In verse 4, Nehemiah prayed a public prayer. In verse 9, everyone in the congregation prayed.

discuss\ consider

1. We need to be prepared for increased opposition as we build our spiritual walls. How should we prepare?
2. What kind of a watch have you set to thwart the enemy?
3. Have you found that it is easier to give up than to fight? What does God have to say about this?

challenge

Your character is tested by what it will take to stop you. How strong are you when someone ridicules you for your faith?

memorize

"We prayed to our God...and we set a watch." Nehemiah 4:9

Lesson 11

Giants or Grasshoppers Nehemiah 4:10-12

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching point

1. Discouragement and doubt are part of Satan's strategy to defeat us.

practical application

1. Don't be defeated by the D-darts of Satan.
 - a) Discouragement
 - b) Doubt
 - c) Despair
 - d) Demoralization
2. Remember that the halfway point is critical.

questions

1. What methods had the enemy used thus far to discourage the building of the wall?
2. Nehemiah 4:10 is written in the form of a Hebrew poem. The workers sang it as a dirge as they worked. What was happening at this half-way point?
3. What does fear do to people?
4. From what account in the Bible does the giant/grasshopper mind-set come?
5. What did Nehemiah do to change this frame of reference? How can this defeated attitude be overcome today?
6. List the D-darts of Satan.

answers

1. Ridicule, scorn, open threat, disruption, and confusion.
2. They had become discouraged, and assumed a defeated attitude because there was still so much work to be done.
3. It causes believers to doubt both themselves and God's power.
4. From Numbers 13:33, when twelve men were sent by Moses to spy out the strength of the people in the Promised Land. Ten reported that the people of the land were giants, and in comparison the Israelites were like grasshoppers. Joshua and Caleb disagreed, saying that they could conquer the Canaanites because God was on Israel's side!
5. Nehemiah turned their thoughts to God, and encouraged the builders to continue building by God's strength, not relying on their own strength. The same method holds true today.
6.
 - a) Discouragement
 - b) Doubt
 - c) Despair
 - d) Demoralization

discuss\ consider

1. God gives us the strength for every job that He calls us to do. Do you believe this, or do you become discouraged along the way, thinking it is too much and too hard to complete? Are you singing a dirge or a psalm as you work for God?
2. Like the two spies giving the minority report, do you really believe that you and God are a majority against the wiles of Satan? Remember, from God's perspective giants and grasshoppers look the same!

challenge

What kind of rubbish do you need to clear away, so that your spiritual wall-building can continue and be more effective? What are some of the safeguards you can employ to strengthen your spiritual walls?

memorize

"There is so much rubbish that we are not able to build." Nehemiah 4:10

Lesson 12

Putting on the Armor Nehemiah 4:13-15

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Offensive warfare defeats Satan.
 - a) Set a watch.
 - b) Be armed.
 - c) Don't be afraid.
 - d) Remember the Lord.
 - e) Be challenged to fight for the family.

practical application

1. Be more than an expert in spiritual wall-building – be a leader.

questions

1. From verse 7, name the enemies of Jerusalem and find their locations on a map.
2. The Jews were frightened, tired and discouraged. How did Nehemiah turn this around?
3. From Ephesians 6, list the pieces of armor and their significance.
4. Why is no armor provided for the Christian soldier's back?
5. What offensive weapon did Jesus use when confronted by Satan at His temptation in the wilderness? Are we ready and able to pick up and to use this weapon, too?

answers

1. Sanballat (Samaria): north; Tobiah (Ammon): east; Geshem (Arabs): south; Ashdod: east.
2. Nehemiah exhorted the people to depend on the Lord, reminding them of His great and awesome works on their behalf. He set a watch (or defense) at vulnerable places along the wall. He prayed. He challenged the workers to fight for their families.
3. Defensive weapons: Belt of truth holds our armor in the proper place; breastplate of righteousness protects our hearts; firm footing for standing our ground in battle is provided by the gospel; shield of faith repels Satan's fiery darts of opposition, doubt and discouragement; helmet of salvation protects our heads. Offensive weapon: the sword of the Spirit – the Word of God.
4. We are supposed to stand our ground (Ephesians 13-14), not turn our backs and run away!
5. He used the same offensive weapon God has given to us: the Sword of the Spirit – the Word of God! Jesus used Scripture from Deuteronomy to defeat Satan. (See Matthew 4 and Luke 4.) We should be prepared to use Scripture for all types of occasions!

discuss\ consider

1. Review the principles of spiritual warfare taught in Ephesians 6:10-20.
2. Can you pinpoint your vulnerable places? Which places in your spiritual wall need greater protection, lest Satan get a foothold there?

challenge

Although we are aware of family or church problems, we sometimes get too busy to take an honest look at them. It's easier to put our heads in the sand and hope that the problems will go away. Does this speak to you? Don't ignore the problems, but strengthen the things that will make your family or fellowship group strong for the Lord.

memorize

"Do not be afraid. Remember the Lord, and fight for your families." Nehemiah 4:14

Lesson 13

**Defending and Depending
Nehemiah 4:16-20**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Spiritual wall-building involves protecting what is built.
2. Being organized in spiritual warfare honors God.

practical application

1. Everyone should study some Christian Evidences.

questions

1. How had God frustrated the plan of the enemy?
2. Why was the trumpeter a key person in the defense?
3. What is the concept of the sword and the trowel?
4. Does organization for defense in spiritual warfare dishonor God?
5. Is it important to study some Christian Evidences? What does this mean?
6. Where was Nehemiah when all the work was going on?

answers

1. The enemy attack was exposed, and guards were set.
2. The trumpeter was the early warning system to protect the Jews from a sneak attack.
3. Defense while working. Half of the builders stood guard while the other half worked.
4. No. Being prepared doesn't take away from God's ability. It honors Him when we are ready to be used by Him.
5. Yes, it is important. From the Greek word for "defend" comes the word "apologetics," which means a systematic defense of the Christian faith. "Christian Evidences" is practical apologetics, evidence that is available to show that Christianity is credible. Knowing Christian Evidences enables us to defend the faith and to give answers to questions about Christianity.
6. He was not sitting in safe, luxurious headquarters! Apparently he made constant rounds of the walls. If an attack occurred, Nehemiah and the trumpeter would go quickly to the trouble spot to rally, organize and encourage the people (verses 18,20).

