



Reasons to Rejoice
BIBLE STUDY



THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

“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

ARISE AND REBUILD!

The Book of Nehemiah: Lesson 13

Can you believe it? Sadly, we have come to our last lesson. I wish the book would end on a high note, remembering the Israelites singing loudly as they dedicated the walls. But sadly, the people take a nose-dive as spiritual carelessness sets in and they return to their old ways. This chapter is a good reminder of how important it is to stay close to the Lord by reading and following His Word. And without spiritual leadership, God’s people tend to wander. John MacArthur wrote, “The history of God’s people reveals a stressing (if not depressing) truth: heartfelt passion and sincere devotion is often short-lived. Nehemiah chapter 13, the last portion of the Old Testament to be written, is a clear example of this truth.”

Before you begin, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart to all He has for you. May you listen attentively, expectantly, and diligently to the voice of the Holy Spirit as you study.

First Day

- 1. Begin by reading Nehemiah 13:1-31. What facts do you find in this chapter? What’s going on? Why? When?**

- 2. What is the main point or thought of the chapter?**

3. How would you outline this chapter?

4. Do you see any repeated words, thoughts, or phrases? How do those words reflect the main thought?

5. How many times is the phrase “remember me” used? Why does Nehemiah end the book with that phrase?

6. Explain the contrast between chapter 12 and chapter 13.

7. Read Nehemiah chapter 10. How many promises did the Israelites break, according to chapter 13?

As we end by looking at the Hebrews’ failures, let’s not allow our hearts to judge them too harshly. How often do you and I make promises to the Lord and break them the very next hour? We need His Word so badly! We need His Spirit so badly! He is our Rock—we MUST stay anchored to Him!

Memory Verse of the Week: “Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Your mercy!” Nehemiah 13:22b

Second Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Nehemiah 13:1-31. Reread verses 1-3. What happened again as a result of reading the law? (Verses 1-3 are a continuation of 12:44-47.)
2. Who wasn't allowed to enter into the assembly of God? Why? Read Deuteronomy 23:3-4, Numbers 21-24, and Deuteronomy 2:26-30.

It appears that Nehemiah had been governor of Jerusalem for 12 years (5:14). After this term, he returned to Persia to report to the King as he had promised, and verse 6 tells us that after "certain days," he again returned to Jerusalem. It's not really clear how long he was gone. Some commentators guess about a year, while others think he may have been away for a few years, long enough for some of the men to marry foreign wives and raise children who didn't know how to speak the Hebrew language (23-24). While Nehemiah was gone, the prophet Malachi wrote his prophetic book rebuking the priest and the people for their sinful ways. Derek Kidner wrote, "If on his first visit he had been a whirlwind, on his second he was all fire and earthquake to a city that had settled down in his absence to a comfortable compromise with the gentile world." Not only were the Israelites marrying the Ammonites, one had infiltrated the house of God!

3. Read 13:4-9. Who had sided with Tobiah during Nehemiah's absence? Explain what Eliashib had allowed him to do.
4. How did Nehemiah respond, according to verses 8-9? (2 Chronicles 29:5, 15-16)

Eliashib, the high priest, had allied with Israel's enemy for personal gain and allowed it to go so far that the house of God had been desecrated. The religious leader himself ordered a room the size of a small warehouse to be cleared out for Tobiah's personal belongings. Tobiah must have been ecstatic to gain this much of a foothold

into the house of God. How utterly disgraceful this was! And how utterly disturbed Nehemiah was when he walked in!

4. This reaction sounds kind of familiar! Read Matthew 21:12-14.
Compare the two situations.

How does something like this happen so quickly? To answer this question, Raymond Brown writes, "Nehemiah had exercised exemplary influence on the everyday life of the people, but once he left the city, standards began to fall. Things began to drift badly. It probably did not happen suddenly or dramatically. Gradually, people started to do things without asking whether God's Word had anything to say on the subject. They began to live for themselves rather than the Lord. They stopped giving generously for the support of the Levites as they had promised to. Without their regular teaching ministry, men and women were no longer reminded of spiritual values. Israelites all over the country neglected Scripture's provisions for the Sabbath. Marriage and family concerns were no longer subject to divine direction. Soon, Judah's faith was adversely affected. Its religious (7-11), commercial (15-22), and domestic (23-27) life became less than what God intended it to be. Temple, marketplace and home were no longer places where God's name was revered, and His values honored."

