

IFNOT

Fall

LIFE GROUP STUDY

~2023~

Welcome

to a seven-week Life Group study

Nehemiah left the security and status of a high-ranking position in the most powerful empire in the world to help make a difference in the lives of the people he cared about. His heart was broken when he discovered the city he loved was in ruins, without any walls, and the people were experiencing tremendous suffering.

Nehemiah risked his life and devoted his energy to rebuild the wall and call his people to wholeheartedly follow the God he loved. He faced overwhelming opposition and overcame enormous obstacles. He refused to give up or give in to discouragement. Within a few years Nehemiah was able to return to the palace with the people living safely in their homes with their walls rebuilt, worship restored, and their enemies subdued.

Spend seven weeks learning from a man with an inspiring faith who modeled a way to make a lasting impact in a fallen world even when he was surrounded by selfish people that opposed his values, priorities or beliefs. Allow him to show you how to flourish in difficult circumstances.

What is the weekly cadence? We have designed four essential pieces that work together to create a meaningful experience:

1. Read the selected scripture twice and answer Life Group discussion questions.
2. Attend or watch the weekend message.
3. Meet in your Life Group to discuss the Life Group questions and the message.

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WEEK ONE

Hearing God's Call

Nehemiah 1:1-11

Historical Background: In the ancient world a city without walls was a disaster waiting to happen. Walls provided protection and security. If the city did not have any walls the people were helpless and completely vulnerable to attacks from outsiders. They would not be able to keep what they had because lawless people came and went without restraints. They would also be unable to trade any of their goods because the traveling caravans would not be willing to trade with them in an unsafe situation.

Questions for Life Group Discussions:

- What do you think are four or five of the most important qualities of a leader?
- How big of an impact can one person have on the people around them?

Read Nehemiah 1:1-11

- Nehemiah was very familiar with God's word. He knew God required humility and confession before He could restore their land and allow them to prosper (Leviticus 26:40-46 and Deuteronomy 30:1-10). How did Nehemiah apply these scriptures for himself and for the nation? What did Nehemiah identify in his prayer as the real reason the walls were torn down? (Verses 7- 8)
- What did the people need to do to make things better?
- If God is already aware of all our fears, desires, and needs, why does He want us to pray about them?

Questions for Life Group Discussions:

- What would have happened if Nehemiah did not have the humility to acknowledge his sin and confess it to God?
- Why do you think Nehemiah took ownership, even when he did not create the problem?
- What keeps people from acknowledging their responsibility and admitting it?
- What is the significance in that day that the wall was broken down and the gates burned with fire? We do not have walled cities today. What is the equivalent?
- What do you think our church needs prayer for right now?

Weekend Sermon Notes for Week #1



WEEK TWO

The Faith of a Leader

Nehemiah 2:1-20

Questions for Life Group Discussions:**Read Nehemiah 2:1-20**

- In what ways do you currently act as a leader? Think of both formal and informal leadership roles. What are your leadership strengths and weaknesses?
- How would you describe your leadership style? Are there any leaders you have learned from and try to emulate?
- How does the world define leadership? What attributes are expected? How does this compare to biblical leadership?
- Why is the faith of a leader important? What does it mean that a leader needs to be a follower?
- What verses reflect Nehemiah's faith in God as he acts in leadership? In what ways is Nehemiah trusting in God rather than himself? (Look for timing, direction, provision, protection, unity, power, and more.)

Questions for Life Group Discussions:

- What practical lessons can we draw from the way Nehemiah interacts with the King, and others? How does each practice/lesson impact the leaders and followers involved?
- Trusting in God doesn't always help us avoid pitfalls and hardships. Often God brings us through these pitfalls/hardships rather than around them. Where do you see this in Nehemiah? What other biblical and personal examples come to mind?
- We're called to both a humble faith and expectantly asking God to come through in big ways. There is tension in balancing these callings. How can we navigate that balance as believers?
- What personal situations, past or present, have you experienced "worldly" leadership (vs biblical)? How might things have looked different (both actions, and results) if biblical leadership was applied?
- Which aspect of Nehemiah's faithful leadership do you find the easiest and hardest to emulate, and why? (Trusting God's timing, His guidance, His blessing, His protection, His call, or His power?)
- How, if at all, has studying Nehemiah's faithful leadership encouraged/convicted you to respond? Do you have opportunities to step up as a leader and exercise faith in your leadership?

Weekend Sermon Notes for Week #2

WEEK **THREE**

Dealing with Discouragement

Nehemiah 4:1-23

Questions for Life Group Discussions:**Read Nehemiah 4:1-23**

- How does Nehemiah's response to opposition teach us about perseverance in the face of adversity?
- What lessons can we learn from Nehemiah's strategy for rebuilding the wall in terms of planning, teamwork, and leadership?
- What did Nehemiah ask God for in his prayer in verse 4?
- What role does prayer play in Nehemiah's response to opposition, and how can we incorporate prayer into our own challenges and obstacles?
- Chapter 4 highlights the importance of unity among God's people. How can we foster unity and support within our own Christian communities, especially when faced with opposition?

Questions for Life Group Discussions:

- Chapter 4 demonstrates the power of encouragement and support from fellow believers. How can we become encouragers and supporters for others in their spiritual battles and challenges?
- Have you ever been overwhelmed by discouraging work? How did you handle it?
- Do you have an experience of being overwhelmed by worry?
- How can changing our focus help us overcome our anxiety?
- In the midst of worries, how can we train ourselves to focus on God and the good rather than being consumed by worry?