discuss\ consider

1. Read 1 Peter 3:15. Have you told someone about that hope? Are you a "trumpeter" (a warning system) to those who don't know Christ?
2. This Talk referred to a group who took a stand against abortion. List some other anti-scriptural or anti-Christian issues that concern you. What could you do about them?

challenge

Have you been confronted about your faith? Did you defend it successfully? Set yourself the goal of knowing the Bible and its Author more intimately. Pursue a systematic study of Christian Evidences. You could start at www.growingchristians.org!

memorize

"Our God will fight for us." Nehemiah 4:20

Lesson 14

Busy, Busy, Busy Nehemiah 4:21-23

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Unity is essential to wall-building.
2. Spiritual leaders must set the example.

practical application

1. How is your attitude when you are called upon to do double duty?
2. Expect to be busy in the work of the Lord.

questions

1. Describe a typical work day in the life of a wall builder.
2. Did Nehemiah conduct “Operation Wall” from a desk?
3. Who was the guard referred to in Nehemiah 4:23?
4. What is the common theme in Nehemiah 4:21 and Ephesians 4:3?
5. List the qualities of a spiritual leader from 1 Timothy 3.

answers

1. The worker cleared the rubbish, and carried heavy blocks of stones to the building site in spite of opposition, ridicule, and threats of attack. He worked from the rising of the sun until the stars appeared. "Commuters" were asked to stay inside the city to work and share in to guard duty at night.
2. No. He worked alongside the workers.
3. The Persian army personnel who came from Babylon with Nehemiah (verse 9).
4. Keep the unity. Workers must be unified in purpose for the work to continue.
5. Above reproach; one spouse; even-tempered; self-controlled; respectable; hospitable; able to explain, teach and defend the faith; not addicted to harmful substances; gentle; not contentious; not materialistic or hoarding with money; respectful children; happy, well-managed home; good reputation in the community.

discuss\ consider

1. Read Nehemiah 4:22. Did the guards grumble at doing double duty? Have you ever grumbled at doing what you thought was more than your share? Read Philippians 4:13; Colossians 3:23; Psalm 18:2, 32; Isaiah 40:31; and 2 Timothy 4:17.
2. The qualities listed in 1 Timothy 3 are not only for leaders. Discuss how they are a model for every Christian to follow.

challenge

There are times when we must come apart, or we will "come apart"! After some exhausting and trying times, Jesus Himself called His disciples to "*come apart and rest awhile*" *Mark 6:31*. Consider whether you are on the verge of "burnout" in serving the Lord, or taking too much "R & R"? What steps need to be taken to correct **your** situation?

memorize

"Give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, for your labor is not in vain." 1 Corinthians 15:58

Lesson 15

The Enemy Within Nehemiah 5:1-13

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching point

1. Internal strife and dissension will hinder spiritual wall-building.

practical application

1. Do you look at unfortunate circumstances through the glasses of a servant or the glasses of an opportunist.
2. Give serious thought before acting when you're angry.

questions

1. Every attempt the enemies made to stop the wall-building had been overcome. What else could go wrong?
2. Review Nehemiah 5:1-5. What happened here? What was the problem?
3. What was Nehemiah's reaction to the problem?
4. Read Acts 6:1-8. What was the problem? How was it solved? What was the result?
5. How are we to deal with internal strife in our churches? Read Philippians 2:1-4, Galatians 5:13-15, Colossians 3:12-17 and Romans 14:19.
6. What did Nehemiah do when he was angry? What should we do when we are angry?

answers

1. The attack from without now became an attack from within. There was internal strife, dissension, and disunity.
2. Some of the Jews were so poor that they didn't have enough to eat; they had mortgaged their houses and lands to live; they had to make themselves and their children indentured servants. The wealthier Jews, contrary to Jewish law, failed to help their less fortunate brethren. They were like loan sharks, inflicting high taxes on their fellow-citizens in a time of famine, even involved in the slave trade!
3. He reacted in anger. He exposed the problem, then challenged the wealthier Jews not to charge interest and to return to the poor what had been taken unjustly.
4. The widows were not being cared for. Deacons were appointed, and they took care of the situation.
5. We are not to take advantage of one another, but to serve, honor, forgive and love one another, and to make every effort to restore peace and unity. (You will come up with more items for this list.)
6. He got to the root of the problem, exposed it, and made things right. This should be our example.

discuss\ consider

1. This lesson shows people look at the same situation with different glasses, seeing the situation as an opportunist or as a servant. Do you know people from each view point? What is your frame of reference?
2. Think of a recent catastrophic event. Think of examples of people who used this situation for personal gain. Were there some who viewed it through the eyes of a servant? Name some examples of those who chose to serve.

challenge

Recall a situation when you were angry. Was it righteous anger? How did you deal with the situation and your anger? What was the result? Are there steps you need to take to repair relationships or control unrighteous anger? Do a survey of scriptures that deal with the subject of anger.

memorize

"Should you not walk in the fear of our God?" Nehemiah 5:9

Lesson 16

Everybody's Doing It Nehemiah 5:14-19

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Blessed are those who deny their rights in the interest of the Kingdom of God.
2. People have short memories, but God doesn't.

practical application

1. Don't get compassion fatigue.
2. Everyone does not do it.

questions

1. Explain, "Nehemiah built a wall, not a personal empire."
2. What does it mean to deny your rights for the glory of God?
3. What is meant by "compassion fatigue?"
4. Is it wrong to expect the best of both worlds, materially and spiritually?
5. Cite specific examples, both biblical and contemporary, of believers who denied their personal rights in the interest of the kingdom of God.