5. How can this easily happen to you and me? How can we prevent it?

6. Does the paragraph above describe any season of your life? How did God get your attention?

7. Have you allowed a "Tobiah" to creep into your life in some area? Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and, if need be, turn over some tables and throw out some chairs.

8. Why do you think Nehemiah reacted so harshly? What does that tell us about the seriousness of sin?

9. What does this chapter remind us about the character and integrity of the leaders under whom we serve? What does this also remind us of, regarding our own character and integrity as parents?

10. God holds ministers to a higher standard, according to Malachi 2:1-8. What does this chapter say about it?

May this chapter serve as a reminder to us about the seriousness of sin, the dangers of apathy and complacency, and the intensity in which we should rid ourselves of sin.

Third Day

Work on your memory verse. Is that your cry to the Lord?

1. Read Nehemiah 13:1-31 again, focusing on verses 10-14. Why had the Levites gone back to work in the fields?

2. How were the Levites supposed to be supported? (Read Numbers 18:20, Deuteronomy 12:19, 14:27, 18:1-8, and Nehemiah 10:37-39)

3. Who did Nehemiah blame for this, according to verse 11?

He “contended” with the rulers, rebuking them for disobeying the Law, as well as breaking their promises, as reported by Malachi 1:6-14 and 3:8-12. It was the Levites’ and priests’ job to teach Biblical principles and set high spiritual standards, but without any support, their ministry became null and void. They didn’t have a voice any longer. With neglected teaching and a decline of worship, the people became spiritually dead. Materialism set in, and the people were indifferent to God’s Word. When Nehemiah arrived, he immediately restored order in the house of God.

4. What did he do, according to verse 13?

5. What was Nehemiah’s prayer to God in verse 14? Why do you think he prayed this?

We see a glimpse of Nehemiah’s heart in verse 14, pleading with God to remember him. It sounds a bit like he wanted to remind God that he had been faithful, unlike the rest of them, but I think it’s more of a cry for God’s mercy, rather than on his own merits. We find this phrase is used three times, once after each rebuke (13:22, 31).

The Israelites failed to separate themselves from their neighbors, the Ammonites and the Moabites; they didn’t support the priests and Levites as they promised, and now, in verses 15-22, they break yet another promise and violate another law.

6. Read verses 15-22. What promise and law did they break? (10:31)

7. What three things did Nehemiah do to remedy this problem? Was it immediately fixed?

8. Read Jeremiah 17:21-27 to gain some insight into what Nehemiah was referring to in verse 18. How was history repeating itself?

9. How do you think this section can apply to you and I today?

Wiersbe wrote this about the Sabbath: “The Lord’s Day, the first day of the week, is not a ‘Christian Sabbath,’ because the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week and belonged especially to the Jews. Therefore, the Old Testament laws governing the Jewish Sabbath don’t apply to the Lord’s Day. But Sunday is a special day to God’s people because it commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead as well as the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We ought to use the Lord’s Day to the glory of the Lord.” I would add, let’s try to keep the “Sabbath rest” 24/7 in our hearts!

10. How can you and I use our Sundays to glorify the Lord?

Nehemiah again asks the Lord to remember him, according to His great mercy! Let’s end here for today. May the Lord bless you and keep you today, and may you bless and obey Him back! ☺

Fourth Day

Did you memorize your verse?

1. Let’s read our last section, Nehemiah 13:23-31. What other problem was Nehemiah addressing? (Ezra 9:2, Nehemiah 4:7)

Ashdod was one of the former Philistine cities to the west of Jerusalem and an enemy of Israel. A few years earlier they had plotted together to fight against Israel (4:7-8), and now they were marrying them. Ammon and Moab were east of the Jordan, whose beginnings were by Lot’s incestuous relationships with his two daughters (Genesis 19:30-38).

2. According to verse 24, what infuriated Nehemiah? Why?

3. What did he do about it? Why was he so angry? Do you think he overreacted?

If the children were raised by pagans, this could cause the complete destruction of Israel. It would steadily erode their identity. The compromise of this generation could undo the work of centuries. Nehemiah's reaction was shocking but needed. He understood that God's purposes depended on a holy people. God's law was being broken; God's heart was being grieved. He called it "great evil" in verse 27! They had ignored the words of Scripture, the commands and warnings about mixed marriages.

