

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# BIBLE FOR ALL (BFA) MATERIAL FOR DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

**Dig Deeper Study Tools**

Author's Purpose  
Context  
Structure  
Linking Words  
Parallels  
Narrator's Comment  
Vocabulary  
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Tone and Feel  
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Bible Timeline  
"Who am I"  
"So What"

## **Nehemiah — Strengthening Faith, Strengthening Community**

**Sermon Series**

**04, 11 January 2026**

**January Study 1**

**Nehemiah 1:1-11**

**18 January 2026**

**January Study 2**

**Nehemiah 2:1-8**

## Introduction to Nehemiah (Biblical Theology Study Bible NIV)

The book of Nehemiah, along with its companion Ezra, comes from the time of the return from exile in Babylon and vividly narrates the obstacles and opposition the Jews encountered when they rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and eventually made the city habitable and secure. Ezra and later Nehemiah led the restoration and rebuilding not only of the broken city but also the broken people. Their roles were different, but we should not exaggerate the difference. Ezra, although primarily a teacher, had clear ideas about the constitution of the returned community; and Nehemiah, while primarily an administrator, had a vital spiritual life. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are both concerned with the interplay of the public and the personal and the inextricable link of the material and the spiritual.

### *Leading Themes*

Nehemiah comes to us first as a man of prayer before we see him in action as a gifted administrator and leader. All he does is driven by loyalty to the God of the covenant. He is passionate about the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the establishment of God's people in the land, including a resumption of community life and worship.

- The doctrine of God
- The supremacy of Scripture
- The history of salvation
- The importance of prayer
- The nature of leadership
- The provisional nature of the work: The book ends not with a great flourish but with a renewed call for faithfulness and a heartfelt prayer for God's help. Before the end of Nehemiah's service, initial enthusiasm is running out, leading to lapses into past ungodly practices. Until the kingdom is consummated, there will always be the need for faith, obedience, and daily dependence on the Lord's help.

### *The Portrait of Nehemiah in the Book*

Nehemiah comes across more vividly than Ezra. We should not rigidly distinguish between Ezra the spiritual leader and Nehemiah the political leader because each is prominent in both spheres. Yet Nehemiah, although a lay figure, is involved in projects of building and spiritual reformation usually associated with kings and prophets. Like Hezekiah and Josiah, he rebuilds and repairs the city and calls the people to return to the celebration of the great festivals that commemorate aspects of Israel's relationship with its covenant Lord.

Nehemiah is not strictly a prophet, but the book opens with the phrase "The words of Nehemiah," analogous to introductions in the Prophetic Books (e.g., Jer 1:1; Amos 1:1). His words often are prophetic (e.g., 2:12, 17–18), and false prophets harass him (6:10–14) as they do the great prophets. Neither is Nehemiah a priest, but he is thoroughly involved in the renewal of priests and Levites (chs. 7–13). He is not a perfect figure, and we are not invited to admire or imitate him in every respect—e.g., beating people and pulling out their hair (13:25)! We are not Nehemiah, but Nehemiah's God is our God; and we, like Nehemiah, are servants. Thus, we can see in the struggles he faced and the reforms he carried out a voice for our own day. Ezra and Nehemiah acted to restore Israel's covenant relationship with the Lord: they confessed their sin of

turning from the Lord in disobedience; they restored the Torah at the heart of the nation's life; and they carried out the necessary restoration to allow the kind of settled life and security where progress could be made.

### Relevance

- It is important to be rooted in the story of God's past dealings without living in the past and pining for a mythical golden age. The hard grind of recovery and reform is calculated to bring out strong faith.
- We must emphasise the gospel's uniqueness and confront spiritual and moral compromise.
- Prayer is the link between balancing God's sovereignty with the need for action.
- In our day we will never complete the work, because God begins and finishes that for his glory.