answers

1. As governor of Judah, he was a godly example and set high standards as a leader, giving up many of his “rights” as governor. He could have taxed the people and bought land at a low price, but he didn’t. Rather than charge diplomatic expenses to the Persian government, he paid expenses out of his own pocket.
2. It means to deny yourself privileges, even legitimate ones, if it would bring honor to God. The Christian has higher standards, and it is his godliness that shines through to win people to Christ. It is going the second mile.
3. It means becoming desensitized to the plight of the disadvantaged, usually because of the overwhelming nature of the task and the numerous requests for financial support.
4. Some popular “prosperity gospels” present the unscriptural teaching that Christians should expect both material and spiritual prosperity in this life. But Jesus had “nowhere to lay His head,” and many early Christians experienced poverty and persecution.
5. Two examples: Abraham – Genesis 13:5-12 and Moses – Hebrews 11:24-26. See how many more you can name!

discuss\ consider

1. Discuss 1 Corinthians 15:58 and Hebrews 6:10. How is this teaching different from the “prosperity gospel?”
2. List some things to which you have become desensitized. What should you do about this?

challenge

Have you written a letter, called, or visited anyone with the express purpose of thanking him for the impact he has had on your life? Consider doing this before it’s too late.

memorize

“Out of reverence for God I did not act like that.” Nehemiah 5:15

Lesson 17

Compromise? O No! Nehemiah 6:1-4

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Compromise is no problem when priorities are in order.
2. The enemy is very persistent.

practical application

1. Let's be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.
2. Stay busy!

questions

1. What was the proposed site of the conference?
2. How did the enemies try to get Nehemiah to attend?
3. When is a suggestion to compromise not a problem?
4. What is it that we must learn to prioritize?
5. When you hear several voices suggesting different directions to take, how should you sort them out?
6. Refer to Matthew 10:16. What does it mean?

answers

1. At one of the villages in the Plain of Ono (near Tel Aviv, where Ben Gurion airport is located today). It was not neutral ground – it was on the border of enemy territory, near Ashdod, a day's journey from Jerusalem.
2. They said that it was important, a peace treaty. They pushed for what they called peaceful co-existence, saying that the wall could be finished later.
3. When priorities are in order.
4. Things of eternal value must be our top priority.
5. Wait, pray, and check the information with the teaching of the word of God.
6. “Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” Beware of enemy traps; give gentle but truthful answers. Unbelievers will try to trap you with your own words.

discuss\ consider

1. Sanballat and Geshem tried to get Nehemiah to meet in the name of peace (but they planned to harm him). Have you ever fallen into a trap like the one set for Nehemiah?
2. What happens when someone puts pressure on you (they sent a message to Nehemiah four times)? What do you do? Do you cave in? Compromise? Or do you stand firm?

challenge

Nehemiah had his priorities straight. His work for the Lord was #1. What are your priorities? What is #1 in your life?

memorize

“Why should the work cease while I leave it?” Nehemiah 6:3

Lesson 18

Leave it with the Lord Nehemiah 6:5-9

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Slander is one of Satan's most devastating attacks.
2. Strength against slander is found in God, not in self-defense.

practical application

1. Don't give the enemy a chance for more than slander.
2. Don't do something foolish because of fear.

questions

1. The enemy made a fifth attack in attempt to hinder the rebuilding of the wall. What was the strategy this time?
2. Who was behind this strategy?
3. What is slander and why is it so devastating? How is it countered?
4. Why is it so difficult to keep from defending yourself when you are slandered?
5. What did Nehemiah do when he was slandered?
6. Why does fear make people do strange things?

answers

1. The enemy made a personal attack on Nehemiah.
2. Satan. He prompted Sanballat to pretend to be friends with Nehemiah, while attacking him.
3. It is character assassination, and it is very difficult to counter. It is countered by finding refuge and strength in God, and not in self-defense.
4. We want to set the record straight, no matter how much time and energy it takes! It seems unfair to be attacked and not do everything we can to defend ourselves.
5. Nehemiah found strength in God. He denied the charge and committed the matter to God.
6. Fear makes people irrational so they cannot think clearly. They may overreact and say or do the wrong thing.

discuss\ consider

1. Have you ever been slandered? If so, what did you do about it? Be sure that you don't give the enemy a chance for more than slander.
2. Have you ever become irrational because of fear? How did you control it?

challenge

Have you ever joined in when you heard something against someone? Have you ever repeated something against someone, whether it was true or false? Will you determine to make changes, if this has occurred in your life?

memorize

"Never take your own revenge." Romans 12:19

"Now therefore, O God, strength my hands." Nehemiah 6:9

Lesson 19

Perceiving Deception Nehemiah 6:10-14

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. A thorough working knowledge of God's Word is necessary for spiritual warfare.
2. The world will find fault with a disobedient Christian.

practical application

1. Watch out for "The-Lord-told-me-so" friends.
2. Watch out for the enemy in the most unlikely places.

questions

1. List some of the tactics Satan used against Nehemiah.
2. Were these tactics successful in stopping "Operation Wall?" Why or why not?
3. Who was Shemaiah? What did Sanballat and Tobiah hire him to do?
4. What was Nehemiah's perception of Shemaiah? How could Nehemiah distinguish a false prophet from a true prophet? (Compare verse 12 with Numbers 18:7)
5. What does Nehemiah's discernment show about him?
6. What is a believer's primary defense against spiritual deception?

answers

1. Scorn, ridicule, threat, conspiracy, internal strife, and slander.
2. They were not successful because Nehemiah kept his eyes on the Lord, and he had his priorities in order. His example gave confidence to the people to trust in God.
3. He was a false prophet, hired to inform Nehemiah that there was a threat on his life.
4. He perceived that Shemaiah was a false prophet. God's Word forbade those who were not priests from entering the sanctuary, and Nehemiah was not a priest. A true prophet of God would never suggest something that is contrary to the Word of God – not in Nehemiah's day and not in our day!
5. Nehemiah knew the book of Numbers, one of the books of the Law. Even though he was not a priest, Nehemiah had a good working knowledge of the Word of God!
6. A thorough knowledge of God's Word, and close communication with Him.

discuss\ consider

1. Have you had the experience of being advised wrongly, even by close friends and devout Christians? If so, what does this tell you?
2. Read Hebrews 5:11-14. What are the implications of this passage?

