

The book of



chapters

5 — 6

Day 1

1. Nehemiah 4 ended on a high note; the people were busy rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, each in their assigned location. Sadly, Nehemiah 5 opens with problems. Read Nehemiah 5-6 at least twice before starting the study guide.

2. We can learn much about handling conflict from Nehemiah. Nehemiah 5 opens with tension and discord. Briefly state the three problems mentioned in verses 1-5.

Vss. 1-2

Vs. 3

Vss. 4-5

3. No matter what the reasons for discord, it is the leader's responsibility to help restore peace. This will not mean everyone walks away a winner but that everyone walks away doing what is right. What phenomenon of nature were the people experiencing in Nehemiah 5:3?

4. Nehemiah cannot change the weather, but he can help those in charge see the plight of the less fortunate. Empathy is one of the most beautiful of all character qualities. It differs from sympathy. Define these two words, then think of a time you experienced these two emotions.

a. Sympathy

b. Empathy

After defining these two words how might we fill in the blanks. Sympathy makes me want to _____. Empathy makes me want to _____.

5. Nehemiah is not necessarily dealing with harsh or mean people. He is dealing with people, who for whatever reason, have neglected to put themselves in the other person's shoes. There is a famine going on and some are using it for their own personal gain. They may have felt pity for those suffering, but it had not compelled them to sacrifice, quite the opposite. How were they taking advantage of their fellow Jews during this season of distress?

6. At any given moment there are some in this world who are struggling to find even the most meager of provisions. What are some ways to help those less fortunate?

7. Read the stories below and ask God to help you see opportunities to love others like Jesus.

- One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked, "What are you doing?" The young man replied, "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die." "Son," the man said, "don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can't make a difference!" After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said, "I made a difference for that one."

- I was invited to a luncheon today. A lady named Tara Warren spoke. She is a stage IV Ovarian cancer survivor. She shared her story of going through treatment. 2012-2013 were very difficult years, but she had a great group of church friends and family to support her. Even though the chemo made her terribly ill, she noticed a lady who always came alone for her treatments. God spoke to Tara about putting together a care package to bring this lady a bit of cheer. When Tara arrived the next week, she had a gift sack with some of the things that had brought her comfort. In the sack was a lip balm, tissues, a small unscented hand lotion, a Gatorade to give her strength, a green tea to calm her stomach, last but not least a small 3x5 card with a personal note of encouragement and a Bible verse which had given her hope. This one act of kindness has become a full-time non-profit ministry now. The ministry is called Tenaciously Teal and has grown and is now reaching several communities. Lives are being changed because one woman took Jesus seriously when he said, "Love God and love others."

We will never be able to alleviate all suffering, but we can all do something. Ask God to help you see others and love them in Jesus' name. Then like the boy in the starfish story and my new friend Tara in the second, we can make a difference.

8. What was Nehemiah's response when he heard the cry of the people?

9. As a leader there may be times when we get angry over an injustice. If you are a parent, a boss, or a leader of any group, it is your responsibility to lead well. In Ephesians 4:26 we are told “be angry and sin not.” The Bible does not tell us to never be angry, there are things that should disturb us to the point of action, but that action should be managed properly. Some people lash out, others try to bury their feelings, but neither of these two responses are helpful. Lashing out hurts people and destroys relationships. Denying our feelings of anger and attempting to suppress them can lead to bitterness, which destroys from the inside out. Colossians 3:8 instructs us to “...rid yourselves of all such things as anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” Read Ephesians 4:26-27, we should never allow anger to brew. How are we to handle anger?

10. Since dealing with anger is such a common thing, let’s take a few minutes to think about it. It is not uncommon for us to run into people who are carrying the baggage of past hurt and anger. It may have begun as a seemingly small thing but left unattended this seed can grow into a root of bitterness. Read Hebrews 12:15. What instruction do you see here?

