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# Wednesday in the Word

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## **Nehemiah**

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# How to Study

## Setting

Read the text to get a feeling for the setting of the action. Where or under what circumstances is the action taking place? Describe this setting based upon the events of the preceding passage and/or upon the opening few verses of this passage.

## Outline

Read the entire passage carefully noting the shifts in focus on persons and events or the shifts of scene from one place to another. Separate the passage into major scenes and write a one sentence summary of each scene, putting the story into your own words.

## Observations

For each of the scenes in your outline answer the following questions:

- What words are repeated in the text?
- List common themes in each scene. Note key words that help lead to your conclusions.
- List the similarities and contrasts between the scenes.

## Characters:

- Who are the main characters?
- How does the passage give insight into the characters and what motivates them?
- Describe the relationships between the characters in each scene, noting any changes from preceding passages and chapters.
- Do you see God at work either explicitly or implicitly?
- If God's prophet (Samuel) appears in the scene, what is his function?
- If God's King (David or Saul) is in the scene, what is he suppose to learn?

## Themes & Spiritual Principles

- Consider the descriptions, actions of and reactions to the people of God in this scene. Does any of it remind you of passages in the gospels concerning Jesus? Or other New Testament characters?
- Look for and state any spiritual principles from this passage. (A spiritual principle is a universal, timeless truth.) For example, does this passage teach something about the nature of mankind that is always true of one who has the Spirit and/or one who does not? Does something in the text reveal God's character, or how He works or acts?
- Do you see themes in this passage that go beyond this text and are repeated in other passages of Scripture?

## Application:

- Look for patterns or examples of success or failures and what we learn from them that we could apply to our lives today.
- Look for lessons about God that are applicable to our lives today.

## Suggested Reading

### How to Study the Bible

- [Basics of Bible Interpretation, by Bob Smith](http://www.raystedman.org/leadership/smith/) – a classic! great for the beginner. Now available FREE online, though I believe you can still buy a paper copy.  
<http://www.raystedman.org/leadership/smith/>
- [Adventuring Through the Bible: A Comprehensive Guide to the Entire Bible, by Ray C Stedman](http://www.raystedman.org/bible-overview/adventuring) – this is my favorite one-volume commentary; It is often my starting point when beginning a new study. You can buy a paper copy or access it FREE online.  
<http://www.raystedman.org/bible-overview/adventuring>
- [Precepts Austin – How to do an Inductive Study](http://www.preceptaustin.org/inductive_bible_study.htm) — Complete at least the first 3 lessons in how to do an inductive bible study. Then explore the rest of the resources on this helpful site. [http://www.preceptaustin.org/inductive\\_bible\\_study.htm](http://www.preceptaustin.org/inductive_bible_study.htm)
- [\*Living by the Book\*](#), (Book and Workbook) by Howard G Hendricks & William Hendricks – also available as an ebook and a video series. Don't be intimidated by the size of the book. The writing is clear and engaging and you will learn a lot.
- [\*How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth\*](#), by Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart – this is a must have resource; no Bible student should be without and it now comes as an e-book. Re-read the chapter for your particular type of passage when you start a new study.
- [\*He Gave us Stories: The Bible Student's Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives\*](#), by Richard L Pratt Jr

### Nehemiah

- *Nehemiah: Experiencing the Hand of God*, by John MacArthur. One of the study guides in the MacArthur Bible Study series.
- *Hand me Another Brick: How Effective Leaders Motivate Themselves and Others*, by Charles Swindoll. Thomas Nelson, 1998.
- *Excellence in Leadership: Reaching Goals with Prayer, Courage & Determination*, by John White. Intervarsity Press, 1986

For more bible study resources and to listen to podcasts on Nehemiah, visit:  
[www.wednesdayintheword.com](http://www.wednesdayintheword.com)

# Nehemiah Outline

Summary: Author is writing to:

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CHAPTER	THEME	KEY VERSE
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

CHAPTER	THEME	KEY VERSE
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		

# Nehemiah 1

1. In Chapter 1:4, Nehemiah responds to the news about the exiles in 4 ways. What's the difference between them? Why would he decide to include all 4?
2. What are the main points of the prayer in chapter 1?
3. Why do you think Nehemiah addressed God in this particular way? (vs. 5-6)
4. Why does Nehemiah describe the people of Israel as he does in vs. 6-7?
5. Nehemiah quotes the Old Testament in vs. 8-9. (Lev. 26:33; Deut 30:1-3) Why do you think he quoted these passages?
6. Given the content of this prayer, why do you think Nehemiah finishes with the simple request in vs. 10-11?

*What traits in Nehemiah's prayer life (as seen in Chapter 1), would you like to see in your prayer life?*



## **Notes Nehemiah 1**

**Study:** Read through the passage several times. Analyze the setting and the characters, and record your observations on themes and application.

