



**Leadership Principles from Nehemiah**  
**Lesson 1: History, Overview, and Introduction to the Book of Nehemiah**

**1. Date**

The Book of Nehemiah was written between \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Author**

The author is Nehemiah or Ezra. It is possible that both of them wrote it together.

Originally Nehemiah was part of the book of Ezra. Later it was made into two sections – The First and Second Books of Ezra. About the fourth century A.D., the second book of Ezra was called the Book of Nehemiah by Jerome, a church historian and theologian.

**3. Purpose**

The Book of Nehemiah, one of the history books of the Bible, continues the story of Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity and the rebuilding of the walls of the city of Jerusalem.

This book reveals great leadership principles in the life of Nehemiah as he led the people of Jerusalem in the enormous task of rebuilding the broken down walls of the city.

**4. History**

The Babylonian Empire invaded Judah in 597 B.C. Jerusalem was destroyed and captives were taken. The Babylonian captivity lasted seventy years.

About fifty years into the Babylonian captivity, after the Babylonians had invaded Jerusalem and taken captives, the first exiles began to return to Jerusalem. His focus was rebuilding the altar of sacrifice and the Temple. We can find this in the book of Ezra chapters 1-6.

The second return happened with Ezra about sixty years later. His desire was to bring about spiritual renewal by teaching the people the Word of God and by rebuilding the community. He went to Jerusalem with the blessing of King Aratxerxes.

Soon after Ezra's departure, Nehemiah, with the help of the same king, returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. He and Ezra together helped to bring a spiritual revival to the city by reinstating practices that had not been followed during the captivity in Babylon. It was a process of renewing their covenant with God and following His Word.

Nehemiah was a Hebrew in Persia when the word reached him that the Temple in Jerusalem was being reconstructed. Nehemiah stood in the office of royal cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. This was a place of great honor in the Persian court. Being in the daily presence of the king, and seeing him at his seasons of relaxation, the cupbearer had many opportunities of gaining the goodwill of the king in obtaining many favors which were denied to others.

As cupbearer, one of Nehemiah's duties was to guard against anyone poisoning something the king might drink. On account of the constant fear of plots and intrigues, a person must have been regarded as thoroughly trustworthy to hold the position.

Even though there was good news about the Temple's reconstruction, Nehemiah was upset knowing there was no wall to protect the city. Jerusalem had a temple but there was no protection for the city from further attack.

Nehemiah prayed to God, asking Him to save the city and use him. God answered his prayer by softening the heart of the Persian king, who gave not only his blessing, but also supplies to be used in the project. Nehemiah was given permission by the king to return to Jerusalem, where he was made governor.

Only 42,360 exiles returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel and 1,754 with Ezra. Not all of them settled in Jerusalem. Many settled in other cities and places in Israel. This accounts for only a few people being in Jerusalem when Nehemiah comes on the scene. It explains why the city took so long to rebuild. Each group of exiles sought to build their own homes. So the city of Jerusalem was neglected for many years. When Nehemiah came back for the purpose of rebuilding the walls to make the city secure, he found the temple had been completed, but the walls in ruins. The book of Ezra deals with the rebuilding of the temple

Nehemiah traveled to Jerusalem and used his leadership skills to rally a citywide construction crew. He used people who lived in Jerusalem but also called upon the help of others who lived in other cities around Israel to help rebuild the walls. Within a few weeks, the walls around Jerusalem were built and standing tall and their enemies lost their confidence. In spite of opposition and accusations the wall was built and the enemies silenced. The people, inspired by Nehemiah, gave tithes of much money, supplies, and manpower to complete the wall in a remarkable fifty-two days.

He and Ezra reestablished true worship through prayer and by encouraging the people to revival by reading and adhering to the Word of God.

## 5. Overview

### **Chapters 1-7: Rebuilding the walls**

Chapter 1 – \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter 2:1-16 – Nehemiah’s request of the king, return to Jerusalem, and review of ruins of Jerusalem.

Chapter 2:17-20 – Nehemiah’s encouragement to rebuild the walls

Chapter 3 – \_\_\_\_\_

Chapters 4-6 – Nehemiah’s response to opposition

Chapter 6:15, 16 – Each family built the section of the wall directly in front of their houses, and with hard work, the wall was astonishingly completed within fifty-two days.

### **Nehemiah 6:15, 16**

Chapter 7 – Nehemiah’s register of people

Chapter 8 – Reading of God’s Word to the people

Chapters 8-13 – Revival and reform

After the rebuilding of the wall, Ezra leads all the Jews in a renewal ceremony. This incorporated a public teaching of the Law, in which it was read and explained. Because of their long captivity in Babylon, many of the people had never heard the Word of God previously. For example, the recognition of the Sabbath Day was reinstated.

### **Nehemiah 8:1**

The people understood that if they were to survive they must remember and obey God’s Laws.

Chapters 9-10 – Revival is the result of the Word of God being obeyed

Chapters 11-13 – The dedication of the wall and reforms happen in society

## **6. Key verses in the Book of Nehemiah**

Nehemiah received the news of the broken down walls.

### **Nehemiah 1:3**

Nehemiah prayed, asking God for favor as he talked with the king.

**Nehemiah 1:11**

Nehemiah completed the walls.

**Nehemiah 6:15, 16****7. The four “Rs” of Nehemiah**

Nehemiah is book of leadership.

Primarily, in this class, we will study the leadership characteristics of Nehemiah as he rallied the people to take on the task of rebuilding the walls and gates of Jerusalem.

Four words wrap up the themes behind the Book of Nehemiah.

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Nehemiah was used by God to rebuild that which had been broken down. The crumbled walls of Jerusalem left the Israelites vulnerable to their enemies.

Often, God calls leaders to rebuild that which has been broken down in the lives of people and in society.

**Isaiah 58:12**

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After generation in the bondage of Babylon, many Israelites were not familiar with God’s Word and were not following the law out of ignorance.

Leaders are called to bring people back to God’s Word.

**2 Timothy 2:15****2 Timothy 3:14-17**

True leaders realize that God’s Word is the standard by which we live. There can be no compromise with the Word of God.

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Repentance is a theme throughout the Book of Nehemiah.

Repentance began with Nehemiah himself as prayed and fasted after hearing the news about the walls of Jerusalem.

**Nehemiah 1:5, 6**

Repentance continued as Ezra read the Word of God to the people.

Leaders today must do the same. We must have an attitude of repentance when praying for our nations that have turned away from God.

**2 Chronicles 7:14****Nehemiah 8:8, 9**

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True repentance causes people to return back to God.

When Nehemiah repented, he took action to rebuild the walls.

After hearing the Word of God, the people repented and then immediately realized they should be celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. This is something many of them had never seen or done. But they put action to their repentance and celebrated the feast.

**Nehemiah 8:13-18**