"I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king’s words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, “Let us arise and build.” So they put their hands to the good work.” – Nehemiah 2:18

CLASS OBJECTIVES

- To learn from Nehemiah how to rebuild, restore, and renew our devotion to God.
- To align our hearts to care deeply about the things that are important to God.
- To engage in good works that honor God and stir our hearts.
- To depend on God for restoration, protection, and victory.
- To incorporate prayer more fully in our daily lives.
- To develop greater leadership and teamwork skills.

CLASS SCHEDULE

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OVERVIEW: THE SETTING OF EZRA & NEHEMIAH

“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.” – Ezra 1:2

KEY DATES
• 536 BC – First group of captives returns under Zerubbabel
• 520-516 BC – The temple is rebuilt
• 458 BC – A second group of captives returns under Ezra
• 444 BC – The wall around Jerusalem is rebuilt by Nehemiah

WORLD LEADERS
• Xerxes I (also called Ahasuerus 486-465 BC) – He is mentioned in passing in Ezra 4:6. He was the king of Persia during the time of Esther.
• Xerxes II (424-423 BC) – Not mentioned by Nehemiah.
• Darius II (423-404 BC) – Last Persian king mentioned by Nehemiah (Neh. 12:22)

MAJOR THEMES
• Good Works. Nehemiah is a man of faith, action, and determination. His example provides numerous lessons for Christians to apply in good works.
• Prayer. From major decisions to daily challenges, Nehemiah constantly turned to God in prayer.
• Restoration. The walls, the faith of the people, and their acts of worship all needed to be restored. Reading from the Law of Moses was essential to this process.
• Leadership. God uses great leaders to bless His people. Nehemiah’s skills in communication, organization, and conflict resolution are a treasure trove of leadership lessons.
• Problem Solving. Nehemiah discerns between problems to respond to immediately, problems to address gradually, and others to overcome by refusing to engage with problem people.

STUDY QUESTIONS
1. Only a remnant ever returned from captivity. According to Ezra 2:64-65, how many returned?
2. Why had the repair of the walls stopped in the days of Ezra? (Ezra 4:11-22)
3. What city was Nehemiah in when he heard about the broken walls of Jerusalem? (1:1) What can you find out about this city? How far was it from Jerusalem?

THOUGHT QUESTIONS
1. Describe Nehemiah’s character. What similarities do you recognize between Nehemiah & Jesus? For example, both give up the comfort of life around the throne to come and help solve a crisis.

JERUSALEM IN THE TIME OF NEHEMIAH – Image Credit: Leen Ritmeyer
- On the diagram below, the Sheep Gate is at the very top, on the northern end of the temple mount.
- Nehemiah 3 describes the walls beginning at the Sheep Gate and proceeding to the west to the...

  o ________________ Gate (3:3) then on to the...

  o ________________ Gate to the ______________________ Gate (3:13)

  o Then around to the Angle (3:____) and another Angle (3:____)

  o Finally, back to the ________________ Gate (3:32)

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OVERVIEW: GLORIFYING GOD IN GOOD WORKS

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” – Ephesians 2:10

GOOD WORKS OF NEHEMIAH

- Rebuild. With faith and courage, Nehemiah led the effort to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
- Restore. Next, Nehemiah partnered with Ezra to teach the law of God and encourage repentance.
- Renew. Finally, Nehemiah organized the people to rededicate themselves to the fellowship, offerings, and sabbath rest commanded by God.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Briefly describe as many of the good works Nehemiah helped accomplish as you can.
   - 2:17-18
   - 4:10-14
   - 5:9-13
   - 5:14-19
   - 8:9-10
   - 8:17-18
   - 9:1-7
   - 9:36-10:1
   - 13:30-31
   - Others?