**Dig Deeper:** Ezra 4:7-24; Acts 13:2 & 14:23

## Nehemiah 2

*Chapter 2 continues Nehemiah's story in three scenes: verses 1-8; verses 9-16; and verses 17-20. As you read them, picture each of these scenes visually as if they were a movie playing before you. Use the questions below to help you fill in details and the "actors" motivation.*

1. Scene 1, vs. 1-8 — Nehemiah tells us he's afraid in vs. 2. What does he have to fear? Why do you think Nehemiah chose to approach the king in the manner he does? What does Nehemiah's language and approach tell you about how Nehemiah prepared for this meeting? What risk is he taking?
2. Scene 2, vs. 9-16 — Why do you think Nehemiah explores the city alone, on horseback at night? What is he hoping to learn by his ride? What risks is he taking? Avoiding?
3. Scene 3, vs. 17-20 — How does Nehemiah approach the people? How does Nehemiah face his enemies?
4. How are these 3 scenes similar? What do they tell us about Nehemiah's character? What must Nehemiah believe about God to take these actions?
5. What do these scenes tell you about leadership?
6. How did God answer Nehemiah's request in his prayer from chapter 1?

*In what specific ways did Nehemiah demonstrate his dependence on God and how could you learn from them to confront a situation in your life with greater dependence on God?*

## **Notes Nehemiah 2**

Outline & summarize this section in your own words.

**Dig Deeper:** Acts 5:27-39

## **Nehemiah 3**

*In chapter 3 Nehemiah records the list of who built what part of the wall. Why would Nehemiah include this list? Pay attention to the details in the list. What can you learn about the people who built the wall? Who are they? What season of life are they in? What kind of jobs do they hold? How do they work together? etc.*

Compare with 1 Kings 5:1-18 and Solomon's building project.

*If someone wrote a summary (similar to Nehemiah 3) of who's doing what in your church, how would you be listed? What can you learn about accomplishing an overwhelming task?*

## **Notes Nehemiah 3**

Outline & summarize this section in your own words.

**Dig Deeper:** 1 Corinthians 12; Proverbs 14:23; Romans 12:10-11

## **Nehemiah 4**

1. Chapter 4 records the opposition the people face. Describe the opposition as it progresses through the chapter. (Note vs. 1-3, 7-8, 11,15)
  
2. How does Nehemiah respond to the opposition? (Pay attention to his prayer, his words, and his actions in vs. 4-6, 9, 13-14)
  
3. How do the people respond to the opposition? (Note vs. 10-12)
  
4. How does Nehemiah lead the people in the face of opposition? (vs. 14-23)
  
5. What does this chapter teach you about leadership? About God's faithfulness? About facing an impossible task?

*When you face opposition and/or criticism on a project or church endeavor, how could you respond in a way that is pleasing to God?*

## **Notes Nehemiah 4**

Outline & summarize this section in your own words.

**Dig Deeper:** 2 Chronicles 32:1-23; 1 Samuel 17:14-47; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

## Nehemiah 5

1. In Chapter 5 what form of opposition do the people face now? (vs. 1-5)
2. Review the Laws on interest (Deut 23:19-20; Exodus 22: 21-27) and slavery (Exodus 21:1-11). What were the people suppose to do and what were they doing that made Nehemiah angry?
3. Contrast the practices of the nobles and officials in vs. 7-12 with the practices of Nehemiah in vs. 13-19. How does Nehemiah explain the difference (vs. 15-16)? What does that tell you about godly leadership?
4. How does Nehemiah deal with the leaders abusing the law? Note vs. 6-8, 13. What does that tell you about godly leadership? Hint: Try circling every verb (i.e. action word) connected with Nehemiah in this chapter.

*Consider your track record of dealing with people. Are you more like the rich Jews of Nehemiah's day or a servant-leader like Nehemiah? What might you ask God to change about you in how you deal with others.*



## **Notes Nehemiah 5**

Outline & summarize this section in your own words

**Dig Deeper:** Jeremiah 22:13-19; Proverbs 19:23; Luke 22:25-27

## **Nehemiah 6**

*Chapter 6 records three tests of Nehemiah's character and leadership. Describe the temptation Nehemiah faces in each test. Are the three tests the same or different? How does Nehemiah respond to each test? (Underline every response Nehemiah makes to his enemies.) Compare their overall objective with Nehemiah's response.*

Vs. 1-4

Vs. 5-9

Vs. 10-14

What else can you learn about godly leadership from the way Nehemiah faces these tests?

*What kind of opposition are you facing in your walk right now? How can you apply the lessons of Nehemiah 6. Consider when it is appropriate to "turn the other cheek" and when you need to resist and stand firm?*

## **Notes Nehemiah 6**

Outline & summarize this section in your own words

**Dig Deeper:** Ephesians 6:10-18; Acts 21:10-14; Deuteronomy 13:1-5

## **Nehemiah 7**

1. In Chapter 7, what does Nehemiah look for in leaders? (vs. 2)
2. 7:5 tells us God put it in Nehemiah's heart to register the people. Remember that Nehemiah's primary concern has been helping the people regain a strong faith in God while the people tend to mix their religion with the other religions. Given that, why do you think God wanted Nehemiah to create a registry? (Note vs. 2, 61-64).
3. Why did Nehemiah give special instructions about guards and locked gates?