challenge

Resolve to study God's Word daily in order to grow in spiritual discernment. Be sure that your behavior matches your beliefs.

memorize

"Wisdom from above is first of all pure." James 3:17

Lesson 20

It Can Be Done! Nehemiah 6:15-19

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. It is possible to build strong walls.
2. Strong spiritual walls do affect the enemy camp.
3. Mixed marriages will lead to compromise.

practical application

1. Never say, "It can't be done."
2. Expect to feel betrayed in the work of the Lord.

questions

1. How long did it take to complete the rebuilding of the wall?
2. How was it possible for a wall which had been in ruins for 140 years to be rebuilt so quickly? What did this communicate to the surrounding peoples?
3. Who was Tobiah, and how had he gained influence in Israel?
4. How do strong walls affect the enemy?
5. What were Tobiah's next disruptive tactics?
6. Why do "mixed marriages" lead to compromise?

answers

1. Fifty-two days
2. The answer to both questions: The work had been done with the help of God.
3. He was one of the enemy leaders. He made inroads into Israel through marriage.
4. The enemy loses confidence and becomes disheartened.
5. People who were loyal to Tobiah told Nehemiah about Tobiah's "good deeds," and reported Nehemiah's reaction. Tobiah also sent intimidating letters to Nehemiah.
6. Because each spouse desires to please the other. The Christian partner's loyalty to Christ will be tested when concessions regarding Christian lifestyle and commitment are made, in the interests of "family peace." The Bible is clear that a believer is not to be "yoked" to an unbeliever. See 2 Corinthians 6:14.

discuss\ consider

1. Recall a situation in which you were involved when the hand of God was seen. Was God praised and given the glory for His mighty intervention?
2. Have you ever been discouraged by the magnitude of a job facing you? What did you do about it? How do you overcome this kind of discouragement?
3. "Expect to feel betrayed in the work of the Lord." Explain this statement. Have you ever seen this in your life?

challenge

We have a choice to build strong walls or sand castles of our lives. Review the lessons on what it takes to build strong spiritual walls.

memorize

"All the nations...realized that this work was done by God." Nehemiah 6:16

Lesson 21

Watch Those Gates Nehemiah 7: 1-4

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Growing Christians need to continually watch out for the enemy.
2. Growing Christians should also be singers and Levites.

practical application

1. Let's never rest on our laurels.
2. Let's especially watch our "gate areas."

questions

1. Review
 - a. When did the events in the Book of Nehemiah take place?
 - b. Why did God permit Jerusalem to be destroyed and the Jews taken captive?
 - c. Where were the Jews taken? How long were they in captivity?
 - d. Who was Cyrus? What did he do for the Jews?
 - e. Who was Zerubbabel?
 - f. Who were the two prophets who helped in restoring the temple in Jerusalem?
 - g. Why did God want a wall around Jerusalem?
 - h. What are Chapters 1-6 about?
2. What is Chapter 7 about?
3. Of what importance are the gates around the city?
4. What do the following represent in spiritual wall building: gate guards, singers, and Levites?

answers

1. Review

- a. Near the close of the Old Testament period, 5th Century, B.C.
- b. Because they had forsaken the Lord, their God, and rebelled against His law.
- c. They were taken to Babylon, and kept in captivity seventy years.
- d. Cyrus was a Persian King (Persia conquered Babylon). He issued an edict which permitted the Jews to return to their homeland.
- e. Zerubbabel was the leader of 50,000 Jews who returned to their homeland.
- f. Zechariah and Haggai, who motivated the people to rebuild the temple.
- g. To make it less vulnerable to enemy attack.
- h. The completion of the wall.

2. A great time of blessing and revival

3. To keep the enemy from gaining entrance, and from breaking down the walls.

4. Gate guards are on the lookout for enemy attacks, singers praise to keep one from being discontent, and Levites keep on doing the work.

discuss\ consider

1. Nehemiah 7:14 teaches 3 W's: Watch, Worship, and Work. Is your Christian life balanced in the area of the 3 W's? Consider how to strengthen "weak W's."

2. Why is it that watching is so difficult?

challenge

How important are the gates in your spiritual life? Can you identify your gates of vulnerability? How can you strengthen those gate areas?

memorize

"He was a faithful man and feared God." Nehemiah 7:2

"Appoint guards from among the inhabitants." Nehemiah 7:3

Lesson 22

**Proving the Birthright
Nehemiah 7:5-6**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching point

1. There must be proof of the birthright.

practical application

1. Are you sure of your birthright?
2. We should emphasize the gospel in our ministry.

questions

1. List the three phases of the Exile.
2. List the three phases of the Return.
3. How is the 70-year captivity reckoned?
4. Why did the Jews of Nehemiah's day have to prove their birthright?
5. What happened to the Jews who could not prove their birthright?
6. What does it mean to be "a partaker of the divine birthright"?

answers

1. Phase 1: Daniel and others were taken into captivity (605BC)
Phase 2: Ezekiel taken into captivity (597BC)
Phase 3: Temple destroyed (587-586BC).
2. Phase 1: 50,000 Jews returned under Zerubbabel(538BC), Temple rebuilt (516BC)
Phase 2: Ezra returned with 2,000 more Jews (458BC)
Phase 3: Nehemiah returned and the city walls were rebuilt (445BC).
3. In 2 ways:
 - a) 605-535BC (in 605BC the first phase of the captivity began; in 535BC the rebuilding of the temple began)
 - b) 586-516BC (the Temple was destroyed in 586BC, and rebuilding was completed in 516BC).
4. Because non-Jewish enemies were infiltrating the ranks.
5. They were excluded from the genealogy list.
6. When a person repents and confesses his sin, and asks Jesus Christ to be his Savior, God forgives his sins. The believer receives divine life, becoming a partaker of the life of Christ (1 Peter 1:4), and is assured of a home in heaven.

discuss\ consider

1. Why do some people rely on good deeds, tithing, being a church member, or “being good” as their ticket to heaven? Do these things impress God? Review Matthew 7:22-23.
2. What happens to professing believers who are not true possessors of the birthright? Does this concern you enough to share the above verses with them?

