



## "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 7

Nehemiah was determined to build this wall, and by the end of chapter 6, the reconstruction was complete. But Nehemiah's job was bigger than the wall. The people may have been breathing a sigh of relief that they were done, but Nehemiah knew the work was far from being over. The outside structure may have been completed, but now there was much work to do on the inside. The city needed to be restored, as well as the hearts of the people.

A city is much more than beautiful walls or houses. It's about people. Wiersbe wrote, "In the first half of this book, the people existed for the walls; but now the walls must exist for the people." Nehemiah wanted to build the community. They would have a lot of needs and responsibilities, and being the leader that he was, Nehemiah put his hand to this new task ahead with the same fervor he had when enlisting the people to join his team and build the wall. Remember, their homes had not been rebuilt yet, only the city walls.

#### First Day

1. Today let's read Nehemiah 7:1-73. Upon first reading this chapter, it seems like just a list of genealogies waiting to be skipped through. But don't be fooled. There's some great stuff in there! Read the chapter and answer the following questions:
  - A. What's the main point or thought of this chapter?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - B. Do you recognize any names?

C. Describe Nehemiah's leadership. What can we learn from him?

D. Read Ezra 2. What do you notice?

2. Why did Nehemiah think that this new city needed extra protection? (Was he right?)

We've already discussed the significance of the wall, why it was being built, etc. But I read something in H.A. Ironside's commentary on Nehemiah that was really interesting. I'd like to share it with you. He wrote, "The wall, we have seen, speaks of separation, both from the world and its evil, and to the Lord, the God of Israel. The gate speaks, not of unscriptural exclusion that has no heart for those who are of the one family, but of fellowship, admitting to the privileges to be enjoyed within the walls, all who have divine title to enter, and barring out all others."

3. What are your thoughts on the paragraph above?

4. Why do you think the "past" was so important to Nehemiah? Why were the genealogies so important?

5. How much do you know about your genealogy? Why do people think it's so important to know their genealogy?

That's it for today. Tomorrow's text will uncover Nehemiah's plan on repopulating the city. Have a great day, and press on with purpose!

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those around Him." Psalm 89:7

### Second Day

**Work on your memory verse. This week's text will show us how we, too, should always fear and reverence His Name.**

1. Read Nehemiah 7:1-4. What facts do you find?
  
2. After the gates were hung, what important thing did Nehemiah do?

Nehemiah knew he couldn't do the job alone, so he appointed leadership to work with him. He began with taking care of some of the physical needs of the city. The "gatekeeper" or "porters" obviously guarded the gates, regularly supervising the city's main entrances. They had a great influence because they controlled who came in and out; who was permitted to enter God's city and mingle with God's people.

3. What specific instructions were given to the gatekeepers? Why?

Nehemiah saw the spiritual needs as well as the physical. He knew they couldn't trust in the strength of the walls and the gates. He appointed worshippers, or "singers", to lead the community in worship and praise to God. He understood the importance and the need to keep praise and worship as a priority in their lives and their community.

4. How important is praise and worship in your life? Do you keep the Lord the center, the priority, and the heart of your whole life? (Ephesians 5:19,20)

Next, Nehemiah appoints Levites. They were "appointed to function as Israel's teachers and pastors and to convey to the people the great realities of their faith. The Levites' role in Israel had been dignified with a long history. The presence and function of the tribe of Levi was a constant reminder to other Israelites of the centrality of spiritual issues in a society where a complete tribe was set apart for God's work and witness in the community. The priests were chosen from that tribe alone, and other members of the tribe shared in supportive ministries in the wilderness tabernacle, temple, and throughout the scattered Israelite communities." Whatever their roles in the past, Levites of this post-exilic period appear to have shared a pastoral, educative, and exemplary function. When Ezra read God's Word to the Jerusalem congregation, the Levites served as interpreters and exponents of the Scripture." (Raymond Brown)

Nehemiah also set different "guards" to patrol specific stations along the wall and to watch their own houses. It seems like he set up a type of "neighborhood watch" for protection.

As believers, we need protection as well. We need faithful men and women at the gates, refusing to let false teaching infiltrate into the ministry. We need to have watchman stationed on the walls to warn us of enemy attacks. We have to be watchful, ready, alert ... not sluggish, lazy, or asleep.

5. How can we spiritually protect ourselves? What types of "guards, boundaries, or hedges" can we set up to keep us from falling?
  
6. As parents, how can we "guard" and "watch" the gates of our homes?
  
7. As a wife, how can I "guard" my marriage?
  
8. How can I "be on watch" for my friends?

9. Notice that entrance into the city was not permitted at night. How does our enemy still try to attack us in secret, dark, and sneaky ways?
10. How does "overconfidence" make us vulnerable for attack?

