

Book of Nehemiah

1. Nehemiah 1:1-11 (Request of the times)

1) Observation: When Nehemiah heard the news that the walls of Jerusalem had been broken down, where was he and what was he doing?

2) Interpretation: What does God's promise, "I will bring them back to the place I have chosen to be called by my name" (verse 9), mean?

3) Application:

3.1(God Loving Us): Nehemiah learns about the situation of his people through acquaintances who came from Jerusalem. The news was that the city was in ruins, and its walls were destroyed, causing suffering among the people. What was your situation before God visited you? How did God reach out to you during that time?

3.2(God Meeting Us): While praying, Nehemiah realizes that Israel has lost its nation and has been brought to a distant foreign land because they have forsaken God's grace and laws and committed sins. Have you ever realized and repented of sins or wrongdoings during prayer that you hadn't thought of before? What was the nature of God's love that you felt while repenting and praying?

3.3(God Refinding Us): Nehemiah remembers God's promise to bring them back to the chosen place (verse 9) while praying. Even when we are weak and sin, when we repent and move forward toward God, the Lord assures us of His promise of salvation. What is the promise of God that you realize during prayer? What hope does that promise give you?

3.4(God Inspiring US): Nehemiah explicitly states that he was the king's "cupbearer." He enjoyed favor with the king and had a position where he could live a comfortable life. However, he set everything aside and left to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. What task have you been entrusted with to fulfill God's promise?

4) Real Life Today: Nehemiah prays, asking God to move the king's heart and enable him to fulfill the mission entrusted to him. In carrying out the mission for the faith community, what kind of assistance are you seeking from God?

2. 2:1-9 (The Effect of Prayer that Arises from the Heart)

1) Observation: When Nehemiah was certain that the king would grant his request, what did he ask for?

2) Interpretation: Nehemiah heard the news about the Jerusalem walls in the month of Kislev (1:1) and obtained an opportunity to speak to the king in the month of Nisan (2:1). How long did he wait for this time? (Reference: <http://kcm.co.kr/BIBLE01/unit/calendar.html>)

3) Application:

3.1(God Loving Us): One day, the king noticed that something was troubling Nehemiah's expression. The fact that the busy Persian king paid attention to the countenance of his cupbearer reveals how close and trustworthy Nehemiah was to the king. How is God guiding those around you? How does God's guidance through the people around you impact you?

3.2(God Meeting Us): Nehemiah waited for about four months before having a conversation with the king and expressing his desire to return to Jerusalem. After praying to God first, Nehemiah began speaking to the king (verse 4). Have you experienced receiving an answer from God after a long time of prayer? What actions did you take during that time?

3.3(God Refinding Us): Nehemiah waited for four months to have a conversation with the king. During this period, he prayed and prepared himself, waiting for God to use him. The world and the circumstances remained unchanged. Initially, Nehemiah felt sorrowful due to the news about Jerusalem, but through prayer, he transformed into an active mindset of patience and anticipation. Have you experienced a change within yourself while praying for a long time, even though the external environment or situation did not easily change?

3.4(God Inspiring US): When Nehemiah requested permission from the king to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls, he also asked for a letter from the king to show the governors along the way to Judah as a means of ensuring safety. Additionally, he made a bold request for the necessary timber for the wall's reconstruction upon reaching Jerusalem. Nehemiah's meticulous preparation and wisdom are evident. What do you need to fulfill God's work, and how do you secure it?

4) Real Life Today: To fulfill the mission for the faith community you belong to, who is someone you can meet today? What kind of conversation will you have with them?

3. Nehemiah 2:10-20 (The Beginning of His Work)

1) Observation: When Nehemiah surveyed the burned and crumbling walls, how many animals were there?

2) Interpretation: Why did Nehemiah secretly look at the ruins of Jerusalem at night?

3) Application:

3.1(God Loving Us): Nehemiah, after surveying the broken walls of Jerusalem, takes a night tour to assess the situation and prepare for dialogue. Of course, looking at ruins is not an easy task. It can be heartbreaking and filled with disappointment when faced with such immense destruction. However, Nehemiah carries out this task. Just as the Lord examined and carefully observed your situation before meeting you, recall the memory of meeting the Lord and refresh it. How does that fact make you feel?