challenge

Do you have proof of your birthright as a believer? Read 2 Corinthians 13:5 and Romans 8:1, 5-6, 9, 14.

memorize

“He has given us new birth...and an inheritance that can never perish.” 1 Peter 1:3-4

Lesson 23

**Revival, Renewal and Blessing
Nehemiah 8:1-6**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching point

1. Any renewal or revival of God's people will be centered around the Bible.

practical application

1. Do you want revival and renewal in your own life?
2. Do you want revival and renewal in your family?
3. Do you want revival and renewal in your church?

questions

1. What was the occasion for the people to gather in Jerusalem (see Leviticus 23.23-25).
2. What can you recall about Ezra?
3. What is the core or center for any revival or renewal of God's people?
4. In this passage, there are four things that showed the great appreciation that people had for the Word of God. What are they?
5. What is a danger signal of spiritual trouble ahead for individuals and for churches?

answers

1. The Feast of Trumpets.

2. Ezra was a scribe who returned to Jerusalem about thirteen years before Nehemiah returned. He was a great spiritual leader, motivating the people to set their hearts right before God.

3. The Word of God

4. They were united in wanting to hear the word of God; they listened from daybreak until noon; they were attentive; they stood the whole time the word was read to them.

5. A stronger emphasis on spiritual experiences, feelings, and spiritual highs than on hearing, studying, and following the Word of God.

discuss/consider

1. Do you have the kind of appreciation for the Word of God that these people had? How do you evidence this in your life?

2. Did you have family devotions when you were growing up? If so, of what value are they in your life today? If not, how do you think they would have helped you? Do you have family devotions now, with everyone participating?

challenge

Do you read the Bible every day as necessary spiritual food? Do you set aside time to be quiet before the Lord? Resolve today to do this faithfully, to seek His will for your life and to walk in the way that He has set before you.

memorize

"All the people were attentive to the Book of the Law." Nehemiah 8:3

Lesson 24

There is a Time Nehemiah 8:7-12

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. There is a time for weeping and a time for rejoicing.
2. The joy of the Lord is your strength.
3. The Word is effective because it is understood.

practical application

1. For the Bible to become more effective in your life, you must do more than read it – you must understand it.

questions

1. What does Nehemiah 8 teach us?
2. In which language was the Old Testament written?
3. What was the common language of the exiles?
4. The Levites instructed the people in the Law of God. What 3 elements for effective teaching of God's Word are given in verse 8?
5. Why were the people weeping?
6. How and why did the people turn their weeping to celebration?

answers

1. To center on the word of God. It was read, taught and understood.
2. Hebrew
3. Aramaic
4. Reading the text; making it clear; making sure everyone understands the meaning.
5. They were convicted of their sins when the Word of God was read.
6. When Nehemiah explained that they should be rejoicing in the Lord and in His strength, the people celebrated the Feast with great joy, eating, drinking and sharing with one another. They were joyful because they had heard and understood the Word of God, and it had made a positive impact on their hearts, their minds, and their lives.

discuss\ consider

1. Have you ever wept when you read or heard the Word of God? Do you sometimes read the Bible just to “get your reading done”? How effective is it under those circumstances?
2. What is the source of your strength? Is it Nehemiah 8:10? What happens when you try to do things in your own strength? Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Ephesians 3:20-21; Habakkuk 3:19.

challenge

There is a time for weeping and a time for rejoicing. Ponder this.

memorize

“The joy of the Lord is your strength.” Nehemiah 8:10

Lesson 25

**Obedience to the Word
Nehemiah 8:13-18**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching point

1. Obedience to the Word of God is the secret of joy and happiness.

practical application

1. Let's obey the Word even though we may not have all the answers.
2. Dads, you need to study the Bible more.

questions

1. What is known about the Feast of Tabernacles? Read Leviticus 23:39-42.
2. How long had it been since the Israelites had celebrated this feast?
3. What is the secret of joy, happiness, and gladness?
4. How did the people of Nehemiah's day find this secret?
5. Are we responsible to obey the Bible even when we don't understand it?
6. Do you think that some of the people in Nehemiah's day may have had questions about God's commands, even though they obeyed them?

answers

1. The Feast of Tabernacles is held in the seventh month, and lasts for seven days. It commemorates Israel's forty years in the wilderness when God led, protected and provided for the Jews. Even today Jewish people set up lean-tos (booths) in their gardens or balconies, and some still live or eat in them for during the week-long festival.
2. Since the days of Joshua – about 1,000 years.
3. Obedience to God's word (see Joshua 1:8).
4. By obeying the Word of God exactly (see 2 Timothy 3:15-16). In this instance, they followed every detail concerning the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles.
5. Yes, even as we are to obey the laws of the land, although we may not be aware of some of them, or when we disagree with them (see Romans 13:1-7).
6. They probably had questions, but the bottom line was that they obeyed the word.

discuss\ consider

1. Has it been some time since your church participated in a revival? What is your personal experience with revival? Are you familiar with some of the revivals of recent centuries or of those currently happening in various parts of the world?
2. Consider the roles, as outlined here, of fathers, husbands, and wives.

challenge

How exact are you in obeying the Word of God? Do you take liberties with it when it doesn't suit you?

memorize

"They gathered together that they might gain insight into the words of the Law." Nehemiah 8:13

Lesson 26

**Confession
Nehemiah 9:1-6**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Confession of sin must precede worship.
2. Worship is the acknowledgment to God Himself of who God is and what God does.

practical application

1. Remember to include worship in your prayers.
2. Don't forget to thank God for the basics.

questions

1. What is the focus of Nehemiah 8?
2. What is the focus of Nehemiah 9?
3. What are the two Hebrew calendars? What were the three feasts during Tishri, the seventh month?
4. What did the people do following these feasts?
5. How long did they read? How long did they confess their sins?
6. How did they present themselves before God? Why?
7. Define worship. What must precede worship?

