

Eric Mason

Nehemiah

God's Building Project



✓ 8-Session Bible Study

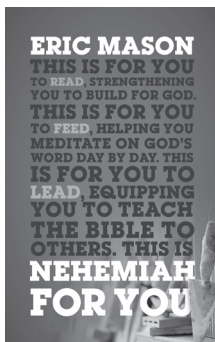
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✔ **8-Session Bible Study**



Nehemiah For You

These studies are adapted from *Nehemiah For You*. If you are reading *Nehemiah For You* alongside this Good Book Guide, here is how the studies in this booklet link to the chapters of *Nehemiah For You*:

Study One > Ch 1-2
Study Two > Ch 2-3
Study Three > Ch 3-4
Study Four > Ch 5

Study Five > Ch 6
Study Six > Ch 6-7
Study Seven > Ch 8-9
Study Eight > Ch 10

Find out more about *Nehemiah For You* at:
www.thegoodbook.com/for-you

Nehemiah: God's Building Project

A Good Book Guide

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This edition printed 2026.

Published by The Good Book Company



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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Design by André Parker and Drew McCall

ISBN: 9781802541830 | JOB-008559 | Printed in India

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Introduction

One of the Bible writers described God's word as "a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (Psalm 119:105, NIV). God gave us the Bible to tell us about who he is and what he wants for us. He speaks through it by his Spirit and lights our way through life.

That means that we need to look carefully at the Bible and uncover its meaning—but we also need to apply what we've discovered to our lives.

Good Book Guides are designed to help you do just that. The sessions in this book are interactive and easy to lead. They're perfect for use in groups or for personal study.

Let's take a look at what is included in each session.

Talkabout: Every session starts with an ice-breaker question, designed to get people talking around a subject that links to the Bible study.

Investigate: These questions help you explore what the passage is about.

Apply: These questions are designed to get you thinking practically: what does this Bible teaching mean for you and your church?

Explore More: These optional sections help you to go deeper or to explore another part of the Bible which connects with the main passage.

Getting Personal: These sections are a chance for personal reflection. Some groups may feel comfortable discussing these, but you may prefer to look at them quietly as individuals instead—or leave them out.

Pray: Here, you're invited to pray in the light of the truths and challenges you've seen in the study.

Each session is also designed to be easily split into two! Watch out for the **Apply** section that comes halfway through, and stop there if you haven't got time to do the whole thing in one go.

In the back of the book, you'll find a **Leader's Guide**, which provides helpful notes on every question, along with everything else that group leaders need in order to facilitate a great session and help the group uncover the riches of God's light-giving word.

Why Study Nehemiah?

Nehemiah tells the story of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. God's people had been in captivity, but God had intervened so that they were allowed to come back to their own land and rebuild their broken city. It's a key moment in the history of God's people.

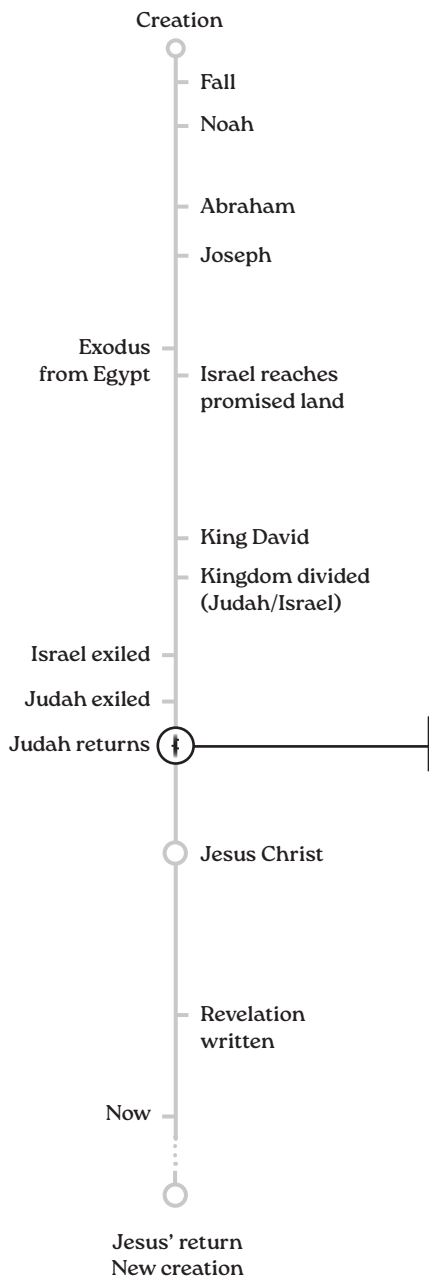
But we won't walk away from this book with just a rebuilt wall. There are far more riches than that in these pages!

Jerusalem was supposed to be a city on a hill, a light to the world, a representation of the rule of God. But its people had forgotten this. So the book of Nehemiah shows us the work it takes to rebuild representation of the glory of God. Nehemiah doesn't just rebuild the city walls; he rebuilds the social and spiritual character of the people too. He deals with justice issues, resists the distractions of enemies, and reinstates the word of God in its place at the center of the life of the city.