3.2(God Meeting Us): After surveying the walls, Nehemiah meets with the people of Jerusalem and proposes rebuilding the collapsed walls together. He recounts how God has led him to this place and encourages them to undertake a task that no one has dared to start. What were the challenges you faced when starting a new life after meeting the Lord? What stories gave you strength during that time?

3.3(God Refinding Us): At this time, Nehemiah is approached by Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab, who ridicule and belittle the Israelites, asking, "What are these feeble Jews doing?" When you decided to live a new life of faith and trust in Jesus, were there people who mocked or viewed it negatively? How did you respond and deal with it? What were the consequences?

3.4(God Inspiring US): Nehemiah boldly proclaims to his adversaries what his task is. He declares that his work is for God's chosen people and that foreigners cannot hinder it. When you undertake the work assigned to you by God, what message would you like to convey to those who try to obstruct it?

4) Real Life Today: If you were to survey Nehemiah, which specific aspects of your community would you focus on?

4. Nehemiah 4:6-23 (Preparation against Enemies)

1) Observation: How many times did Nehemiah receive reports about Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites planning to attack the Israelites who were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem?

2) Interpretation: Why were Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites so angry about the Israelites rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and why did they express such strong opposition?

3) Application:

3.1(God Loving Us): When we start a work of faith, the world often opposes and presents us with great difficulties, even urging us to give up. Why do you think God allows believers to experience such challenges from the world?

3.2(God Meeting Us): Despite the threats from the surrounding nations, the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem continued. God appointed Nehemiah as a leader, and Israel faced the enemies with determination and preparedness. They went from being fearful in the face of threats to having a courageous attitude. What change of heart did you experience when you decided to follow the Lord, and how did God help you with that change?

3.3(God Refinding Us): While facing external threats in rebuilding the walls, the Israelites also had to confront an internal enemy: fear. Nehemiah encouraged them to rely on God's power and overcome fear with love. He urged them to fight for their loved ones, keeping in mind the Lord.

Who is the Lord you need to remember in your faith journey, and where does the power of love that can overcome the world begin in your life?

3.4(God Inspiring US): Under Nehemiah's leadership, the people worked with tools in one hand and weapons in the other to continue the work, prepared for any enemy intrusion. Even in fulfilling the mission God has given us, we need spiritual defense. What are your spiritual weapons?

4) Real Life Today: What is the difficult task that your community is facing? What will you hold in your right hand and left hand in the face of that task?

5. Nehemiah 5:1-9, 14-19 (The Compassion of a Leader)

1) Observation: Though Nehemiah was appointed as the governor of Judah, he has not received any salary for several years and continues to work.

2) Interpretation: It is said that the previous governors before Nehemiah would burden the people with heavy taxes, collecting forty shekels of silver per day from each individual, as well as food, wine, and other provisions. How much value does forty shekels of silver equate to in today's currency?

3) Application:

3.1(God Loving Us): As the governor of Judah, Nehemiah could have enjoyed wealth and comfort. He could have collected the tax of forty shekels per person (equivalent to the wage of a laborer for 160 days), just like the previous governors. However, out of compassion, he did not take any salary but dedicated himself solely to the task of rebuilding the city walls. Even Christ, leaving His heavenly throne, came to this earth and dwelt among the poor, giving His life for us and fulfilling God's mission. When was the moment you first realized the extent of God's love for you?

3.2(God Meeting Us): When Nehemiah heard the cries of lamentation due to the nobles exploiting their fellow Israelites and making them slaves, he was filled with indignation. He rebuked the nobles and commanded them to release the oppressed. When you encountered the Lord, from what kind of chains did you receive freedom?

3.3(God Refinding Us): Each of us has inward thoughts, actions, and habits that we silently tolerate, even though we know they are sinful. When we casually overlook them, we may unintentionally inflict pain on others. If you have such thoughts and behaviors, what are they?

3.4(God Inspiring US): Nehemiah deeply empathized with the people's difficulties and shared in their suffering. He chose not to receive the rightful compensation he deserved and worked tirelessly. He sternly rebuked the officials and nobles, reforming the corrupt practices and systems that oppressed their people. In what area does God call you to dismantle the unjust practices and systems within the society and community you belong to?