answers

1. Revival and renewal, centered around the word of God
2. Prayer, as an integral part of revival, renewal, and blessing
3. The religious and the civil calendars The Feast of the Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.
4. They came together to confess their sins, not to the priests, but as a group of the Lord's people, speaking directly to their God.
5. They read for three hours, then confessed their sins for three hours.
6. With fasting, wearing sackcloth, and with ashes on their heads. In their culture, this was a sign of repentance.
7. Worship is the acknowledgement of who God is and what He does, addressed to God Himself. Confession of sin must precede worship.

discuss\ consider

1. Read and meditate on 1 Corinthians 11:28.
2. Review Nehemiah 9:5-6, a prayer beginning with worship. Read the Lord's prayer to find a proper pattern for worship (Matthew 6:9-13). How often do you begin your prayers with worship?

challenge

Do you have a time and place to meet with God daily? If you ever find worship difficult or forced, start by reading hymns. Read Psalm 19, or other "praise" Psalms. Read them as a prayer, and you'll soon be using your own words to worship.

memorize

"Praise the Lord your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting!" Nehemiah 9:5

Lesson 27

**Man's Unfaithfulness & God's Faithfulness
Nehemiah 9:7-23**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. God's laws are good.
2. Even when believers are unfaithful, God is faithful.

practical application

1. Count your many blessings. Pray them one by one!
2. Our travels in the wilderness are not across God-forsaken land.

questions

1. Where are the three longest Old Testament prayers found?
2. Why are the people praying at this time?
3. Name the two rivers mentioned in this passage. Locate them on the map. Where do these rivers meet?
4. This river junction was located in ancient times in _____. In modern times this area is in the country of _____.
5. What are the benefits of God's laws? Why do some people consider God's laws to be oppressive?
6. How did the Israelites show their unfaithfulness in the wilderness?
7. How did God show His faithfulness in this situation?

answers

1. Daniel 9, Ezra 9, and Nehemiah 9, with Nehemiah 9 being the longest.
2. The wall had been built, revival had taken place, and this prayer was in the context of confession and worship.
3. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, which met at Ur of the Chaldees
4. Babylon; Iraq
5. God's laws are good, and as we are obedient to them we find freedom and fulfillment. By knowledge and obedience we can be all that God designed and intended for us. Some people think God's Laws take away their freedom – they want to do their own thing.
6. They murmured and complained; they were rebellious, and their hearts were hardened. They were proud and forgetful of God's goodness to them.
7. God was faithful in spite of their unfaithfulness. He gave His Spirit to instruct them. He led them by a pillar of cloud during the day and by a pillar of fire by night. He gave them manna from heaven and water from a rock – He met all their needs!

discuss\ consider

1. Does God lead us through the wilderness today? Recall examples of God's leading in your life.
2. The Israelites seemed to idealize their life in Egypt, that it wasn't so bad after all. Do you ever do this?

challenge

Consider God's faithfulness to you, even when you have been unfaithful to Him. Review your answer to #7. Does this sound familiar?

memorize

"You are a forgiving God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in love." Nehemiah 9:17

Lesson 28

**The Longest Prayer
Nehemiah 9: 24-38**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. God must discipline His children.
2. God does not break His promises.

practical application

1. We cannot escape God's discipline, but neither can we exhaust God's patience.
2. We don't have to be slaves on our own land.

questions

1. Who was leading this prayer?
2. This prayer traces the history of _____ especially revealing God's _____ and His people's _____.
3. Critics say the Bible is in error because archaeological digs have revealed little destruction during the time of the conquest. How would you answer them?
4. When the Assyrian King Sennacherib attacked Jerusalem, God performed a miracle. What was the miracle? Where is it found in the Bible?
5. Why does God discipline His children?
6. What is mercy?

answers

1. Several of the Levites were leading the people in prayer
2. Israel; faithfulness; unfaithfulness
3. We should not expect to find a lot of destruction, for the cities were not destroyed, but taken over by the conquerors. Only a few were burned.
4. 185,000 Assyrian troops died in one night, and Sennacherib returned to his own land. This account is documented in cuneiform records, and three times in Scripture: Isaiah 37:33-38, 2 Kings 19:32-37, and 2 Chronicles 32:1-21.
5. Because He loves His children, and wants the best for them. God's discipline is always constructive, and we will benefit if we submit to it.
6. The word for mercy (sometimes translated as "lovingkindness"), is best defined as God's loyal, steadfast, and faithful love.

discuss\ consider

1. Can we exhaust God's patience? No, for His patience is unlimited. Are you thankful for His patience in your life? If so, tell Him.
2. The Jews were "slaves in their own land" because the Persians exacted tribute in crops and livestock from the Jews (verses 36-37). How could we be slaves in the land God has given to us?

challenge

Can we escape God's discipline? No, and we should value it! Consider what your life would be like if you were not disciplined by God.

memorize

"Great is Thy faithfulness." Lamentations 3:23

Lesson 29

**Commitment Contract
Nehemiah 10:1-31**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Commitment is more than a long prayer of confession.
2. There are focal points of commitment.

practical application

1. How serious are you about commitment?

questions

1. What triggered the revival in Judah in Nehemiah's day? What were the two emphases of the revival?
2. On what two things did the great prayer focus?
3. Which three groups of people signed the "Commitment Contract"?
4. What about the rest of the people, who didn't sign the Contract? Were they unwilling to commit?
5. What is commitment, and what does it involve?
6. List the three focal points of the Commitment Contract.

answers

1. The wall of Jerusalem had been rebuilt. Prayer, and hearing and obeying the word of God.
2. Confession and worship
3. The priests, the Levites, and the leaders
4. The signers did so on behalf of all the people. They all were committed
5. Commitment means obeying all of God's law. It follows prayer and confession.
6. Marriage, the Sabbath, and the House of God

discuss\ consider

1. Are the focal points of commitment of the Israelites the focal points of commitment in your life? Would you be willing to sign a Commitment Contract with God? Would you be willing to accept God's judgment if you failed in your commitment?
2. Think of a firm commitment you've made in the past. Did you keep it? If not, what drew you away?

challenge

Mark your appointment calendar for the next month, blocking out time with God each day. At the end of the month, take stock and see what God has accomplished in your life.

