

# BUILDING UNITY

# BRICK BY BRICK



## STUDY GUIDE

### CHAPTERS 1-2

### INTRODUCTION

The book of Nehemiah comes from an interesting time in the history of God's chosen people, Israel. A remnant had returned to Jerusalem with the permission of the king of Persia in order to rebuild the temple. (See the book of Ezra for the story of Zerubbabel and Ezra) After the temple was rebuilt, a sixty year gap ensued before Ezra came to Jerusalem to re-establish worship in accordance with the Law of God. He is there for thirteen years before Nehemiah arrives to work on rebuilding the city walls and restoring order in what has become a disgraceful blemish for Israel.

Scan this code to watch through this overview of Ezra and Nehemiah from the Bible Project:



### Discussion 1

1. **What sticks out to you about the books of Ezra and Nehemiah?**
2. **Why do you think these stories all end with struggle instead of victory?**

### READ: NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 1

Have you ever felt a burden for something? Maybe you've seen someone in a difficult situation, or feel the pressure of some years work that needs done and your heart aches just a little bit over it. For Nehemiah, we see a burden that almost doesn't make sense. He is living in the palace of a powerful king with a very respected position. It's already been almost 75 years since people from the Babylonian captivity have been allowed to go back to Israel, and yet Nehemiah has found himself comfortable in the land of exile. There is no real need for him to worry about the city of Jerusalem or for him to care about the protection of it's people. Yet, here he is broken over a report of the city walls still lying in ruin.

This burden on Nehemiah is truly the work of God to awaken him to a purpose planned for him. God had promised the people would return and rebuild through the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah, and this burden was a part of fulfilling that promise, though God's full restoration promise would only be fulfilled through the coming Messiah.

## Discussion 2

1. **How did Nehemiah respond to the burden he felt for Jerusalem?**
2. **What has God burdened your heart for?**
  - **Take a few minutes to pray for God to open your eyes to the things He is calling you to, and to give you the strength to depend on Him as you walk in obedience to His call.**

## READ: NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 2

Nehemiah was full of fear over what God was prompting him to do, but the sadness plaguing him was much stronger. The king started the conversation, and God showed His great power by using a pagan ruler to supply permission, protection, and resources in the rebuilding of a city that was meaningless to him. It is always incredible to see that God is sovereign no matter who is in positions of power!

They seemed to be off to a great start with this project, but then we meet Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem... These men had no interest in seeing the city of Jerusalem rebuilt, because it's destruction meant their gain. Throughout the rebuilding of Jerusalem, there were enemies of the Jews who worked to stop the process through ridicule, schemes, and threats. Ezra chapter 4 gives us a picture of the same kind of opposition rising up against Zerubbabel and the builders of the temple.

Opposition is not something we desire, and yet God often uses it to refine our resolve and strengthen our faith in His ability to overcome and use us for His glory. We find that Nehemiah is not deterred from his mission but carefully examines to project ahead. He then shows great leadership by presenting the vision to the leaders in Jerusalem and gets them on board to accomplish this difficult task ahead.

## Discussion 3

1. **How long did Nehemiah wait before having a conversation with the King? (See Chapter 1:1 and 2:1)**
2. **What do you think the reason was for his waiting?**
3. **How have you seen God use opposition in your life to strengthen your faith in Him?**