

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BIBLE FOR ALL (BFA) MATERIAL FOR DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Dig Deeper Study Tools

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Nehemiah — Strengthening Faith, Strengthening Community

Sermon Series

03, 10 May 2026

May Study 1

Nehemiah 9:1-38

17 May 2026

May Study 2

Nehemiah 10:1-39

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 nd year of Darius)		520	Ezra 5:2; compare Hag 1:14
Temple construction completed (6 th year of Darius)		516	Ezra 6:15
Ezra departs from Babylon to Jerusalem (arrives 7 th 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 th 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 nd year of Artaxerxes I)		433-432	Neh 5:14, 13:6

Outline of Nehemiah (with preaching schedule)

BFA	Date	Text
STRENGTHENING FAITH: THE RETURN OF NEHEMIAH AND THE REBUILDING OF JERUSALEM'S WALLS		
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)
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY: THE PEOPLE AND THEIR RECOMMITMENT TO GOD		
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

03, 10 May 2026

May Study 1

Nehemiah 9:1-38

PREPARE (INDIVIDUAL): READ, MARK, AND REFLECT

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

Nehemiah 9:1-38

The Israelites Confess Their Sins

On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and putting dust on their heads. ² Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the sins of their ancestors. ³ They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the Lord their God. ⁴ Standing on the stairs of the Levites were Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani and Kenani. They cried out with loud voices to the Lord their God. ⁵ And the Levites—Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah and Pethahiah—said: “Stand up and praise the Lord your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting.”

“Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. ⁶ You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

⁷ “You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham. ⁸ You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Girgashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous.

⁹ “You saw the suffering of our ancestors in Egypt; you heard their cry at the Red Sea. ¹⁰ You sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them. You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day. ¹¹ You divided the sea before them, so that they passed through it on dry ground, but you hurled their pursuers into the depths, like a stone into mighty waters. ¹² By day you led them with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire to give them light on the way they were to take.

¹³ “You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good. ¹⁴ You made known to them your holy Sabbath and gave them commands, decrees and laws

Notes and Questions
The 24th day of the same month i.e. immediately following the solemn assembly in Nehemiah 8.

Fasting, wearing sackcloth, and putting dust on their heads were visible signs of mourning.

See Gen 12

See Exod 1-15

See Exod 20-24

through your servant Moses. ¹⁵ In their hunger you gave them bread from heaven and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock; you told them to go in and take possession of the land you had sworn with uplifted hand to give them.

See Exod 17
See Num 13-14

¹⁶ “But they, our ancestors, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and they did not obey your commands. ¹⁷ They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them, ¹⁸ even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, ‘This is your god, who brought you up out of Egypt,’ or when they committed awful blasphemies.

See Num 14:4

See Exod 32

¹⁹ “Because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the wilderness. By day the pillar of cloud did not fail to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take. ²⁰ You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst. ²¹ For forty years you sustained them in the wilderness; they lacked nothing, their clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen.

See Exod 13-14; also
Num 14:14

²² “You gave them kingdoms and nations, allotting to them even the remotest frontiers. They took over the country of Sihon king of Heshbon and the country of Og king of Bashan. ²³ You made their children as numerous as the stars in the sky, and you brought them into the land that you told their parents to enter and possess. ²⁴ Their children went in and took possession of the land. You subdued before them the Canaanites, who lived in the land; you gave the Canaanites into their hands, along with their kings and the peoples of the land, to deal with them as they pleased. ²⁵ They captured fortified cities and fertile land; they took possession of houses filled with all kinds of good things, wells already dug, vineyards, olive groves and fruit trees in abundance. They ate to the full and were well-nourished; they reveled in your great goodness.

See the book of
Joshua

²⁶ “But they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they turned their backs on your law. They killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you; they committed awful blasphemies. ²⁷ So you delivered them into the hands of their enemies, who oppressed them. But when they were oppressed they cried out to you. From heaven you heard them, and in your great compassion you gave them deliverers, who rescued them from the hand of their enemies.

See the books of
Judges, 1 Samuel, 2
Samuel, 1 Kings, 2
Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2
Chronicles

²⁸ “But as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight. Then you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies so that they ruled over them. And when they cried out to you again, you

heard from heaven, and in your compassion you delivered them time after time.

²⁹ “You warned them in order to turn them back to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands. They sinned against your ordinances, of which you said, ‘The person who obeys them will live by them.’ Stubbornly they turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen. ³⁰ For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you warned them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you gave them into the hands of the neighboring peoples. ³¹ But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

³² “Now therefore, our God, the great God, mighty and awesome, who keeps his covenant of love, do not let all this hardship seem trifling in your eyes—the hardship that has come on us, on our kings and leaders, on our priests and prophets, on our ancestors and all your people, from the days of the kings of Assyria until today. ³³ In all that has happened to us, you have remained righteous; you have acted faithfully, while we acted wickedly. ³⁴ Our kings, our leaders, our priests and our ancestors did not follow your law; they did not pay attention to your commands or the statutes you warned them to keep. ³⁵ Even while they were in their kingdom, enjoying your great goodness to them in the spacious and fertile land you gave them, they did not serve you or turn from their evil ways.