memorize

"You are a gracious and merciful God." Nehemiah 9:31

Lesson 30

**Ordinances and Offerings
Nehemiah 10: 32-39**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. God's people have a responsibility to support God's work.
2. Tithing is not unbiblical.

practical application

1. Are you willing to chop wood?
2. Are you willing to give your first and your best to the Lord?

questions

1. What is the theme and teaching of chapters 7-10?
2. What did the people compose and sign (chapter 10)?
3. What is mentioned in each verse of our passage?
4. Why did the people agree to bring these particular offerings? See Exodus 30:11-16 and Deuteronomy 26:1-11.
5. What did the people bring "of their best" to support the house of God?
6. "Tithing is not unbiblical." Can you support this statement?

answers

1. There was a great revival, sparked by the rebuilding of the wall. The revival was centered on God's word and on prayer.
2. A Commitment Contract to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord.
3. Offerings to God
4. These offerings were specified in the Law, and the people had made a commitment to obey the Law exactly.
5. They brought money for the house of God, wood for sacrifices, first-fruits from the harvest, the first-born of the flocks, and tithes for the support of God's House and the Levites.
6. Tithing is a biblical principle. It is found extensively in the Old Testament. Even before the Mosaic Law was given, Abraham gave tithes to the priest Melchizedek. In the New Testament, Christians are stewards of all that God gives to us. We are responsible to use all that we have wisely. In our giving we should keep the additional principles given in the New Testament in mind. For an example, see 2 Corinthians 8-9.

discuss\ consider

1. Is there a covenant for Christians which reflects the values of Nehemiah 10:32-39? If God could grow money on trees, why does He ask His people to support His work?
2. The Lord's people of Nehemiah's day were willing to do unglamorous, mundane jobs and give sacrificially to support the house of God. Are you willing, voluntarily, to clean the church? Do the "behind the scenes" jobs? Or do you only accept "important" or "popular" jobs that don't require much sacrifice of time or money?
3. Ask yourself, "What do I value most in life? Am I willing to sacrifice it to the Lord?"

challenge

Take stock of your possessions, and what you do with them. Take stock of your time, and how you spend it. Assess your abilities, and how you use them. Determine to make sacrifices to honor the Lord in these areas.

memorize

"Freely you have received, freely give." Matthew 10:8

Lesson 31

**Volunteers Needed
Nehemiah 11: 1-2**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. God keeps track of individual efforts.
2. God looks for individuals who can defend the faith.

practical application

1. Don't lose out on blessing by refusing to volunteer.

questions

1. Why were more people needed in Jerusalem? What proportion of those living outside the city was needed to move into the city?
2. Who is the king referred to in Nehemiah 11:23-24?
3. Why did the king pay for the building of the temple and the walls?
4. God wanted Jerusalem to be a strong city. List two references that tell believers today to defend the faith, or contend for the faith.
5. What happens when volunteers are no longer able to do the front-line work?
6. Why is it that commitment and volunteer work are so difficult?

answers

1. To help defend the city. One out of ten families. Lots were cast when more people were needed, over and above the volunteers.
2. King Artaxerxes I
3. From his Persian perspective, he wanted to appease all the gods. See Ezra 7:23.
4. Jude 3 and 1 Peter 3:15
5. Other volunteers need to catch the vision for God's work and step in to fill their spots.
6. Perhaps because they are often unseen or "unsung" by man (although not by God!). The "long haul" is difficult and tiresome, and commitment fades when "instant results" aren't achieved. There are many interesting or exciting distractions that draw people away from commitment and unpaid service. In addition, burnout may occur because of discouragement, long hours and very few people willing to help.

discuss\ consider

1. When you have given a job "your all," and no one pats you on the back, how do you feel? What do you do? Does it encourage you to know that God takes note of every individual and his service for Him? See 1 Corinthians 15:58.
2. Have you been in a church where only a few seem to do almost all of the work? Can you come up with some creative ideas to solve or lessen this problem?

challenge

Would you be willing to pull up stakes and move if you believed it was the Lord's plan for you?

memorize

"They willingly offered themselves." Nehemiah 11:2

Lesson 32

Dedication of the Wall Nehemiah 12

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching point

1. God is pleased when believers dedicate their projects to Him.

practical application

1. Let's dedicate our projects to the Lord.

questions

1. List some of the people that Nehemiah appointed to dedicate the wall.
2. Which two men led the two companies in thanksgiving?
3. Jerusalem's wall today is on a 3,000 year old foundation, starting with Solomon's day. In order, who were the people/groups involved in building Jerusalem's walls?
4. Can you still see some parts of the wall that were rebuilt in Nehemiah's day?
5. What is a "project?" Is it biblical to dedicate your projects to the Lord?
6. What was the occasion for the "noise heard afar off?"
7. Were others affected by the joy of Jerusalem?

answers

1. Thanksgiving choirs, companies that were giving thanks, priests, and the people.
2. Ezra and Nehemiah
3. Solomon, Nehemiah, Herod, the Crusaders, the Ottoman Empire and the Turks
4. Yes, you can still see sections of Nehemiah's wall and Hezekiah's Broad Wall
5. A project, as defined in this lesson, is all that we do (like buying a car or a house, starting a business, engaging in sports or other activities, or whatever occupies us). It is biblical to dedicate projects, but be sure they are fully and truthfully dedicated.
6. The dedication of the wall
7. Yes. Read Nehemiah 12:43.

discuss\ consider

1. When the wall was dedicated, the joy was heard by all. When your projects are completed, can your joy be heard "afar off"? Are others blessed?
2. Do you know someone who has dedicated his dearest projects and possessions to the Lord? Is his joy known to others?

challenge

List some of the projects in your life. Have you consciously dedicated any, some or all of your projects and possessions to be used by the Lord? What is God's response when you dedicate your projects to Him?

memorize

"That day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced...with great joy." Nehemiah 12:43

Lesson 33

God Turns a Curse into a Blessing Nehemiah 13:1-9

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. Without strong spiritual leadership, the people go backwards.
2. Sometimes believers have to do more than preach.