11. Left unattended, this root can begin to take over our thinking. We may think we are hiding it, but bitterness shows itself in various ways. Bitterness can affect us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It is like acid eating away and destroying bit by bit. God’s grace and bitterness cannot coexist. Today would be a very good day to do a heart check. Better yet, ask God to do one. If he shows you an area of bitterness or anger, deal with it immediately. Read Ephesians 4:31-32 at least twice, what is the remedy for bitterness?

12. Some people find it hard to be kind to the person who has offended them. They do not want to have a tender heart toward the person who hurt them. The last thing they feel compelled to do is forgive that person. And yet, that is exactly what we are told to do. So now, it is a matter of obedience. The motivation for forgiving should always go back to Christ’s example. He loved us while we were in our sin. He acted on our behalf to provide a way to be reconciled before it was even a thought on our mind. Who do we resemble when we release anger and bitterness then strive for reconciliation?

13. Nehemiah did get angry when he heard the outcry of the people. Nehemiah 5:7 tells us he pondered these injustices before taking any action. How did allowing himself time to look at the problem from different angles and taking time to talk to God help him take a wiser course of action?

Think of the last time you had to deal with an injustice, how did you handle it?

Day 2

14. Nehemiah needed the people to work together for the common good of restoring the walls of their city. What steps can you identify for dealing with conflict and injustice after reading Nehemiah 5:7-9?

15. What was Nehemiah's two-part solution to this problem?

16. What was the response of the people to Nehemiah's plan?

I'm sure Nehemiah was very happy to hear their positive response to his instructions. What did he do next to ensure everything would be carried out as planned? (vss.12-13)

17. In Nehemiah 5:14-16, we see Nehemiah living out one of the greatest of all leadership skills, leading by example. There are many people who try to lead by telling others what to do. A great leader will not only initiate a plan but roll up his sleeves and join the effort, thus gaining the cooperation of his team. Think of things you would like to see your team, or your family accomplish. What will you do to lead to see this become a reality?

John Maxwell is one of my favorite leadership teachers. He has a wonderful book on this subject, "Lead by Example."

18. Great leaders know what God has called them to do and are devoted to seeing it come about. Nehemiah 5:16 (NIV) reads “I devoted myself to the work on the wall.” This is the Hebrew word *Chazaq*, which means to strengthen, prevail, harden, be strong, be courageous, be firm, and to be resolute. Think of all the areas where you have a leadership role; are you devoted like this?

19. What is most important to you?

Wow, that is an interesting question! Everything in me wants to yell “Jesus!” But would that prove true by watching my actions and listening to my words each day? It is impossible to live in obedience if I allow my desires to overrule God’s plan. Whose plan are you following, yours or God’s?

20. Nehemiah’s walk matched his talk. In Nehemiah 1:11, Nehemiah said he took great pleasure in bringing honor to God. Nehemiah loved and loyally served the God of his ancestors. This is simply another way of saying he loved and served the same covenant keeping God of those who had gone before him. Would you say your walk matches your talk? If someone followed you around documenting the words and activities of your week, would they easily conclude that you are a Christ follower?

21. Nehemiah did not just have problems from within his community. He had opposition from those who were enemies. Who are the three enemies named in Nehemiah 6:1?

- a.
- b.
- c.

22. The work is going very well. The wall around the city of Jerusalem has been rebuilt. All that is left is to set the _____ in place. (Nehemiah 6:1) This is very good news. But as with all great works, the opposition is not happy.



23. Sanballat and Geshem sent a message to Nehemiah. What was their request?

24. It may seem like an innocent request, but Nehemiah is wise to consider the source. When planning our response to opposition we should consider carefully what is the wise thing to do. Andy Stanley said, “In light of my past experiences and my future hopes and dreams, what is the wise thing to do?” What was Nehemiah’s reply to Sanballat and Geshem’s message?

This is often referred to as divine discernment. We should ask God what he would have us do. One of Satan’s favorite tools is distraction. He does not have to derail us, just distract us.

Day 3 25. Saying no thank you is polite, but it does not always solve the problem. How many times did Nehemiah have to say no to Sanballat and Geshem?