2. What can we learn about the condition of Nehemiah’s heart and his care about the things of God from the text? (1:3-4; 1:7; 2:2-3; 2:12)

3. Where did Nehemiah get his source of strength of confidence of success as he led the people in building the wall and spiritual reforms? (2:20)

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important that we have a clean and sincere heart in order for us to be effective in good works that please the Lord? (See 2 Tim 2:20-21)

2. Why are good works so important for God’s people today? (See Eph 2:10; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 2:12)

ACTION ITEMS

- Is there a good work that you know of that, if you undertook that work, you know that with God’s help you could make a difference and help glorify the Lord or lead others to Christ? List at least two good works that you can commit to this year that you prayerfully feel you could be effective undertaking.
- Commit to praying daily for God's guidance and strength for the good works you listed above.
- If you can’t think of any good works that are tugging at your heart, then schedule a time to talk to the Elders to talk about ideas for works you can help with.
1. DEPENDING ON GOD

“O Lord, I beseech You, may Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to revere Your name, and make Your servant successful today and grant him compassion before this man.” Now I was the cupbearer to the king.” – Nehemiah 1:11

CHAPTER 1 DETAILS

- Nehemiah doesn’t rely solely on his position, intelligence, or hard work. He depends on God.
- Nehemiah and Hacaliah’s names both contain the Hebrew “Yah,” likely indicating loyalty to Yahweh.
- From Chislev (Nov-Dec) to Nisan (March-April) is approximately 4 months.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Where else in the book do we read about Hanani? What role does he fill?

2. Outline Nehemiah’s prayer:

3. What four blessings does Nehemiah ask God for in verse 11?
   What: “make your servant _____________”
   When: “__________”
   How: “grant him _____________”
   Who: “before this ____________.”

4. How much time did Nehemiah spend in prayer for the people and city of Jerusalem (vs 4,6)?

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Nehemiah had the courage to find out how bad the situation really was in Jerusalem. Research and find some statistics on a wide-spread problem facing people today such as divorce, domestic abuse, orphans, decline in church attendance, growth of atheism, abortion, poverty, Christian persecution, etc…

2. Christians are not called to fix every social problem, but we are called to be a light in our good works. (Matthew 5:16) What is a wise response to understanding the extent of these problems?

3. Why is it important that Nehemiah knew and acknowledged both the curses and blessings God promised? (vs. 8-9)

ACTION ITEMS

- What problems are faced by God’s people around the world that break your heart?

- What are three elements of this problem you can include in your prayers this week?

- What positions do you hold that create opportunities for you to help others?
Then I said to them, “You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.” – Nehemiah 2:17

CHAPTER 2 DETAILS

- The twentieth year of King Artaxerxes was 444 B.C.
- Nehemiah’s prayers vary from detailed and lengthy, to immediate and unrecorded. (vs. 4)
- Like many bold plans, Nehemiah’s speech is met with both quick acceptance and quick opposition.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What personal detail does Nehemiah use to describe the city of Jerusalem in vs. 3,5?

2. In vs. 6-8 Nehemiah doesn’t just answer the king’s question, he asks for several things. What does he ask for? Why does Nehemiah believe his requests were granted?

3. Why would Nehemiah survey the city himself before telling the crowds “what my God was putting into my mind to do?” (vs. 11-16)

4. Name the three men who stir up opposition to Nehemiah’s plans to rebuild.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Think about Nehemiah’s conversation with King Artaxerxes. How would you describe Nehemiah’s attitude and approach in addressing the king?

2. Identify the key parts of Nehemiah’s public call to action in vs. 17-18...

   The Problem: ________________________________

   The Solution: ________________________________

   The Reason to Act: __________________________

   The Reason to Act Right Now: ______________

3. What practical reasons would local leaders have to oppose the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls?

ACTION ITEMS

- Select a problem you’d like to address and spend a few days surveying it more closely. See what portions will be easy to address, what portions will be challenging, and what portions will require extra resources or man power.

- Nehemiah speaks very clearly when he summarizes his plan in just two verses. Boil down a good work you’d like to do, and the reason others should eagerly participate, into just two sentences.
3. WORKING AS A TEAM

“Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brothers the priests, and they built the Sheep Gate...And next to him the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.” – Nehemiah 3:1-2

CHAPTER 3 DETAILS
- The wall construction was divided into different sections. The different sections were built during the same time period by different groups of people working together as one.
- All classes and ranks of people joined the work.

STUDY QUESTIONS
1. Briefly describe how the work was broken up. Look at the map provided in the Overview lesson and discuss the order that Nehemiah gives for the construction.

2. Read Chapter 3 and list all of the different ranks and occupations of people you see in the text (e.g., priest, perfumer, etc.).

3. What does verse 5 tell us about the attitudes of some of the people of the time? Contrast that with verse 9

THOUGHT QUESTIONS
1. There is a place and necessity for works to be done on an individual basis. Especially for larger works, how important is it to work with and “next to” other brethren? Why?