*In light of Nehemiah's example, what criteria should we follow in choosing leaders? How could you develop leadership qualities?*

## **Notes Nehemiah 7**

Outline & summarize this section in your own words

**Dig Deeper:** Acts 6:1-7;1 Timothy 3:2-7

## **Nehemiah 8**

1. Chapter 8 records a great hunger among the people to not just know but to understand the word of God. What are the qualifications for attending (vs. 2-3)?
  
2. How do the people respond to understanding God's word and how do the leaders help them understand it? (vs. 3-8)
  
3. Why do Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites encourage the people to celebrate? (vs. 9-12) Why is there great rejoicing? (vs. 12-13, 17)
  
4. In verses 13-15 the people celebrate the Feasts of Booths. Read about this feast in Leviticus 23:34-43. Why do you think God had them celebrate this particular feast right after the walls are rebuilt?

*If you were not a Christian and you continually met believes who rarely read the Bible and were largely ignorant of its content, what would you think of them and/or Christianity? What do you need to change about your relationship to the Word of God?*

## **Notes Nehemiah 8**

Outline & summarize this section in your own words

**Dig Deeper:** Psalm 119:1-48

## Nehemiah 9

1. The prayer in Chapter 9 occurs about 3 weeks after the first reading of the Law in chapter 8. Why have the people gone from celebrating to mourning? (vs. 1-3)
2. This prayer includes the history of the Israelites (Abram vs. 7; Egypt vs. 9; Mount Sinai vs. 13; the land vs 23; the exile 30; the return vs. 31). What must the people have done to learn the content of this prayer?
3. How does this prayer describe God? Note the verses that begin “Thou didst” or “You” and describe God’s actions and character.
4. Contrast the verses above with the “but they” verses which describe the people. (Note vs. 33 particularly)
5. Vs. 32-38 summarize and conclude the prayer. What do you think the main point of the prayer is? What do you think the main request of this prayer is?

*Consider your own spiritual history. How has God revealed his love and mercy to you? What lessons from the past should you remember today to keep from making foolish choices?*



## **Notes Nehemiah 9**

Outline & summarize this section in your own words

**Dig Deeper:** Exodus 24:1-8; Psalm 78; 1 John 1:5-10

## **Nehemiah 10-11**

1. Given the content of the prayer in Chapter 9, why do you think the people made a vow in chapter 10?
2. What is the content of the vow? (vs. 28-32) Why do you think they picked these three areas to include in the vow?
3. In their culture, what is the significance of intermarriage? Of keeping the Sabbath? Of supporting the Levites and priests?
4. Consider other instances of vow-making in the Bible. Are the people in Nehemiah's day different? Exodus 24:3-7; Mark 14:27-29
5. In Chapter 11:1-2, why do you think most people did not want to live in the newly rebuilt city of Jerusalem?
6. Why do you think those who volunteered to live in Jerusalem were "blessed"? (vs. 2)

*When have you been motivated to recommit yourself to the Lord? Who holds you accountable in your walk with God?*

## **Notes Nehemiah 10-11**

Outline & summarize this section in your own words

**Dig Deeper:** Deuteronomy 29:1-13; Matthew 6:19-21

## **Nehemiah 12**

1. Chapter 12:27-47 describes the celebration when the walls were dedicated. As you read it, visually picture the scene as if it were a movie. Compare this “tour” along the walls with Nehemiah’s ride in chapter 2.
2. How have the people changed since chapter 2? What have they learned about themselves and their God? (Consider the opposition they faced in chapters 5 & 6, their hunger for God’s word in Chapter 8, their prayer in Chapter 9, their vow in chapter 10 and their re-population of Jerusalem in Chapter 11.)
3. What was the purpose of their celebration? (vs. 43, 45)
4. In many churches today, believers engage in “worship war” conflicts over music and liturgy. Consider the celebration in chapter 12. How might we resolve or avoid those conflicts?

*Review the words used to describe the worship of the Israelites at the rededication of the Jerusalem walls (12:27-47). Which of these words describe your own worship experience lately?*

## **Notes Nehemiah 12**

Outline & summarize this section in your own words

**Dig Deeper:** Mark 14:3-9

## **Nehemiah 13**

*Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in 445 BC and ruled as governor for 12 years (until 433 BC). (See 1:1, 2:1 & 5:13) 13:6 tells us he returned to Persia in 433 BC. Chapter 13 records the events upon his return to Jerusalem some years later.*

1. Compare what Nehemiah finds in chapter 13 with the vow in chapter 10:30-33. Note 13:7, 10, 15, 23-24.
2. Describe Nehemiah's reactions to what he finds. (vs. 8-9, 11, 17-21, 25-27).
3. Does Nehemiah overreact to their sins? Why is his response so ruthless? What is his motivation? (vs. 14, 29, 31)

*Have any close associations with people of the world had a negative effect on your spiritual health? Have you allowed any non-biblical actions or attitudes to creep into your life?*

## **Notes Nehemiah 13**

Outline & summarize this section in your own words

**Dig Deeper:** 1 Kings 11:1-11; Matthew 21:12; Malachi 2:1-8