Weekend Sermon Notes for Week #3

WEEK **FOUR**

Dealing with Division

Nehemiah 5:1-19

Questions for Life Group Discussions:**Read Nehemiah 5:1-19**

- Why is Nehemiah angry when he hears the reports of the people who cry out to him? What is his chief concern?
- Was it right or wrong for him to be angry? Why or why not?
- Are there any times when you should have been angry but were not? Explain.
- Does being angry automatically mean being wrong, impatient, selfish, or rash? Can you be angry without these accompanying issues?
- If he were focused on the task at hand and not the purpose behind it, how might he have responded differently?

Questions for Life Group Discussions:

- Have tasks or the work in front of your face ever gotten in the way of hearing people that needed help? Explain.
- If Nehemiah was chiefly concerned about himself, his rights, and his well-being, how might he have responded differently?
- Have you ever been blind to the needs of someone close to you because you were more concerned with yourself (maybe offended at how they brought up their need or trouble)? Explain.
- Why did Nehemiah elect not to take from the people like other governors? (vs 15)
- If comfortable sharing - how have you handled situations in your life in which you had to choose between pleasing God and pleasing men (either by pleasing yourself, or avoiding conflict, or another way)?

Weekend Sermon Notes for Week #4

WEEK FIVE

Dealing with Lies

Nehemiah 6:1-19

Questions for Life Group Discussions:**Read Nehemiah 6:1-19**

- What is a lie that you are often tempted to believe?
- How do you combat that lie?
- Nehemiah refuses to compromise with his enemies and continues on in his great project (Nehemiah 6:1-4). How do we balance the line between knowing when to compromise with others and when not to?
- Has there been a situation in your life when you've felt manipulated?
- Nehemiah's enemies try to tempt him when he's tired, the work has been long and hard and he's finally offered a break. Have there been times in your life when you've felt tired of your situation and ready to give up? Did you give in to temptation? If not, how did you overcome the temptation and press on?

Questions for Life Group Discussions:

- What does Nehemiah do when he hears of the lies about him and the Jews? (Nehemiah 6:5-9)
- Why is prayer important in the midst of temptation?
- Have you seen someone use lies to tempt you or someone you know into disobeying God?
- Shemaiah tried to use fear to lead Nehemiah into sin (Nehemiah 6:10-14). What are practical ways to fight against temptation when our emotions can seem to take over?
- Spend a few minutes praising God for His ultimate victory over the enemy. Write down a few truths from God's word to remind yourself for the next time you find yourself tempted to believe the lies of the enemy. If it helps, make a chart with the lies you struggle to believe on the left side and the combatting truth from God on the right side.

Weekend Sermon Notes for Week #5

WEEK **SIX**

Pursuing Renewal

Nehemiah 8:1-18

Questions for Life Group Discussions:**Read Nehemiah 8:1-18**

- Surrender is scary because it requires reordering your world to align with the values God desires for your life.
- What do these verses teach us about the significance of understanding the word of God? Why does this matter? How has the word of God been instrumental in your journey with God?
- What is the joy of the Lord? How does a person get it? Why is the joy of the Lord your strength?
- Do you think God cares more about your heart or your accomplishments? Why?
- When the people in Nehemiah's day surrendered to God's leadership then they started obeying His commands which resulted in unrestrained joy. Are there things you are doing or relationships in your life that are damaging your ability to experience joy in this season of life?

Questions for Life Group Discussions:

- Not many of us would even think of going without physical food for a week or even a day. What happens to your spiritual life if you don't get the proper nutrition that can only come from God's Word?

- If the Bible is God's life-giving instructions to His dearly loved children, why do we have difficulty finding time to read it? Identify at least 3 obstacles you will need to overcome for you to spend more time in God's word. (Examples: I am too busy, the message is difficult to understand, I don't trust the reliability).

- How did the people respond after Ezra read God's word out loud and interpreted it? What can we learn about applying God's word from Nehemiah? Have you given some people influence or access into your life that they shouldn't have?

- Why is it dangerous to pursue long-term relationships or business partnerships with someone who doesn't ultimately share your values?

Weekend Sermon Notes for Week #6

WEEK **SEVEN**

Dwelling on God

Nehemiah 9:1-38

Questions for Life Group Discussions:**Read Nehemiah 9:1-38**

- Why did Israel fast? Is it just a thing they did or is there something more to it? What is the benefit of fasting before prayer?
- Why did Israel separate themselves from foreigners?
- Should we ever separate ourselves for a time? What if we have obligations? What if being separate conflicts with evangelizing?
- Was there value in telling God what He had done (starting in verse 6)?
- Has anyone ever responded to your love and provision as the Israelites responded to God (by rebelling, ignoring, complaining, forsaking)? How did it feel?

Questions for Life Group Discussions:

- Why did God deliver the Israelites into the hands of their enemies? (Verse 27) Was it to get back at them? Was their love in His decision to do so?
- What challenges in your life have you not welcomed when they happened but you ended up thankful they did?
- Do you think they meant what they said in verse 33, that God had been righteous and they had been wicked?
- Are we safe to assume in everything that goes wrong, God is just and we are wicked? Why or why not?
- If we didn't believe what we were saying would He want us to say it anyway? Why or why not?

Weekend Sermon Notes for Week #7