2. Led by Nehemiah, the people were obviously motivated to work to achieve a common goal. Do you feel as motivated to do the work of your local church in service to God? Why or why not?

3. The contribution of every person is important to the overall success of a good work (Eph 4:16). Nehemiah is a great example of a leader who noticed the contribution of each person despite their occupation or class rank. If you are in a leadership position, why is it important to recognize and express thankfulness for the contributions of your team?

ACTION ITEMS
- Think of a good work that needs to be done for this church or some other work that would please the Lord and organize a group of people to do that work.

- If you have a leadership position over people or if a group of people have done a good work for you, express to those people your gratitude and thankfulness.
4. OVERCOMING THE CRITICS

“Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You, for they have demoralized the builders.” – Nehemiah 4:4-5

CHAPTER 4 DETAILS

- Verbal ridicule can create major interference in our good works, so it must be overcome.
- Nehemiah calls the people to remember Who is fighting for them and who they are fighting for.
- In the face of their critics, the workers adapted their plans, but stayed true to the vision.

STUDY QUESTIONS
1. Despite the critics, what milestone was reached in verse 6?

2. What is Nehemiah’s first response to the critics in verse…
   _____________________________ (4-5)
   _____________________________ (9)

3. What indicates in verse 12 that the threat to the project became more credible than just “talk?”

4. What extraordinary lengths did the workers go to in order to keep working? (vs. 17-23)

THOUGHT QUESTIONS
1. What doubts are Sanballat and Tobiah trying to stir up among the workers in vs.2-3 and vs. 11?

2. Nehemiah knew how to work hard, but he also knew when an inspirational speech was needed in verse 14-15. When do we need these today?

3. Nehemiah prays like everything depends on God, and works like everything depends on him. What short-term, extraordinary lengths can we go to today to finish critical projects?

ACTION ITEMS

- Create a list of traits from this chapter that will help you distinguish between constructive criticism and unhelpful ridicule.

- A common temptation when facing unfair criticism is to argue, but Nehemiah let’s his work speak for itself even when it isn’t 100% complete. Identify some milestones you could hit that would prove to your critics, you are as determined as ever.
5. LEADING WITH CHARACTER

“The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people and took from them for their daily ration forty shekels of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God.” – Neh. 5:15

CHAPTER 5 DETAILS

- There was a famine in the land and many Jewish families were having to borrow money and mortgage their land just to feed their family. Some of the wealthier brethren were loaning money to the vulnerable Jewish families, charging interest rates, and taking their children as slaves when they were unable to pay. Nehemiah stopped this and even redeemed some of the slaves with his own money.
- Nehemiah displayed fear of God, love for his people and generosity by not taking the daily rations from the people that he had a right to take as governor. Moreover, he was very generous with the food he had at his own expense.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Read chapter 5 and list all of the things from this chapter that indicate Nehemiah was a man of good character.

2. Describe the problems brought to Nehemiah in 5:1-5 in detail. Was sin involved? (see Deut. 24:10-13, Ex. 22:25, Lev. 25:42). To what means had the people gone to pay their debts? To whom did they owe money? (v. 7).

3. 5:14-18 illustrates what important aspects of leadership? Contrast Nehemiah’s behavior in these verses with previous governors. (See I Cor. 9:1-12).

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Define “character” in your own words.

2. How do we know Nehemiah was a man of good character? Is it simply because of the good deeds he did?

3. Why is it important for our leaders to have good character?

4. How do you react when people within your own church fail to live out good godly character and sometimes go so far as to sin against you or deeply trouble you? What can you do to resolve this for good?

ACTION ITEMS

- Commit to improving your character to be more pleasing to God.

- List any sins in your life or in the lives of those you may have influence over that, using your good character, can help put an end to.

- Pray 5 times this week for the things you listed above.
6. PRESSING FORWARD

“So I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?” – Nehemiah 6:3

CHAPTER 6 DETAILS
- Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem team up and make multiple attempts to stop Nehemiah’s progress.
- In only 52 days, the repairs to the walls were completed!
- Nehemiah, the people of Jerusalem, and all the surrounding areas “recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.”