This story has an obvious relevance to any type of rebuilding we might do for God—from our homes and families to our local churches, communities, cities, and government. It teaches us about gospel mission. It shows how, even in the midst of great need, opposition, rebellion, encumbrances, and sins, God still works through his people and motivates us to complete his work.

Only a few generations after Nehemiah, the Savior would come. Jesus would live, die, and rise again, and would guide the people of God—including you and me—beyond the walls of Jerusalem in mission, to establish his reign over the nations. It's with that perspective that we read the book of Nehemiah today.

We can see ourselves and our lives in the book of Nehemiah. But most of all we can see God's intentions, his glory, and his Son.



Nehemiah

440s & 430s BC

- 586 Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem
- 537 Under Cyrus, the return begins
- 445 Nehemiah goes to Jerusalem
- 432 Nehemiah returns to Babylon

1

Redeemed to Represent

Nehemiah 1:1 - 2:8

Talkabout

1. Imagine the capital city of your country, or the place where you live, has been destroyed. How would you feel? What would you do?

Investigate

 Read Nehemiah 1:1-10

DICTIONARY

Chislev (v 1): a month in the Hebrew calendar, corresponding to our November and December.

Susa (v 1): the capital of Persia.

Judah (v 2): the region around Jerusalem.

Remnant (v 3): a small remaining amount.

Covenant (v 5): a binding agreement.

The Israelites had been in exile—scattered far from their homeland. But God had intervened and the people had begun to be allowed to go back

to Jerusalem. At the start of the book of Nehemiah, some exiles have already returned, while others remain in Persia.

2. Among those who have already returned is Hanani, the brother of Nehemiah. What does he say about the state of Jerusalem (v 3)?

- What is Nehemiah's immediate reaction to the news (v 4)?

3. How does Nehemiah address God (v 5)?

- How do you think that might have helped him to pray?

4. What's the contrast between God and the people (v 5, 6-7)?

5. What did God say he would do if the people were unfaithful (v 8)?

- But what promise is Nehemiah hoping he will fulfill now (v 9)?

Jerusalem was the place where God had chosen to make his name dwell (v 9). It was the center of the whole nation—the center of their worship. It was the place where God’s people were supposed to represent God’s reign to the nations around them.

6. What has God done for his people that makes this possible (v 9, 10)?

Today we are the people who represent God to the world, wherever we are. He has redeemed us and is dwelling in us. He is rebuilding us into a better reflection of himself.

Explore More | OPTIONAL

Jesus compares his followers to a city in Matthew 5:14: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.” The church today is like Jerusalem. That’s why Revelation 21 talks about a new, future Jerusalem.

Read Revelation 21:1-4

- What does the new Jerusalem have in common with the old Jerusalem (v 3)?
- But what makes it better (v 4)?

The new Jerusalem is the community that every community is ultimately supposed to look like. And God wants us to be like movie trailers for that city. We want to be a reflection of the beauty of the new Jerusalem—and to see the gospel rebuild the lives of those around us too.

Getting Personal | OPTIONAL

How does Nehemiah’s passionate concern for the faithful representation of God challenge you personally? What would it look like in your life to care as much as Nehemiah does about obeying God and making his name known?

Apply

7. What do you think it looks like for us to represent God’s rule today?

- Where do you see brokenness in the representation of God’s rule today? What will you ask him to rebuild?

Investigate

 Read Nehemiah 1:11 – 2:8

DICTIONARY

Nisan (2:1): a month in the Hebrew calendar, corresponding to our March and April.

Artaxerxes (v 1): the king of Persia.

The province Beyond the River (v 7): the part of the Persian Empire which lay west of the River Euphrates.

After praying and fasting for four months (from Chislev, which is our November and December, to Nisan, which is our March and April), Nehemiah is finally ready to take action.

8. How does Nehemiah's conversation with the king begin (2:1-2)?

9. In verses 4-8, how do we see Nehemiah's dependence on the Lord?

- How do we see his own hard work and initiative?

10. What does the king grant Nehemiah?

- Why?

Nehemiah's interaction with the king is a case study in how to speak to unbelievers. He speaks with respect; he has prepared his request; he contextualizes what he says so that it makes sense to the king (who wouldn't understand about Jerusalem being God's city, but who would care about family legacy). And he is ready—he is willing to take any opportunity for God's glory.

Apply

11. How can we use Nehemiah's example in our own conversations with unbelievers?
 12. What do Nehemiah's actions throughout 1:1 – 2:8 teach us about what it looks like to prepare to represent God's rule to those around us?
- How can we put these things into practice today?

Pray

Spend some time in prayer for yourselves, your church, and the worldwide body of Christ.

Thank God for redeeming you in Christ.

Ask for his help and guidance in representing his reign to the world.