



# Nehemiah

Living Courageously

Sample Lesson #1  
and  
Leader's Guide Answers

## ONE

# EMBRACING THE UNKNOWN

Read Nehemiah 1;  
other references as given.

The book of Nehemiah calls you to live courageously for God. To live courageously, you must learn to live by faith, and you must embrace the unknown by trusting the One to whom nothing is unknown. Nehemiah (the book) also teaches you that God always honors faith. The Bible says, **For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him** (2 Chronicles 16:9).

In this first lesson you'll learn how Nehemiah's heart was stirred beyond empathy and sympathy to genuine compassion when he learned about the living conditions of his fellow Jews in Judah. He asked God to relieve the plight of his countrymen, but would he be willing to leave the comfort of the Persian palace to be part of God's answer to his prayer? Before you begin this lesson and each lesson in this study, ask God to reveal His Word to you and to transform you into the image of Jesus Christ.

1. *Empathy* is the experience of understanding another person's thoughts, feelings, and condition from their point of view. *Sympathy* is feelings of concern and sorrow for someone else's misfortune. *Compassion* is a sympathetic consciousness of others' distress coupled with a desire to alleviate it.
  - a. Has there been a time when you were empathetic or



### Lombardi Time Rule:

If the leader arrives early, he or she has time to pray, prepare the room, and greet others personally.

ADD GROUP  
INSIGHTS BELOW

even sympathetic to another person's misfortune, but you later realized that you could have shown compassion and done something to alleviate their distress?

Yes     No     I can't remember a situation when I didn't help someone in need.

If you answered yes, what could you have done to help the person?

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- 2 a. Zerubbabel led the first Jewish exiles back from Babylon to Jerusalem in 538 BC (Ezra 1:1–2:70). Upon their arrival, they set up the altar and laid the foundation of the temple. Why weren't the Jews able to complete the temple as they had planned (Ezra 4:1–8, 23–24)?

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- b. Eighty years later (458 BC) Ezra led the second group of Jewish exiles back to Judah (Ezra 7:1–10). He found the Jews in a state of moral and spiritual degradation, including intermarriage with unbelievers from the surrounding nations. What specific things was Ezra able to accomplish after his arrival (Ezra 9:1–4; 10:9–12, 19)?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. The book of Nehemiah is an important part of God's revelation to man. List four possible purposes or themes for the book (Introduction).

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Embracing the Unknown

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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. In the 20th year of King Artaxerxes (445 BC), during the month of Chislev (November–December), Nehemiah’s brother Hanani and some other men visited him at Susa, the Persian Empire’s winter capital. Since Hanani and the others had recently returned from Jerusalem, Nehemiah asked them about the welfare of the Jews living in Jerusalem and the condition of the city. What was Hanani’s answer (Nehemiah 1:3)?

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Nehemiah’s reaction to Hanani’s report seems extreme (Nehemiah 1:4). Ancient Jews, however, often threw dust on their heads, tore their clothes, fasted, and sat on low stools during times of mourning or grief (Job 1:20; Psalm 137:1; Esther 4:16). Why was Nehemiah so distressed when he heard Hanani’s report (Nehemiah 2:3)?

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6. Good leaders are not just people who possess superior leadership abilities. They are often individuals who allow their hearts to be stirred with the needs of others and attempt to meet those needs without regard for their own welfare. Identify three individuals who were moved with



### Zip-It Rule:

Group members should agree to disagree, but should never be disagreeable.

ADDITIONAL  
INSIGHTS

compassion, and briefly state how each attempted to meet the needs they saw.

a. Matthew 14:13–19: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. Acts 17:16–17: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

c. Philippians 2:25–30: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. All around us are people in great distress (sickness and death, job loss, financial problems, divorce and family conflict, etc.). Identify two people who are struggling now, and give a practical way you could help them.

1. \_\_\_\_\_: I could \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_: I could \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Nehemiah was so burdened for his fellow Jews that he was willing to forsake his comfortable position in the Persian court to embrace the unknown. He was willing to embrace the unknown because he knew the One to whom nothing is unknown. If you believed, as Nehemiah did, that God was leading you to forsake your job and all that was familiar to you, would you be willing to obey Him?

Yes     No     I am not sure

Other \_\_\_\_\_

9. Nehemiah turned to God in prayer rather than becoming overwhelmed by despair (Nehemiah 1:5–11). Many Christians have been taught the prayer acronym ACTS (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication) as a reminder of the key elements of prayer. Examine Nehemiah’s prayer and list the verse references that apply to each to support your answer (Nehemiah 1:5–11).

Adoration (\_\_\_\_\_). Confession (\_\_\_\_\_).