STUDY QUESTIONS
1. When attacked with distractions, what was Nehemiah’s response? (vs. 3-4)
2. When attacked with rumors, what was Nehemiah’s response? (vs. 8)
3. When attacked with discouragement, what was Nehemiah’s reaction? (vs. 9)
4. When attacked by false friends, what was Nehemiah’s reaction? (vs. 10-14)

THOUGHT QUESTIONS
1. In 6:17-19 we learn that Tobiah is a deeply entrenched problem. Nehemiah deals with him more fully in 13:4-9. What can we learn from how Nehemiah handles these deeper problems?
2. A lot can change in 52 days! How does God’s victory for Nehemiah and the people in vs. 15-16 inspire you towards personal growth?
3. Why was it easy for everyone to recognize God’s hand in Nehemiah’s success? How can we continue to give God the glory?

ACTION ITEMS
- What strategy from Nehemiah can you adopt in order to press forward in the face of distractions?
- What good work deserves your full focus and energy at this stage of your life?
- What Bible verses do you treasure in your heart to overcome fears and press on in good works?
7. REBUILDING THE PEOPLE

“Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.” – Nehemiah 8:5

CHAPTER 7-8 DETAILS

- Nehemiah knows his limits, so he partners with Hanani, Hananiah, and Ezra to restore the people.
- God’s word powerfully convicts of sin, renews our joy, and directs our worship.
- Nehemiah records in 7:5 that he is quoting earlier records. These come from Ezra 2.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the population of the city like in 7:1-4? What bare minimum roles does Nehemiah fill?

2. The generosity of the people is recorded in 7:70-72, what was this to be used for?

3. What is done to help the people understand the book of the law in ch. 8:1-12?

4. According to 8:17, how did the participation during the days of Nehemiah compare to the participation during the days of the united kingdom?

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. In 7:61-65 Nehemiah does not allow the priests without their family records to proceed, nor does he completely exclude them. What wise lessons can we learn from how he handles this question?

2. What is the modern equivalent of “send portions to him who has nothing prepared?” (8:10, see also Isaiah 58:5-14)

3. Why are celebrations important for God’s people? What role should Christian leaders play in celebrations today?

ACTION ITEMS

- Nehemiah doesn’t reinvent the wheel to lead the people forward. Instead, he uses pre-existing resources. What pre-existing resources can you leverage to help your family and church family excel?

- What makes Ezra and Nehemiah such a great team? How can you find a partner like that?

- Rebuilding the people began with reading and observing the feast of booths. Choose a section of Scripture you can read and put into practice such as Proverbs, the Epistles, or even Nehemiah!
8. TURNING AWAY FROM SIN

“Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept your law or paid attention to your commandments and your warnings that you gave them... Because of all this we make a firm covenant in writing; on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, and our priests.” – Neh. 9:34 & 38

CHAPTER 9 & 10 DETAILS

- Following the reading of the law by Ezra in chapter 8, the people of Israel separated themselves from foreigners and publicly confessed their sins.
- Some of the leading Levites stood publicly and prayed and addressed God in a deep and meaningful way recounting all of the wonderful things God had done for His people in the past and expressing admiration for other wonderful qualities of God.
- The people make a covenant to God to follow His ways.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Read 9:1-5; 10:28-39 and see also 13:1-3. What sins did the people confess? Describe how hard it may have been to turn away from some of these sins.

2. Read 9:6-31. Why is understanding the power of God and all that He has done for us so important to effectively turn away from sin?

3. What steps did the people take to identify and turn away from these sins?

4. In 9:38 and 10:29 what do we learn about the seriousness of people’s commitment to turn from sin?

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. How important is confessing sin in your Christian walk? List N.T. passages that describe the importance of confession.

2. Some of the Jewish people were able to help accomplish very great and difficult works in a short amount of time (e.g., rebuild the wall!) How might this action of turning away from sin been harder than the actual physical work they have completed?

3. Have you focused more on physical works than your inward spiritual condition and avoidance of sin?

ACTION ITEMS

- Are there any sins you need to confess of and turn away from? If so, confess those sins to God, and other people if necessary, and dedicate time to pray to God every day for the next month remembering His great power and asking for His help in turning from that sin.

- Find an accountability partner to help you flee from that sin and make a commitment to that person to help keep you on track.
9. VOLUNTEERING TO WALK BY FAITH

“Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. And the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem the holy city, while nine out of ten remained in the other towns. And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.” – Neh. 11:1-2

CHAPTER 11 & 12 DETAILS

• The leaders lived in Jerusalem and the rest of the people cast lots to bring more people into Jerusalem to populate the city.
• Large portions of chapter 11 and 12 consists of records of those who lived in the city and priests and Levites who come up with Zerubbabel in the first wave of returning exiles prior to Nehemiah coming to the city.
• Chapter 12 describes the wall dedication ceremony that took place some years after the wall was rebuilt as well as descriptions of the appointments made for service at the Temple.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Describe who lived in Jerusalem at the start of chapter 11 and how it was determined who would live there town and move into Jerusalem. How did the people treat those who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem?