³⁶ “But see, we are slaves today, slaves in the land you gave our ancestors so they could eat its fruit and the other good things it produces. ³⁷ Because of our sins, its abundant harvest goes to the kings you have placed over us. They rule over our bodies and our cattle as they please. We are in great distress.

The Agreement of the People

³⁸ “In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it.”

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?

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.



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

10. What is the central message of Nehemiah 9:1-38? Consider what the Israelites did and said about God and about themselves, and how this flows into the central message.

11. Consider the pattern(s) you have observed in this text. How do you see this reflected in both our community and individual lives today?



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

12. Nehemiah 9:1-3, 38 show the people responding to God in renewed commitment.
 - a. What does it take for us to repent and return to God like the Israelites did?

 - b. What would it look like for us to respond to God in similarly concrete ways today?

 - c. How might this shape the way we practice confession, prayer, and commitment in our discipleship groups?

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.

→ Examine our own lives. What areas have we fallen short, and/or what areas are we still living in sin?

→ What should we do to be right with God? What are the steps for us to take to live godly lives?

Think further: Israel's confession is shaped by their salvation history. What is your own personal salvation history?

17 May 2026
May Study 2
Nehemiah 10:1-39

PREPARE (INDIVIDUAL): READ, MARK, AND REFLECT

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

Nehemiah 10:1-39

Notes and Questions

Those who sealed it were:

Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hakaliah.

Zedekiah, ² Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,

³ Pashhur, Amariah, Malkijah,

⁴ Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluk,

⁵ Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,

⁶ Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,

⁷ Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,

⁸ Maaziah, Bilgai and Shemaiah.

These were the priests.

⁹ The Levites:

Jeshua son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel,

¹⁰ and their associates: Shebaniah,

Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,

¹¹ Mika, Rehob, Hashabiah,

¹² Zakkur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,

¹³ Hodiah, Bani and Beninu.

¹⁴ The leaders of the people:

Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani,

¹⁵ Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,

¹⁶ Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,

¹⁷ Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur,

¹⁸ Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai,

¹⁹ Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,

²⁰ Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,

²¹ Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua,

²² Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,

²³ Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub,

²⁴ Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek,

²⁵ Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,

²⁶ Ahiah, Hanan, Anan,

²⁷ Malluk, Harim and Baanah.

²⁸ "The rest of the people—priests, Levites, gatekeepers, musicians, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand— ²⁹ all these now join their fellow Israelites the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of

God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the Lord our Lord.

³⁰ “We promise not to give our daughters in marriage to the peoples around us or take their daughters for our sons.

See Exod 34:16;
Deut 7:3

³¹ “When the neighboring peoples bring merchandise or grain to sell on the Sabbath, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on any holy day. Every seventh year we will forgo working the land and will cancel all debts.

See Exod 20:10;
Deut 5:12; Lev 23:3
See Exod 23:10; Lev
25:4; Deut 15:1-2

³² “We assume the responsibility for carrying out the commands to give a third of a shekel each year for the service of the house of our God: ³³ for the bread set out on the table; for the regular grain offerings and burnt offerings; for the offerings on the Sabbaths, at the New Moon feasts and at the appointed festivals; for the holy offerings; for sin offerings to make atonement for Israel; and for all the duties of the house of our God.

See Exod 30:13-14

See Lev 24:5-9

³⁴ “We—the priests, the Levites and the people—have cast lots to determine when each of our families is to bring to the house of our God at set times each year a contribution of wood to burn on the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the Law.

³⁵ “We also assume responsibility for bringing to the house of the Lord each year the firstfruits of our crops and of every fruit tree.

See Exod 23:19,
34:26; Lev 19:23-24,
Lev 23:17; Num
18:12; Deut 18:4,
26:2

³⁶ “As it is also written in the Law, we will bring the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, of our herds and of our flocks to the house of our God, to the priests ministering there.

See Exod 13:2, 12-
13; Lev 27:26; Num
18:15-16

³⁷ “Moreover, we will bring to the storerooms of the house of our God, to the priests, the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and olive oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work. ³⁸ A priest descended from Aaron is to accompany the Levites when they receive the tithes, and the Levites are to bring a tenth of the tithes up to the house of our God, to the storerooms of the treasury. ³⁹ The people of Israel, including the Levites, are to bring their contributions of grain, new wine and olive oil to the storerooms, where the articles for the sanctuary and for the ministering priests, the gatekeepers and the musicians are also kept.

See Num 18:21-24

See Num 18:25-29

“We will not neglect the house of our God.”

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?

GROUP: SHARE AND PRAY

Take note of one another's prayer concerns.

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GROUP: WORSHIP TOGETHER

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



INTERPRETATION:

What is the meaning & significance of your observations?

4. Consider the commitments made by Israel in Nehemiah 10:30-39, and the references noted beside them in page 14. Do you think the Israelites are making a new covenant with God? Explain your thinking.

5. Nehemiah 10:30-39a can be divided into two major sections – Nehemiah 10:30-33, and Nehemiah 10:34-39a. What sub-headers would you give these sections?

6. Why do you think the people begin with commitments about marriage and separation from surrounding peoples (v.30)? Why is this the most important commitment they are making?

7. What does the emphasis on Sabbath observance and debt release (v.31) reveal about how God's people were to trust Him and order their lives?

8. What do the commitments that Israel made to bring to the house of the Lord tell us about God's identity and position?

9. How do the commitments in this passage show us what it looks like for God's people to live faithfully after confessing their sins?