4) Real Life Today: Please examine if there is anyone within the community of faith who is experiencing unjust treatment and going through hardship. How can you approach them and provide comfort and strength through your words and actions?

6. Nehemiah 6:1-9, 15-19 (The Strategy to Confront against Enemies)

1) Observation: How many days did the construction of the city walls take?

2) Interpretation: Why did Sanballat claim that Nehemiah wanted to become king?

3) Application:

3.1(God Loving Us): When progressing in the work of the Lord, there are forces of darkness that seek to hinder it. Sanballat spread false rumors that Nehemiah was plotting to become king and even attempted to take his life. However, Nehemiah faced them without faltering and responded wisely. Instead, he became a beacon of hope for Israel, shining brightly amid darkness. What are the shadows of darkness occasionally cast upon your life? What assurance does God give you when you face them?

3.2(God Meeting Us): Nehemiah courageously stood against the schemes of Sanballat and Tobiah, experiencing God's ultimate victory and the restoration of all things under His control. At this moment, Nehemiah renewed his conviction in God's promise. What was that promise?

3.3(God Refinding Us): When facing the opposition's schemes, Nehemiah continued to seek God's help (verse 9). He sought wisdom for victory in God's will, surpassing the strength of the king's army and his people. The key to overcoming external enemies while doing the Lord's work is to establish a strong spiritual fortress within oneself. What does your inner spiritual fortress look like? What efforts are you making to overcome external enemies?

3.4(God Inspiring US): Nehemiah, without succumbing to the schemes of his enemies, finally rebuilt the city walls, revealing that God was with Israel, accomplishing all these things. (verse 16) What are the moments in your given mission where God's presence is manifested?

4) Real Life Today: Nehemiah worked together with others to build the city walls. Are there any ministers in your faith community who may be tired or overwhelmed while diligently working for the community? How can you support and assist them?

7. Nehemiah 8:1-18 (The Essence of a Festival)

1) Observation: What kind of branches were used to make the sukkah for the Feast of Tabernacles?

2) Interpretation: Nehemiah, in celebration of the wall's reconstruction, follows the law and sets up the sukkah, rejoicing in the festival. Why is the festival held in a humble and simple structure like a sukkah? What is its significance?

3) Application:

3.1(God Loving Us): When Ezra the priest reads from the Book of the Law, Nehemiah, and the people realize that the reason Jerusalem's walls were destroyed was that they had turned away from God and committed sins. Despite this, they recognize that the rebuilding of the walls was made possible by God's grace and love for Israel, leading them to shed tears of repentance. When was a time in your life when you experienced God's grace, forgiving everything and giving you a fresh start?

3.2(God Meeting Us): As they remember the hardships and pain caused by sin, Nehemiah tells the people not to grieve but to rejoice and give thanks on God's holy day. God's grace has the power to bring joy even in times of sorrow. Have you also experienced God's ability to turn sorrow into joy in your life?

3.3(God Refinding Us): When rebuilding the wall and preparing for the festival, Nehemiah begins with God's Word, praising and finding strength in it. Worship should be a celebration like this. What is your experience of worship like? How do you conduct the festival and in what order? Let's share the impact and power of God's Word and praise in worship that moves us.

3.4(God Inspiring US): God's work is not meant to be forced or done with sadness. Instead, it should be a joyful and thankful ministry. How do you enjoy and sustain yourself in God's work?

4) Real Life Today: Are there any marginalized individuals in your faith community? What small steps can you take to invite them and experience the grace of joy together?

8. Nehemiah 9:27-38 (A Cry for Repentance)

1) Observation: Where is Nehemiah expressing his complaint about the Israelites' current state of "slavery"?

2) Interpretation: Nehemiah states that when Israel sinned, God patiently endured and sought to save them. What was how God brought about salvation? (verses 17, 30)

3) Application:

3.1(God Loving Us): Despite Israel rejecting God in the wilderness and the promised land, God showed His grace by sending saviors and prophets to lead them back from their sins. When you turned away from God's path, how did His grace manifest in your life? How did God reach out to you?

3.2(God Meeting Us): God also saves us through suffering. Have you experienced hardships that led you to return to God? How did you feel during that time, and how did God touch your heart?

