



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH Lesson 11

In chapter 10, we read about the people entering into a new covenant with God. The walls had been finished; the reconstruction project completed. But the people needed to be "reconstructed" or "consecrated" as well. A city was more than just walls. The people had fallen away from their God, and through the reading of the Word, they genuinely repented. Ezra, the priest, and Nehemiah, the governor, both encouraged a revival and renewal to take place. The people responded with tears of repentance and a renewed desire to follow the law of God. In chapter 10, they placed their seal on the document, demonstrating their sincere commitment to change.

Here in chapter 11, Nehemiah understands that the city itself must be resettled. Jerusalem needed to be "built" with people for protection, as well as a testimony to the Gentile world. This chapter records the fourth list of people in the book of Nehemiah. Raymond Brown writes, "History was immensely important to God's people, but they were not fusty antiquarians, eager to collect information about their forebears simply for the sake of compiling family trees. These are reliable records and they certainly trace roots, but they are something more. From these lists it is possible to discern some important spiritual principles in the mind of Nehemiah, his devout predecessors and contemporaries who collected, treasured, and edited this material. We are not reading a dusty and irrelevant catalogue of names and families; these archives convey a series of far-reaching Biblical truths."

First Day

1. Read Nehemiah 11:1-36. Write the facts you find. Ask yourself the questions: Who? What? Why? Where? How?

2. What is the main point of chapter 11?
3. Can you find any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts?
4. Do you see any specific types, or categories, of people?
5. What do you think was the "mood" of the occasion?
6. Do you think this was done orderly or chaotic? What does that tell us?
7. What spiritual applications can you find from this chapter?

We'll end here for today. May you look for every "**Reason to Rejoice**" today as you study His Word.

Memory Verse of the Week: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Romans 12:1

Second Day

Work on your memory verse. Nehemiah uses the word "holy" twice in this chapter.

1. Read Nehemiah 11:1-36 again. Was everyone "willing" to relocate?

2. Explain why it was necessary to move people into Jerusalem to live.

3. How did they decide who would move?

The leaders were already living in the city, but they wanted the citizens of Israel to join them. In order for Jerusalem to thrive again economically, spiritually, and socially, it had to be repopulated. While the city was in ruins, the people were not drawn to live there. Many of the people who worked on the wall lived in small towns and villages surrounding the city (7:4). They were probably very happy there, adjusted, settled, with occupations and a social community already established. Although it would be an honor to live in God's holy city, it was most likely hard to leave what was comfortable. But it was obviously God's will for them to live in the city rather than abandon the restored capital.

To decide who would move, Nehemiah seemed to adopt the "tithe" principle. One person in every ten was asked to move. I'm sure it came at a personal cost to them, but they appeared willing to make the necessary move. The "casting of lots" was their way of discovering and deciding God's will (Proverbs 16:33). After all, they had just made a commitment to follow God and His Law, so they would honor it. They were willing to follow God, no matter what it cost.

4. How willing are you to follow God's will if it calls for some type of "move," whether it be a city, job, ministry, or a church? When God tells you to "pack up and move," (physically, emotionally, or spiritually), what's your first reaction?

5. Read Genesis 12:1-5 and Hebrews 11:8-16. Who was called to "move"? Describe his attitude. What can you learn from him?

Living your life for God requires self-sacrifice. The citizens of Jerusalem were willing to sacrifice what they had, to obey His will. Our memory verse tells us that living for Him is our "reasonable" service.

6. Read Mark 14:3-9. Who else made a costly sacrifice for the Lord? Why did she do it? How did Jesus respond?

7. The phrase "she has done what she could" is especially significant (vs 8). Have you done "what you could" for the Lord? Why is our obedience referred to in Romans 12:1 as our "reasonable" service?

I like the part about "doing what she could." It reminds me, again, that God has a specific call on each of our lives, and we are simply told to be obedient. I think it ties in really well with our chapter and another "list" of names we find. I personally have changed my view on all these "lists." I honestly did dread reading them because they seemed so insignificant, especially when I don't recognize most of the names. But now, I am excited when I read the lists because they remind me that God cares about every single individual and their service to Him. Nothing is unnoticed! Nothing gets lost in the shuffle! God (and Nehemiah) care about every little detail!

8. How does knowing that God cares about every detail of your life encourage you today in a situation you may be facing?

I pray that you and I are willing to live in a sacrificial way, being obedient to the Lord's will, whatever the cost. May we all desire to live a life that counts!

Third Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Nehemiah 11:1-36 again. The people who dwelt in Jerusalem are now identified. What word is repeated in verses 1 and 18?

The word "holy" is repeated several times in this book; twice in this chapter. The word means "set apart" for the Lord's use. Nehemiah knew that the priests were holy because they worked for the Lord (Leviticus 21:5-8), the Sabbath Day was holy (9:14; 10:31; 13:22), and certain celebrations were considered holy (10:31). Ezra 9:2 reminds us that all God's people were called to be holy. And now the city of Jerusalem was "holy," or set apart for the Lord's use. A "holy" city needed to be filled with "holy" people.