Thanksgiving (\_\_\_\_\_). Supplication (\_\_\_\_\_).

10. Power in prayer comes from an individual’s relationship to God, a willingness to humble himself before the Lord, knowing how to pray according to His will, and believing He hears and answers prayer.

- a. In Nehemiah’s prayer, he uses a two-word phrase six times that indicates his willingness to humble himself before God. What is it (Nehemiah 1:5–11)?

\_\_\_\_\_

- b. Some Christians’ prayers can be described as “give-me prayers.” Rather than acknowledging God’s magnificence and the believer’s responsibility to submit to Him as Nehemiah did, their prayers offer a grocery list of personal requests. Take a moment to examine your prayers to God. What words would you use to describe your prayers?

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\_\_\_\_\_

11. a. Christians often fail to receive answers to their prayers because they ask God for only general blessings (God, please bless all the people all the time forever and ever. Amen.). In Nehemiah’s prayer, what specific requests did he ask God to grant him (Nehemiah 1:8–11)?

1. \_\_\_\_\_



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ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

ADDITIONAL  
INSIGHTS

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

- b. Nehemiah’s courageous faith in God is revealed by the boldness of his requests. The Bible invites us to come boldly before the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). What is the boldest prayer you have ever asked God to answer?

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# LEADERS' GUIDE

## Lesson 1: Embracing the Unknown

1.
  - a. Answers will vary.
  - b. Answers will vary.
  
2.
  - a. Local enemies wrote a letter to King Artaxerxes of Persia accusing the Jews of rebuilding the city so that they could rebel against Persian rule (Ezra 4:11–16). In response to these allegations, King Artaxerxes issued a royal decree that stopped the work until the second year of King Darius of Persia (Ezra 4:24).
  - b. Ezra oversaw the completion of the temple and led the people to renounce their pagan ways.
  
3.
  1. The book of Nehemiah is a sequel to the book of Ezra that provides the final part of the historical record of the Jews' return to Palestine.
  2. The book of Nehemiah shows how mightily God will use someone who is willing to give up his earthly security and trust Him.
  3. The book of Nehemiah reminds God's people that true spirituality is not the result of proximity to a place of worship.
  4. The book of Nehemiah reveals the level of dedication that is necessary to live courageously for God and accomplish great things for Him. Nehemiah's opposition came from enemies on both sides of the wall, and his perseverance is a testimony to God's faithfulness and his (Nehemiah's) determination.
  
4. Hanani said the Jews (Nehemiah 1:3, **the survivors**) were **in great distress and reproach**. This meant that the Jewish people living in the area were having great difficulty and were at the mercy of their enemies around them. Hanani also said that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down and the gates of the city had been burned with fire.
  
5. Nehemiah was distressed because the city of Jerusalem lay desolate, and the Jewish people were unprotected (Nehemiah 1:3). Nehemiah's emotional reaction (Nehemiah 1:4) likely revealed that he expected the city to have been rebuilt by this time by those who had returned as exiles under Zerubbabel and Ezra.



6.
  - a. Matthew 14:13–19: Jesus met the needs of the multitudes by feeding them.
  - b. Acts 17:16–17: Paul reasoned in the synagogue and in the marketplace every day with those who were present.
  - c. Philippians 2:25–30: Epaphroditus wanted to visit the Philippians and to reassure them that he was healthy. Epaphroditus had nearly lost his life because of some failure by the Philippians (Philippians 2:30).
  
7. Answers will vary.
  
8. Answers will vary.
  
9.
  1. Adoration — “O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God” (Nehemiah 1:5).
  2. Confession — “confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father’s house and I have sinned” (Nehemiah 1:6); “We have acted very corruptly against You ...” (Nehemiah 1:7).
  3. Thanksgiving — Nothing specific except he appears to be thankful that God can be expected to be faithful to keep his word (Nehemiah 1:5, 8–9).
  4. Supplication — “Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man” (Nehemiah 1:11).
  
10.
  - a. Thy servant(s).
  - b. Answers will vary.
  
11.
  - a.
    1. Nehemiah asked the Lord to answer his prayer (Nehemiah 1:11, “let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant”).
    2. Nehemiah also asked God to turn the heart of King Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 1:11, “and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man”). The Persian kings of this period had a generous administrative attitude toward the provinces over which they ruled. Nehemiah was probably aware of this benevolent attitude and prayed specifically that the king would act generously on his behalf.

3. Nehemiah asked God to extend mercy to him through the king. Nehemiah realized that the collective sins of the Jews afforded him no basis for God answering his prayer apart from the Lord's mercy. Nehemiah, knowing that God was merciful, appealed to this aspect of God's character in his prayer.
- b. Answers will vary.