### Timeline (adapted from ESV Study Bible)

<i>Event</i>	<i>Month/Day</i>	<i>Year (BC)</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Cyrus king of Persia captures Babylon		539	Dan 5:30-31
First year of Cyrus; issues proclamation freeing Jewish exiles to return		538-537	Ezra 1:1-4
Jewish exiles, led by Sheshbazzar, return from Babylon to Jerusalem		537?	Ezra 1:11
Altar rebuilt		537	Ezra 3:1-2
Temple rebuilding begins		536	Ezra 3:8
Adversaries oppose the rebuilding		536-530	Ezra 4:1-5
Temple rebuilding ceases		530-520	Ezra 4:24
Temple rebuilding resumes (2 <sup>nd</sup> year of Darius)		520	Ezra 5:2; compare Hag 1:14
Temple construction completed (6 <sup>th</sup> year of Darius)		516	Ezra 6:15
Ezra departs from Babylon to Jerusalem (arrives 7 <sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes)		458	Ezra 7:6-9
Men of Judah and Benjamin assemble at Jerusalem		458	Ezra 10:9
Officials conduct three-month investigation (intermarriage)		458-457	Ezra 10:16-17
Artaxerxes decrees that work on Jerusalem's walls and foundations should stop		Just before 445	Ezra 4:7-23
Hanani brings Nehemiah a report from Jerusalem (20 <sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes I)		445-444	Neh 1:1
Nehemiah goes before Artaxerxes	1	445	Neh 2:1
Nehemiah arrives to inspect Jerusalem walls		445	Neh 2:11
Wall is finished	6/25	445	Neh 6:15
People of Israel gather	7	445	Neh 7:73-8:1
People of Israel celebrate Feast of Booths	7/15-22	445	Neh 8:14
People of Israel fast and confess sins	7/24	445	Neh 9:1
Nehemiah returns to Susa (32 <sup>nd</sup> year of Artaxerxes I)		433-432	Neh 5:14, 13:6

## Outline of Nehemiah (with preaching schedule)

BFA	Date	Text
<b>STRENGTHENING FAITH: THE RETURN OF NEHEMIAH AND THE REBUILDING OF JERUSALEM'S WALLS</b>		
Jan Study 1	4 Jan 2026	Be Resolute, Come in Brokenness Neh 1:1-4
	11 Jan 2026	Be Resolute, Seek God in Prayer Neh 1:5-11
Jan Study 2	18 Jan 2026	Be Resolute, Act on God's Timing Neh 2:1-8
	25 Jan 2026	Be Resolute, Discern Challenges & Rally God's People Neh 2:9-20
	1 Feb 2026	Be Resolute, Everyone Matters Neh 3:1-32
Feb Study 1	8 Feb 2026	Be Resolute, Fight for Our Families Neh 4:1-14
	15 Feb 2026	Be Resolute, God Fights for Us Neh 4:15-23
Feb Study 2	22 Feb 2026	Be Resolute, Fear God Neh 5:1-13
	1 Mar 2026	Be Resolute, Care for God's People Neh 5:14-19
Mar Study 1	8 Mar 2026	Be Resolute, Stay Focused Neh 6:1-14
Mar Study 2	15 Mar 2026	Be Resolute, Remain Vigilant Neh 6:15-19
	22 Mar 2026	Be Resolute, Appoint Godly Leaders Neh 7:1-3
	29 Mar 2026	PALM SUNDAY (break from Nehemiah series)
	5 Apr 2026	EASTER SUNDAY (break from Nehemiah series)
<b>STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY: THE PEOPLE AND THEIR RECOMMITMENT TO GOD</b>		
Apr Study 1	12 Apr 2026	Be Resolute, Guard Healthy Membership Neh 7:5-7, 60-73
Apr Study 2	19 Apr 2026	Be Resolute, Gather Around the Word Neh 8:1-7
	26 Apr 2026	Be Resolute, Celebrate His Grace Neh 8:8-18
May Study 1	3 May 2026	Be Resolute, Come in Confession and Worship Neh 9:1-8
	10 May 2026	Be Resolute, Remember God's Faithfulness Neh 9:9-21, 32-38
May Study 2	17 May 2026	Be Resolute, Commit As A Covenant Community Neh 10:1-3, 28-39

<i>BFA</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Text</i>
THE EFFORT TO STRENGTHEN FAITH AND COMMUNITY HAS TO CONTINUE: THE REDEDICATED PEOPLE WITH THE DEDICATED WALL		
Jul Study 1 (recap)	24 May 2026	Be Resolute, Take Up Your Assignment Neh 11:1-25
	31 May 2026	Be Resolute, God Remembers the Faithful Neh 12:1, 7-9, 22-26
	7 Jun 2026	Be Resolute, Celebrate God's Victory Neh 12:27-47
	14 Jun 2026	Be Resolute, Protect Worship Space Neh 13:1-14
	21 Jun 2026	Be Resolute, Guard Sacred Time Neh 13:15-22
	28 Jun 2026	Be Resolute, Reject Compromises Neh 13:23-31

**04, 11 January 2026**

**January Study 1**

**Nehemiah 1:1-11**

**PREPARE (INDIVIDUAL): READ, MARK, AND REFLECT**

Read the text throughout the week(s) before your group time.