See you tomorrow, ladies. Have a great day, and be alert and watchful!

### Third Day

#### **What's your verse?**

1. Read Nehemiah 7:1-4 again. In Nehemiah's opinion, who were the best men to put in charge of the city? (See 7:2)

(The "citadel" was a fortress in the temple area (2:8), which guarded the north wall of the city.)

2. What were their qualifications?

Nehemiah was probably having a rough time choosing leaders. He didn't know who to trust. He probably had difficulty determining "friend or foe." He would need someone dependable and reliable to oversee the duties of the gatekeepers, as well as someone whose faith and trust in God was their first priority.

3. Why are reliability and dependability such important characteristics in a leader? Do those words describe you? Are you a woman of integrity, faithful to her word? Are you reliable?

Reverence for God was the other requirement for leadership. Not just reverence, but he "feared God more than others." He had a great testimony, both in the eyes of men and the eyes of Nehemiah.

4. As our memory verse said, "God is greatly to be feared, and all should hold Him in reverence." How would you define "reverence?" Do you hold your God in reverence? Are you known for "fearing Him more than others"?
  
5. Read 1 Timothy 3:2-7. What are some other qualifications of a leader?
  
6. When choosing a leader, what can sometimes distract people from choosing rightly? What does the world look for in a leader?

"The most important qualities leaders can demonstrate are not intelligence, a forceful personality, glibness, diligence, vision, administrative skills, decisiveness, courage, humor, tact, or any other similar natural attribute. These all play a part but the most desirable quality for a leader is integrity" John MacArthur.

7. How is integrity developed? As moms, how can we encourage its development in our kids?
  
8. Choose a Bible character that showed integrity, reliability, and reverence for the Lord. What can you learn from them?

I pray that you and I will strive to be women who are dependable and God-honoring. I pray that our word can be counted on, our character unblemished, and our testimony powerful.

## Fourth Day

**What's your verse? How is it encouraging you?**

1. Read Nehemiah 7:1-5. According to verse 5, what did Nehemiah plan to do?
  
2. Where did this plan come from?

Nehemiah found a register of all the people made by Ezra in Babylon before the first group returned; a listing of those who had come with Zerubbabel. As always, Nehemiah sees God's hand in this discovery, giving Him the glory for this idea. The plan to rebuild the city was in God's heart long before it was in Nehemiah's.

He knew he had to re-establish Jerusalem as a stable, new community by increasing the number of residents. He was now hoping these people would uproot themselves from where they were presently living (local villages, etc.) to move to a totally different surrounding. For some to move would be a great sacrifice, but a great spiritual opportunity.

This genealogy was a record of Israel's families that returned (6-25), and the places they settled (26-38). He understood the significance of the past. This history was important to him. It was "a living story which related how truths and values had been sacrificially transmitted. It described the heroism of dedicated personalities and the continuity of their faith. It was not a dead thing, locked away in irrecoverable antiquity. It was a testimony of God's faithfulness to all generations. For the people that lived in the time of Nehemiah, it preserved the memory of their father and grandfathers, people who had served God in a variety of different ministries across the decade (39-60). It was a story of men and women in the previous century who were prepared to leave the relative security of their comfortable lives in another country to return to a "homeland" they had never seen, and to a new and challenging pattern of living. The list was more than a catalog of obscure names; its brief mention of Israel's families was a compressed narrative of the courage, love, and loyalty of men and women who, at God's bidding, went out not knowing exactly where they were going." (Raymond Brown)

Wiersbe says, "These people are the living link that connected the historic past with the prophetic future and made it possible for Jesus Christ to come into the world."

It was important to the Jews to be able to prove their lineage. If they couldn't prove their ancestry, it meant second-class citizenship, as well as being separated from all that God had given Israel (Romans 9:4-5)

3. Why is it important for you and I to know the history of the Church? How does it help us today? What can we learn? How can we be challenged?
  
4. Read Nehemiah 7:5-73. Notice all the different gifts of the people. What does that tell you about the body of Christ?

Notice in verse 7, the name Nehemiah appears. We know this is not the same man because it was nearly a century before. Most think that these are the names of the elders of the people who helped Zerubbabel establish the nation.

5. Verses 8-38 list the families (clans) that came and settled and the number they brought with them. Who brought the least amount of people?
  
6. Who brought the most?
  
7. Here's a challenge question for you! Can you choose one family from the list and do some research on them? Take some notes and tell us what you find.
  