2. Many of us say that our homes have been "set apart" for the Lord's use. Is your "holy house" filled with "holy" people? Do you understand the importance of living a holy life within the walls of your home? Have you made that commitment?

We see that Jerusalem's leaders were joined by provincial leaders, governmental officers (vs 9), Levites who oversaw the outside work of the house of God (vs 16), supervisors of the house of God (vs 11), worship leaders (vs 17, 22), priests, temple servants (Nethinim, vs 21), and more. All these positions were needed to run the city of God. It's interesting to see all the different "giftings" brought together. Some worked on the outside of the temple; others worked on the inside. Some worked on building maintenance while others worked on spiritual maintenance. (In those days, "outside the temple" didn't only mean the grounds, it also referred to the leaders who judged, handled civil affairs, counseled, and ministered to the public away from the place of worship.) This is another great example of the body of Christ all doing their part to bring glory and honor to the Lord.

3. Many men were put in place to guard the temple (vs 18-19). Why do you think that was so important? What was housed there? (chapter 10) Also read 1 Chronicles 9:17-34.

Notice that there were leaders and servants. Both were needed. There were "second men" (vs 17) and "temple servants" (vs 21). There will always be a need for leaders and reliable men and women to support them and work alongside them. Both positions are "ordained" by God. Many of the "behind-the-scenes"

people serve sacrificially, virtually unknown by others. This chapter of Nehemiah reminds us that those "unseen" people are always seen by God, whether or not anyone ever recognizes them. You may be "unknown," but you are "never forgotten."

4. Are you an "unseen" worker in the house of God? Why is it so easy for those in this position to feel unloved and unappreciated? Have you ever felt like this? How does this chapter encourage you?

5. How can we encourage those who are behind the scenes? What are some practical ways to show them how much they are appreciated?

6. Do you ever feel unappreciated in your own home? What can happen if we focus on those "feelings"? What can we do to keep our perspective Godly?

7. What are some ways we can practically help those working on the "outside" of the house of God?

In verse 4, notice that the descendants, or children, of certain men were mentioned. Sharing our faith with our children is extremely important, showing them the importance of service and ministry.

8. Read Psalm 145:4. Are you "declaring" to the next generation? Are you sharing your faith with your children? Are you in the habit of declaring God's goodness, grace, and mercy to them? Are you training them to see God in everything? What changes can you make in this area?

9. What do verses 22 and 23 say about the singers?

Uzzi was in charge of the temple choir which seemed to be too important to be left unplanned. Verse 22 seems to be talking about the service times of the choir. The King of Persia is also mentioned in verse 23. Wiersbe writes, "The King of Persia helped support the ministry at the temple. Since the king wanted the Jewish people to pray for him and his family, he shared in the temple expenses (Ezra 6:9-10; 7:20-24). In our modern democracies, where there is separation of church and state, this kind of support would be questioned. But the province of Judah was one small part of a great empire, ruled by an all powerful king; and the king did for the Jews what he did for all the other provinces. Christians today are commanded to pray for civil leaders also (1 Timothy 2:1-2). And this should be done daily."

10. How often do you pray for your government officials? Do you pray for them and their families daily?

That's all for today. Spend some time praying for your government officials, whether you really "like" them or not. Take the example of Nehemiah and pray daily.

Fourth and Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

I've combined the last two days so we can spend more time in prayer about the topics we've discussed. First I want to take a few minutes discussing the "unknowns" in our lives, the people behind the scenes that are often forgotten about. And I want to go first!

I could never do the ministry that God has called me to do without the help of many people. My husband who supports everything I do; my children who had to make many sacrifices over the years so Mommy could "get her study done;" the friends who have cooked for me, baby-sat for me, cleaned my house for me, and

prayed for me; the women who proof and correct my lessons, those who make copies, put them on the internet, or staple them; the women who will step in for me whenever I need them, who use their crafting or domestic skills to supplement my ministry; the friends who support me in my times of doubt or despair; the women I laugh with, cry with, eat with, and play games with; the women who purposefully call or text me to make sure I'm okay or on task; the women who hold me when I cry, and push me when I'm lazy; the men who babysit us when we're at church; the hostesses; the worship girls; the women who run sound or PowerPoint. Those sometimes "anonymous" people are vital to my ministry and important to me as friends and co-laborers in ministry. I couldn't function without them, nor would I want to.

1. Take some time and make a list of the "anonymous" people in your life. Spend some time in prayer, thanking God for their ministry in your life. Ask God to show you how to encourage some of them this week, whether it be writing notes, calling them, or baking them cookies. Do something to show them how much you value and appreciate them.
2. Charles Swindoll said, "Your gifts make you valuable although not necessarily famous." What does he mean?
3. He also said, "Our final rewards will be determined on the basis of faithfulness, not public applause." What does he mean? How does that encourage, or discourage, you?
4. Read Galatians 6:10. What promise do we find?

Is your body a living sacrifice?