*Nehemiah 1:1-11*

**Nehemiah's Prayer**

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, 2 Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

3 They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. 5 Then I said:

"Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, 6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. 7 We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

8 "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, 9 but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

10 "They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. 11 Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."

I was cupbearer to the king.

*Notes and Questions*

## **PREPARE TO SHARE (INDIVIDUAL): LOOK BACK**

What has God been teaching you in the last few weeks?

Who has God laid on your heart to pray for?

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## **GROUP: SHARE AND PRAY**

Take note of one another's prayer concerns.

Come together to pray for each other, the church, and the world (see this month's prayer bulletin).

## **GROUP: WORSHIP TOGETHER**

Prepare your hearts to meet God and one another in His Word through worshipping together.

## GROUP: STUDY 1

Read Nehemiah 1:1-11.



### OBSERVATION:

What do you notice as you read this passage?

1. What are we told about Nehemiah?
2. What is the problem being faced by Nehemiah?
3. What was Nehemiah's response to this problem?
4. What does Nehemiah say about God and about Israel in his prayer?



### INTERPRETATION:

What is the meaning & significance of your observations?

5. What is the link between the state of Jerusalem's walls and gate, and the people being in great trouble and disgrace?
6. What makes Nehemiah's response an appropriate response to the problem?

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are considered a single collection and are meant to be read together.

The month of Chislev:  
Nov-Dec period.

Susa: winter palace for the kings, in today's southwestern Iran.

The walls of Jerusalem were destroyed by the Babylonians in 586BC. Artaxerxes issued an imperial decree stopping the work on Jerusalem's walls probably just before 445BC, i.e. just before the events of Neh 1.

7. What gives Nehemiah confidence that his prayer will be answered positively?

8. What is Nehemiah really asking God for in his prayer? Why?



**BIG IDEA:** What is the main message of the passage? Sum up the main idea and supporting ideas.

9. Summarise Neh 1:1-11.

10. Think about our situation today. What unique situation has God placed us today to serve Him in? Consider our situations as individuals, and as a church.



**APPLICATION:**  
Why did the Holy Spirit give us this text?

11. Consider how Nehemiah's prayer can serve as a model for us in our prayers. List these down.

12. What does Nehemiah's example show us in how we should respond to setbacks in gospel work?

### **GROUP: DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS**

As a group, decide on a group discipleship goal for the year. Commit the goal to God in prayer as Nehemiah did.

**18 January 2026**

**January Study 2**

**Nehemiah 2:1-8**

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**PREPARE (INDIVIDUAL): READ, MARK, AND REFLECT**

Read the text throughout the week(s) before your group time.

*Nehemiah 2:1-8*

**Artaxerxes Sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem**

2 In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, 2 so the king asked me, “Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.”

I was very much afraid, 3 but I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?”

4 The king said to me, “What is it you want?”

Then I prayed to the God of heaven, 5 and I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it.”

6 Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, “How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?” It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.

7 I also said to him, “If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? 8 And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?” And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests.

*Notes and Questions*

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## **GROUP: SHARE AND PRAY**

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Come together to pray for each other, the church, and the world (see this month's prayer bulletin).

## **GROUP: WORSHIP TOGETHER**

Prepare your hearts to meet God and one another in His Word through worshipping together.

## GROUP: STUDY 2

Read Nehemiah 2:1-8.



OBSERVATION:

What do you notice as you read this passage?

1. When does this passage take place? How long has it been since the events of Nehemiah 1?
2. There are three dialogues in this passage. In each dialogue, the king asks, and Nehemiah answers. Note down what is said by the king and by Nehemiah, and any thoughts/questions you have about it.

Text	King says:	Nehemiah says:	Thoughts/Observations
2:2-3			
2:4-5			
2:6-8			

Nisan: Mar/Apr

Mourning and sadness before the king was prohibited (see also Esther 4:2). All were expected to be joyful in service to the king. Nehemiah is in danger of death by showing his unhappiness before Artaxerxes.

Family ties were extremely important in the ancient Near East. One of the primary family responsibilities was to care for the remains or tombs of one's ancestors. Artaxerxes would have been sympathetic to this appeal of Nehemiah to rebuild the city where his ancestors were buried lest it become a ruin and a wasteland.

The letters ensure that Nehemiah can get where he is going as a recognised representative of Artaxerxes – Nehemiah may have been worried about encountering hostility and political opposition. The letters also ensure provisions from the royal stores.