8. Who is listed next in verses 39-42?
  
9. Who is next in verses 43-45?
  
10. Who are the people listed in verses 46-60?

The "Nethinim" were the temple servants that had been organized by David to assist in the temple. Wiersbe writes, "These men may have been either prisoners of war or descendants of the Gibeonites (Joshua 9:22-27), who relieved the Levites of heavy routine tasks, like cutting wood and drawing water. "Solomon's servants" (Neh. 7:57) were also foreigners who labored for the king. That these non-Jews were willing to leave the secure life in Babylon for the difficulties in life in Jerusalem may indicate that they had come to trust the God of Israel. On the other hand, perhaps they were compelled to return by their masters."

11. How does God want to use "your" gift to help build His church?

We'll wrap up tomorrow by looking at the rest of the people that settled, but before you end, take a minute and ask the Lord to show you if you are "completing the work" you have received in the Lord (Colossians 4:17). Are you using your gifts for His glory? I read that "The multicolored grace of God has equipped His people with a variety of choice gifts, and all believers are personally equipped in one way or another." That's a "Reason to Rejoice"!

### Fifth Day

**Write out your verse from memory. Have you held Him in reverence this week?**

1. Read Nehemiah 7:1-73. What was the problem in verses 61-65?
2. Why did Israel have such a passion for their nation to stay "pure"? Did they believe in "ethnic cleansing"?

This is the first reference to this important issue: the desire to maintain a pure priesthood. They didn't want to compromise by forming alliances with other religions. "This was to protect a pure faith within a community of believing people

who would later welcome Jesus Christ, God's Son, the world's Savior and Israel's Messiah." (Brown) When the people intermarried, they endangered the pure faith, allowing different principles and standards to creep in. This was forbidden in the Mosaic Law.

3. Are you trying to have a "pure" faith? Are you careful not to allow the things of the world to creep in and affect your faith, your testimony, and your purity? What types of things can threaten our "pure" faith?

The words "Urim and Thummim" mentioned in verse 65 literally mean "lights and perfection" and were one of the methods used to discern the will of God on specific matters in the Old Testament (Exodus 28:30; Numbers 27:21; 1 Samuel 28:6) It's similar to the idea of throwing dice.

4. What other groups are mentioned in verses 66-69? (Why do you think the animals were mentioned?)
5. Because they loved God, they were giving to God's work. What was happening in verses 70-72?

Although these Jews may not have had a lot of money, they were generous givers. They probably weren't even established in their homes, nor had their businesses up and running. But they didn't neglect their responsibility of sacrificial giving.

6. What does Nehemiah himself give? (vs 70) Why do you think he draws attention to his giving?

7. What type of "giver" are you? Are you generous? Sacrificial? Purposeful? Read these verses on giving and write the main thought.

- A. Ephesians 4:28
- B. 1 Timothy 6:18
- C. Matthew 6:1-4
- D. 1 Cor. 16:1-2
- E. 1 Chronicles 29:3-9
- F. 2 Cor. 9:7
- G. Malachi 3:9
- H. Luke 21:1-4

8. After reading these verses, how can you be a better "giver"?

The "seventh month" refers to the month of Tishri (Sept/Oct), less than one week after completing the walls. It was about time for them to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, which was a feast the whole nation was called to observe. This was a great time to call the people together (8:1).

Warren Wiersbe finds four key lessons from this chapter. Thank you, Warren, for pointing these out to us.

**Lesson One:** People are important to God. When God wanted to take the next step in His great plan of redemption, He called a group of Jews to leave the place of exile and return to their own land. The Lord used common people, not angels, to do the job, people who were willing to risk their futures on the promises of God.

9. Do you realize how much God loves you? Have you left your personal "Babylon" to follow Him?

**Lesson Two:** God keeps account of His servants. He knows where we came from, what family we belong to, how much we gave, and how much we did for Him.

10. Read Romans 14:7-12. Will you be able to give a "good" account?

**Lesson Three:** The Lord is able to keep His work going. In spite of all the difficulties, over all the years, God was able to accomplish His work.

11. Are you discouraged in your ministry in some way? How does this story of Nehemiah encourage you?

**Lesson Four:** We must all be sure we are in God's family. Without a legitimate genealogy, even the priests could not enter the temple. It doesn't matter where you were born the first time, what matters is your second birth!

12. Read John 3:1-18 and 1 John 5:9-13. Have you been born again? Are you sure you have your citizenship in Heaven? If you realize you aren't and would like to make that decision, pray! Confess your sins to the Lord; ask Him to forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Ask Him to come into your heart. Romans 10:9-11 tells us, "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation. For the Scripture says, whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

**Now tell your leader!**

13. Are there any lessons in this chapter that we didn't go over, but the Lord has put on your heart?

**"For our citizenship is in Heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."**

**Philippians 3:20**