practical application

1. God can turn your “curse” into a blessing.
2. You can turn God’s blessing into a “curse.”

questions

1. Does backsliding happen suddenly and by surprise?
2. What was the problem in Nehemiah 13:4-5? Why did the problem occur? What was Nehemiah’s response when he heard about the problem?
3. Why is strong spiritual leadership necessary?
4. What happened when Moses was absent from the camp (Exodus 32:1-6)?
5. How could Eliashib, who had been one of the wall builders and in the joyous procession, have turned his back on God’s ordinances? Was he intentionally trying to overthrow what had been accomplished for God’s glory?
6. Give the examples of “Sometimes you have to do more than preach” from this chapter and from Mark 11:15.

answers

1. No. It is usually a fairly long and gradual process.
2. Problems occurred because Nehemiah was back in Persia, serving the king. Tobiah the Ammonite was living in the Lord's house, although he shouldn't have been allowed even to enter it! Also, Jews were mixing with those who were not God's people. Nehemiah was angry, and he was motivated to set things right before God.
3. To keep the people committed and unified. Without strong leadership, people tend to slide downhill in their Christian lifestyle.
4. The people persuaded Aaron to make a golden calf, and God's people worshiped the calf.
5. He became allied with Tobiah, and went along with his plan, ignoring God's Word. Probably he didn't intend to destroy God's work – he just got caught up with Tobiah's plans.
6. Nehemiah threw Tobiah and his belongings out of the Temple. The Lord Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple.

discuss\ consider

1. Have there been times in your life, or in the life of someone you know, when God's blessings actually became a "curse" because those blessings were not used for the Lord's glory? What was the result? If this has happened in your life, confess it to the Lord, and determine that it will never happen again!
2. Name some of the areas in your life, your family or your church where God has turned a "curse" into a "blessing." Have you thanked Him? Have you shared the story of this blessing with others, as a witness to God's mercy and love?

challenge

When you know that someone or something is right, and people try to persuade you otherwise, look to the Lord and do what is right. Take a stand against the majority, if need be. Be a Caleb! (See Numbers 13:30-33.)

memorize

"God turned the curse into a blessing." Nehemiah 13:2

Lesson 34

Further Reforms Nehemiah 13:10-14

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. The work of the Lord suffers when it is not supported by the Lord's people.
2. Spiritual leaders must take corrective steps to prevent repeated failures.

practical application

1. Always work towards preventing a problem from repeating itself.
2. Let's get our giving corrected once and for all.

questions

1. The Book of Nehemiah is an historical novel. True or false?
2. Why did Nehemiah return to Jerusalem after he had gone back to Persia?
3. How is the work of the Lord to be supported?
4. What happens
 - a) when the work of the Lord is not supported?
 - b) when the work of the Lord is supported?
5. Is it enough just to correct a problem?
6. What did Nehemiah do to correct the problem, and to make sure that it didn't happen again? What must spiritual leaders do to prevent repeated failures?
7. Which prophet, a contemporary of Nehemiah, speaks of giving?

answers

1. False. It is a true account of actual historical events.
2. To resume his governorship and to set things in order.
3. By the Lord's people
4.
 - a. Christian workers are forced to return to secular employment rather than giving full time to their area of ministry, and the work suffers.
 - b. The work of the Lord goes forward. Missions flourish, both at home and abroad, and churches move ahead spiritually.
5. No. Further steps must be taken to make sure it doesn't happen again.
6. Nehemiah appointed treasurers, faithful men, and assured a system of checks and balances. Leaders today must show strong, godly leadership. They must utilize biblical discipline and establish accountability to prevent repeated failures.
7. Malachi. See Malachi 3:10.

discuss \ consider

1. The focal points of commitment became the focal points of failure in Nehemiah's day. Does this sound like present day churches?
2. In Nehemiah's day, Christian workers were not being supported by the congregation. Is this a problem today? What can you do about it?

challenge

It is not just enough to correct a problem, but further steps must be taken to make sure it doesn't happen again. Are you aware of a problem in your church? What could you do to correct it? Review Acts 6 to see how a problem in a local church was solved.

memorize

"Bring in the whole tithe...I will open the floodgates of heaven and pour out much blessing." Malachi 3:10

Lesson 35

**Being Holy
Nehemiah 13:15-31**

background notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

doctrinal /teaching points

1. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.
2. Children get mixed signals in a mixed marriage.

practical application

1. Do whatever it takes to be holy.
2. Never think you're so strong or so blessed that you can't fall into sin.

questions

1. On his return to Jerusalem, Nehemiah corrected three specific areas of failure. What were they?
2. What are the principles of the Sabbath?
3. What happened because of "mixed marriages" in Nehemiah's day?
4. What happens to children of "mixed marriages"?
5. Define the word "holy." List some scriptural references for being holy.
6. The nation of Israel was one kingdom until about 950BC. Which of the kings of the United Kingdom fell into sin, although they were considered strong and blessed?

answers

1. A lack of support of the Lord's servants; intermarriage with non-believers; and the problem of failing to keep the Sabbath a holy day.

2. Rest and worship

3. Although prohibited by God's law, the people intermarried and brought problems on themselves, particularly because the word of God became diluted.

4. Because they get mixed signals in spiritual matters and because the home is not Christ-centered, the children are less likely to get biblical training and godly example. The Lord wants His Word to characterize our homes and be clearly and consistently taught to our children (see Deuteronomy 11:18-20). In a "mixed marriage" it is nearly impossible to obey this command, and the children lose the benefit of a strong godly heritage.

5. "Holiness" is separation from sin in every form, and positive dedication to God. See 1 Peter 1:15-16; 2 Peter 3:11; Hebrews 12:14.

6. All three of them – Saul, David, and Solomon.

discuss\ consider

1. Some young people say that their boyfriend/girlfriend will come to church and be saved after they are married. How would you counsel them?

2. 1 Corinthians 10:12 tells us to take heed lest we fall. Does this apply to you? How do you take heed?

challenge

Do you have a desire to be more holy, more dedicated to God? What would it take to make you more holy? Are you willing to submit to whatever it would take?

memorize

"Just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do." 1 Peter 1:15