2. How are the sons of Perez described in 11:6, the sons of Benjamin in 11:8 and others described in 11:14?

3. At the time in context of Nehemiah chapter 11 and 12 it has been almost 100 years since the first wave of exiles returned with Zerubbabel but describe the spirit of those who returned with Zerubbabel in Ezra 1:5-6.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What are some reasons that people may not have wanted to live in Jerusalem at this time?

2. How does it make you feel when you see someone volunteer to do a good service unto the Lord? Do you appreciate and bless them as you read in 11:2?

3. Do you rejoice and celebrate great works and acts of faith accomplished for the Lord?

ACTION ITEMS

• Is there something that you can volunteer for that would help glorify the name or the Lord or help build up His church? List ideas of things you can do.

• Is there some act of faith (e.g., repentance of a prodigal, new brother or sister in Christ, etc.) that you can rejoice and celebrate with? If so, make it a point to do so.
10. SHAKING UP THE STATUS QUO

“Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out my loyal deeds which I have performed for the house of my God and its services.” – Nehemiah 13:14

CHAPTER 13 DETAILS

- After reporting his accomplishments to Artaxerxes, Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem.
- Nehemiah holds Eliashib the priest and the nobles of Jerusalem responsible for their worldliness.
- Nehemiah prays three times for God to remember his loyalty and service.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How long did Nehemiah serve as governor of Jerusalem during his first visit? (13:6)

2. Why was cleansing the temple important to both Nehemiah and Jesus? (13:4-9, John 2:13-17)

3. When the Levites and singers were neglected, what did they have to do to survive? (13:10) How does Nehemiah fix this problem?

4. What measures was Nehemiah willing to take in order to enforce the observance of the Sabbath and forbid marrying idol worshippers?

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Why do people so quickly drift away from doing the right thing when Godly leaders are absent?

2. In verse 18 and 26, Nehemiah reminds the nobles of their history. What aspects of our history do Christians need urgent reminders of today to be stirred up in faithfulness?

3. What is the significance of Nehemiah’s prayer, “Remember me…” in vs. 14, 22, and 31?

ACTION ITEMS

- Enough is enough. What sins or bad habits can you eliminate from your life? Find some Bible examples of people who did (or sadly didn’t) make similar changes to keep you motivated.

- What do you hope God remembers you for? Pray that your efforts would not be in vain or forgotten.

- Nehemiah had the political authority to use force in his reforms, but this chapter shows the people’s hearts didn’t always follow. Rather than using force, how does 2 Timothy 2:24-26 teach Christians to reach the hearts of others and make a difference.
11. REVIEWING THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

“Remember me, O my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.” – Nehemiah 5:19

CLASS OBJECTIVES
• To learn from Nehemiah how to rebuild, restore, and renew our devotion to God.
• To align our hearts to care deeply about the things that are important to God.
• To engage in good works that honor God and stir our hearts.
• To depend on God for restoration, protection, and victory.
• To incorporate prayer more fully in our daily lives.
• To develop greater leadership and teamwork skills.

MAJOR THEMES
• Good Works. What did you learn from Nehemiah about devoting yourself to good works?
• Prayer. If Nehemiah observed your life and knew your thoughts for a week, what would he start praying about?
• Restoration. Where can you help bring restoration about, and who can you work together with?
• Leadership. What are 4 leadership lessons you have learned from Nehemiah?
• Problem Solving. Who will be angry if you start solving the most important problems around you? How can Nehemiah’s example prepare you for this resistance?

REVIEW QUESTIONS
1. Name three ways Nehemiah and Jesus are similar:
2. In what year did Nehemiah first come to Jerusalem?
3. What does chapter 3 teach us about teamwork today?
4. What did Nehemiah do when he was very angry in chapter 5?
5. What did Nehemiah say when his critics tried to distract him?
6. With God’s help, how long did it take to rebuild the wall?
7. What role did Ezra play in the restoration of the people?
8. What advantages came with the people’s public commitments to obey God?