4. Why did Nehemiah use Solomon as an example? Read 1 Kings 11:1-8.

Solomon's sin affected Israel in a tragic way by dividing the kingdom. He was a great king, but he had a thing for women. The Israelites knew the history of King Solomon; they knew he "did evil in the sight of the Lord." They should have learned from his mistakes, as well as from the written law. They knew better but chose to follow their fleshly desires. Again, with no Levite reminding them of the Word of God, I'm sure it made it easier to ignore the truth and rationalize their actions. Even a great king, loved by all, can fall into sin.

5. It seems like this sin was even being committed by the families of the priests (vs 28). Ezra wrote about the same problem in Ezra 9:1-2. What did Nehemiah do about that one?

6. Nehemiah "drove" or "chased" the grandson of the high priest out. When you discover "sin" in your camp, do you "drive" it out? Do you take sin, holiness, and obedience as serious as Nehemiah?

7. How did Nehemiah summarize the restoration process in verses 30-31?

When Nehemiah came back to Jerusalem, he found a mess. Alan Redpath wrote, “You recall that the people had met in a great convention to worship God. They had made a covenant with the Lord, and the stage seemed set for abiding blessing. But no, the same sins which had ruined their national life before their captivity had attacked again and overcome them. What were they? They were three in number. In the first place, there was a mingling with other nations—**failure in separation**. In the second place there was a desecration of the Sabbath Day—**failure in service**. And in the third place there were marriages with heathen people—**failure in sanctification**.” But when Nehemiah arrives at the scene, things begin to change.

Nehemiah ended well, didn't he? He didn't compromise, neglect, or ignore. He prayed, he worked, he finished. I love how he ends his book, “Remember me, O my God, for good!” That's all that matters; that's all that counts.

8. If you had to end your life with a one-sentence prayer, what would it be?

9. It's so easy to fail in the same three ways the Israelites did. Let's examine our own hearts:

A. Failure in Separation: Are you keeping your self “separate” from the world, or are you being conformed by it, and to it?

B. Failure in Service: Are you obeying God's Word and what He's called you to do?

C. Failure in Sanctification: Are you desiring a pure and holy faith?

- 10.** How's your walk with the Lord? Have you gotten complacent in your spiritual walk or been neglecting God's Word and prayer? Have you purposefully, or perhaps even inadvertently, allowed any Tobiahs or Ammonites into your heart? Take some time and allow the Spirit to examine you and open your eyes to any sin that needs to be "driven" out! Ask the Lord for mercy, grace, and a new beginning!

See you tomorrow, ladies. It will be our last day together. ☹

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

Today we will be reviewing some of the highlights of the book. May you be encouraged and challenged as we take one last look at our man, Nehemiah. A great person, leader, man... and now friend!

1. What is similar in how the book opens and closes?

2. What did you learn about sin from this book?

Brown wrote, "Nehemiah's message repeatedly confronts us with the greatness and sufficiency of God. It directs the attention away from peripheral issues to the one overwhelming theme of the book: the incomparable magnitude of God's nature, the utter reliability of His truth, the searching splendor of His holiness, the fathomless depths of His love and the limitless resources of His power.

3. Write your thoughts on the above quote.

4. From this book, how did we learn:
 - A. The responsibility of delegation?

 - B. The importance of integrity?

 - C. To be earnest in prayer?

 - D. That we need a deep and personal faith?

 - E. That we are accountable for our actions?

5. As a leader, Nehemiah was amazing. Throughout our lessons, we've discussed various character traits that we find in him. Let's review some of them and see how we match up.
 - A. **He knew he was called by God.** What has God called you to do?
Are you being obedient?

 - B. **He was very organized and careful.** Do you spend time seeking The Lord on "how" to do the things He's called you to do? Do you take time to pray and meditate on His Word?

- C. **He was a great example of integrity, faithfulness, and honesty.** Are you an example to those around you? Could they “pattern” themselves after your life?
- D. **He wanted to glorify the Lord in all he did.** Do you do the same? Is that your goal and motivation for all you do?
6. What would you say is one of the biggest lessons you’ve learned from studying this book?
7. What was one of the biggest challenges you found in Nehemiah?
8. The most important question of all is this: How did your life change as a result of this book? How did God’s Word change you?

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of guiding you through this study. I have enjoyed every second of it! (Well, that’s not completely true ... some of the chapters were pretty tough!) I hope and pray that I’ll be a better leader, a better wife, a better mom, and a better friend as a result of this study. I pray that I will always desire to glorify God in everything I say and do. I pray that you feel the same way. May we all say together,

“Remember me, O my God, for good!” (Nehemiah 13:31)