3.3(God Refinding Us): Nehemiah acknowledges that the hardships God allowed for Israel were a result of their actions, confessing the responsibility for their suffering. True repentance involves acknowledging wrongdoing and taking responsibility. In response, God sees our genuine repentance and bestows the grace to become a holy people. What changes did you experience when you repented? What is the prayer of your heart before God to live as a "holy people"?

3.4(God Inspiring US): Nehemiah laments that the Israelites are currently facing persecution and ridicule from foreign nations in their "homeland" (the promised land) and repents for their sins. He appeals to God to look upon their situation and provide care (verse 32). What area of your life do you wholeheartedly repent and desire to be used by God's precious power?

4) Real Life Today: Just as the Israelite leaders in the passage left their mark of repentance by signing their commitment (verse 38), take a moment in your small group to share brief titles of repentance and pray together.

9. Nehemiah 12:27-47 (Offering of Thanksgiving)

1) Observation: Where is Nehemiah expressing his lamentation that the Israelites are currently engaging in 'idol worship'?

2) Interpretation: Nehemiah states that when the Israelites went astray, instead of punishing them, the Lord showed patience and sought to save them. What were the methods of salvation that the Lord employed? (verses 17, 30)

3) Application:

3.1(God Loving Us): Despite Israel forsaking the Lord in the wilderness and in the promised land, God, in His grace, sent saviors and prophets to lead them to repentance from their sins. How did God's grace manifest when you turned away from His path? How did God approach you in those moments?

3.2(God Meeting Us): God saves us even through trials and tribulations. Have you experienced hardships that led you to return to the Lord? How did you feel in your heart during that time, and how did God touch your heart?

3.3(God Refinding Us): Nehemiah confesses that the hardships permitted by the Lord were done so 'rightly' and that the responsibility for those hardships lies with 'us.' True repentance involves acknowledging mistakes and taking responsibility. During such moments, God observes our genuine repentance and bestows His grace upon us, making us holy people. What

changes did you experience during your repentance? What prayer of the heart do you offer to the Lord to live as a 'holy people'?

3.4(God Inspiring US): Nehemiah laments that the Israelites are currently facing persecution and mockery from the nations in their 'homeland' (the promised land). He repents for their sins and implores the Lord to look upon their situation and provide care (verse 32). In which area of your life do you wholeheartedly repent before God, desiring to be used by Him with your precious abilities?

4) Real Life Today: As the Israelite leaders in the passage left a record of their repentance through signatures (verse 38), take a moment in your small group to share one brief phrase each regarding the title of repentance and pray together.

10. Nehemiah 13:15-22, 30-31 (Cultivating a Holy Lifestyle)

1) Observation: When did Nehemiah close the gates before the Sabbath to prevent people from entering and violating the sanctity of the Sabbath?

2) Interpretation: Nehemiah, particularly emphasizing the importance of the Sabbath, reproaches the people and prays to God, asking Him to remember the work he has done in establishing the rules of the Sabbath and seeking blessings as a result. What blessings did Nehemiah desire to come through keeping the Sabbath?

3) Application:

3.1(God Loving Us): Nehemiah discovered that people were buying and selling on the Sabbath, disregarding the sanctity of the holy time. Is the sacred time (Sunday) dedicated to God in your life being respected and observed? Have there been times when you failed to observe the Sabbath? Let's examine the emotions that arose in your heart during those moments.

3.2(God Meeting Us): Nehemiah strongly rebukes those who do not observe the Sabbath, leading Israel to diligently follow the ordinances of the 'holy' time. Have you had an experience where God's voice awakened you to your wrongdoing? How did you feel at that time, and what actions did you take?

3.3(God Refinding Us): Nehemiah goes beyond verbal rebuke and implements the practice of closing the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath, to go beyond internal repentance and facilitate a change in action. What new rules need to be established in your life for a holy Sabbath time spent with God?

3.4(God Inspiring US): Nehemiah confronts people and establishes rules with wisdom for the reform of Israel. Who are the people you will face today for the mission entrusted to you by God? And how will you practice the mission given to you by the Lord?

4) Real Life Today: Is there anything subtly tolerated in your faith community that could undermine the holiness of the saints? Let's discuss ways to confront and bring about change together.