

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# BIBLE FOR ALL (BFA) MATERIAL FOR DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

**Dig Deeper Study Tools**

Author's Purpose  
Context  
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"Who am I"  
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## **Nehemiah — Strengthening Faith, Strengthening Community**

**Sermon Series**

**08 March 2026**

**March Study 1**

**Nehemiah 6:1-14**

**15, 22 March 2026**

**March Study 2**

**Nehemiah 6:15-7:3**

## 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

**08 March 2026**  
**March Study 1**  
**Nehemiah 6:1-14**

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

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

*Nehemiah 6:1-14*

<sup>6</sup> When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates—

<sup>2</sup> Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.”

But they were scheming to harm me; <sup>3</sup> so I sent messengers to them with this reply: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?”

<sup>4</sup> Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.

<sup>5</sup> Then, the fifth time, Sanballat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter <sup>6</sup> in which was written:

“It is reported among the nations—and Geshem says it is true—that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king <sup>7</sup> and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: ‘There is a king in Judah!’ Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us meet together.”

<sup>8</sup> I sent him this reply: “Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head.”

<sup>9</sup> They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.”

But I prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.”

<sup>10</sup> One day I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was shut in at his home. He said, “Let us meet in the house of God, inside the temple, and let us close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you—by night they are coming to kill you.”

*Notes and Questions*

This is near Samaria (Sanballat’s home territory), about 43.5km northwest of Jerusalem and 11km southeast of Jooppa in the westernmost area settled by the returning Jews.

Letters were usually sealed with a clay bulla (seal) to ensure that it had not been opened.

Shemaiah is potentially banned from the temple, or perhaps ritually defiled.

<sup>11</sup> But I said, “Should a man like me run away? Or should someone like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go!” <sup>12</sup> I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had prophesied against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. <sup>13</sup> He had been hired to intimidate me so that I would commit a sin by doing this, and then they would give me a bad name to discredit me.

<sup>14</sup> Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophet Noadiah and how she and the rest of the prophets have been trying to intimidate me.

## **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 6:1-14.



### CONTEXT:

What happens around (before/after/during) this passage?

1. What is happening in the broader story of Nehemiah at this point in chapter 6? How close is the wall to completion, and why does that matter?



### OBSERVATION:

What do you notice as you read this passage?

2. What attempts were made to distract Nehemiah from the rebuilding of the wall? What was Nehemiah's response?

Who	Attempt made	Nehemiah's response
(vv.1-4)		
(vv.5-9)		
(vv.10-13)		

3. What strikes you about how Nehemiah chooses to respond to each attempt?
4. Consider v.14. What does this tell you about the situation Nehemiah has been facing?

Think further:  
What does this show about Nehemiah's priorities and how he prioritises what to do?

Think further: how would you have responded to Sanballat's letters?



### INTERPRETATION:

What is the meaning & significance of your observations?

5. What makes the fifth letter (v.5) different from the first four? What was Sanballat trying to do with this letter? (Consider also the original circumstances in which the rebuilding of Jerusalem was stopped)
  
6. How does Nehemiah's response to Sanballat's letter in vv.5-9 reflect his trust in God?
  
7. Why does Nehemiah reject Shemaiah's suggestion of taking refuge in the temple? How does Nehemiah know that Shemaiah's advice is not from God?



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

8. Summarise the threats faced by Nehemiah and his responses in this passage.
  
9. How does this passage connect with the repeated theme of opposition in Nehemiah 4-6?

Think further: Nehemiah's response is one that most of us would probably find difficult. How do you think he is able to respond this way?

Think further: what would have happened if Nehemiah had agreed? What implications are there on his obedience to the law and his credibility/reputation?

This passage is focused on the threats posed and Nehemiah's response – the main idea of the text should focus on these as well.



**15, 22 March 2026**

**March Study 2**

**Nehemiah 6:15-7:3**

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

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

*Nehemiah 6:15-7:3*

<sup>15</sup> So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days.

**Opposition to the Completed Wall**

<sup>16</sup> When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

<sup>17</sup> Also, in those days the nobles of Judah were sending many letters to Tobiah, and replies from Tobiah kept coming to them. <sup>18</sup> For many in Judah were under oath to him, since he was son-in-law to Shekaniah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berekiah. <sup>19</sup> Moreover, they kept reporting to me his good deeds and then telling him what I said. And Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me.

<sup>7</sup> After the wall had been rebuilt and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers, the musicians and the Levites were appointed. <sup>2</sup> I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most people do. <sup>3</sup> I said to them, "The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot. While the gatekeepers are still on duty, have them shut the doors and bar them. Also appoint residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some near their own houses."

*Notes and Questions*

This is the end of high summer (Aug/Sep). Elul is also the month just before Tishri. In the month of Tishri, the Jews celebrate the New Year (Rosh Hashanah), the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and the Feast of Booths (Sukkot). It is a time of repentance and preparation.

Meshullam is noted as having helped to repair the wall of Jerusalem in Neh 3:4, 30.

Gates were usually opened at dawn.

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

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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 2

Read Nehemiah 6:15-7:3.



### CONTEXT:

What happens around (before/after/during) this passage?

1. What attempts have been made so far to stop the rebuilding of the wall?



### OBSERVATION:

What do you notice as you read this passage?

2. How long did it take for the wall to be completed? What effect did this have on the surrounding nations?

3. What ongoing problems are described in Neh 6:17–19 despite the wall being finished?

4. Who does Nehemiah choose to be in charge of Jerusalem? What criteria does he use to choose?

5. What instructions does Nehemiah give for the security of Jerusalem? What surprises you about these?

6. Read Neh 7:4. What does this verse tell us about the work that remains?

Think further:

Honour/shame (“losing face” as an example of shame) was a concept strongly embedded in the culture of the Ancient Near East.



**INTERPRETATION:**

What is the meaning & significance of your observations?

- 7. Why are the ongoing problems in Neh 6:17-19 still troubling for Nehemiah given that the wall had already been rebuilt?
  
- 8. Why do you think Nehemiah uses the criteria he does for choosing who to place in charge of Jerusalem?
  
- 9. How does Neh 7:4 serve as a hinge in the story of Nehemiah? What does it tell us about the purpose of Nehemiah's rebuilding project?



**BIG IDEA: What is the main message of the passage?**

Sum up the main idea and supporting ideas.

- 10. In one sentence, summarise what is said in Neh 6:15-7:4.
  
- 11. Consider Jerusalem's situation in Nehemiah 6:15-7:4. How is this similar or different to the church today?

Think further: What is the state of the Jewish people's faith at this point?

The main idea answers two questions: First, "Who or what is the author talking about in the passage?" That's the question of the topic. Second, "What does the author want me to know about the topic?" or "What is the author saying about what he is talking about in the text?" What is his claim or argument, or proposition about the topic? The second question leads to the main idea.



**APPLICATION:**

Why did the Holy Spirit give us this text?

12. The wall was rebuilt, but Nehemiah did not become complacent. What safeguards – spiritual or practical – might God be calling you to put in place to protect what He has already built in your life or community? In what areas would you be tempted to complacency?

**GROUP: DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS**

Share with your group one personal takeaway from today's study.