Why do you think his first no was not sufficient?

26. Nehemiah 6:5 tells us Sanballat sent his aide five times with the same request. The fifth time there was more, this time he handed Nehemiah a letter. It seems strange that an important letter like this would have been left unsealed. Why do you think Sanballat might leave his letter unsealed?

27. Briefly state the slanderous accusations listed in this letter.

28. Define slander.

29. Not only is this letter a lie but I am quite sure its purpose was to discourage Nehemiah. Have you ever had someone accuse you of bad motives and intentions. If so, how did it make you feel?

How hard had Nehemiah worked being careful not to be a burden to anyone? Nehemiah continued to motivate others to have a part in this great work for God. Look back at Nehemiah 5:14, what had Nehemiah refused to take advantage of for twelve years?

30. Nehemiah 6:7 is nothing less than a threat. How do you respond when someone threatens you?

31. These men are trying to bully Nehemiah. How had King Artaxerxes treated Nehemiah? (If you don't remember, look back at Nehemiah 2:7.)

32. Nehemiah does not make an elaborate defense. Read Nehemiah 6:8, in your own words what did Nehemiah say about these men and their claims?

33. Satan has many tools in his arsenal to use against God's people. We looked at distraction earlier, now let's look at fear. Look up the verses listed below and briefly state what you learn about fear and how we are to handle it.

Psalms 23:4

Exodus 14:13

Psalms 56:3-4

Psalms 118:4-6

Proverbs 9:10

Hebrews 13:6

1 Peter 2:17

1 John 4:15-18

Day 4

34. Nehemiah knew these men were simply trying to frighten him and discourage the people so the work would not be completed. We do not want to miss how Nehemiah addressed this situation. Read Nehemiah 6:9 again. Do you remember what the angel said to Daniel in Daniel 10:19?

35. Fill in the blanks. These are a great verses to memorize.

“Do _____ be afraid, you who are _____,” he said.

“Peace! Be _____ now; be _____.” When he spoke to me, I was _____ and said, “Speak, my lord, since _____ have given me _____.” Daniel 10:19

Psalm 121:2 My _____ comes from the _____, the Maker of heaven and earth.

36. How does knowing God sees you, loves you, and that he is a very present help in your time of need effect your outlook?

37. In Nehemiah 6:10-13, we see another plot against Nehemiah. They wanted to trip him up and thus put an end to the work he was leading. We are not told much about this man, Shemaiah, other than Nehemiah went to see him at his home. What did Shemaiah suggest Nehemiah do?

38. Once again, we see Nehemiah is given divine discernment. Read 2 Chronicles 23:6; who were the only Israelites allowed to be in the temple of God?

39. Hiding might have sounded like a tempting idea at first, but he knew this was not from God. Read Psalm 19:9. God will never tell us to do something contrary to instructions we have already been given in his word. If someone tells us to do something that does not square with the written word of God, what can we know?

40. What was the truth about this man Shemaiah? (Nehemiah 6:12-13)

41. Nehemiah simply talks to God about his enemies. It is best to leave judgement and retribution to the righteous judge. There are times when knowing who is speaking the truth can be very difficult. Look closely at verse 13. How did Nehemiah discern that this man was not a prophet of God's?

42. With God's help, how long had it taken to complete the task of rebuilding the wall?

43. Under the leadership of Nehemiah, the Israelites finished the work God had given them. Others are always watching to see if what we say we are doing for God has his hand of blessing on it. What did the other nations say about this great work?

Day 5

44. The last lesson found in Nehemiah 6 has to do with choosing our friends. Many of those around Nehemiah brought reports praising Tobiah. Look back at Nehemiah 6:1,12-14,19; was Tobiah a man Nehemiah should have as a friend?

45. We would do well to choose our friends carefully. Pastor Craig Groeschel said "It is almost impossible to live the right life when you have the wrong friends." Think of your inner circle of friends. Now think about your walk of faith. Where would you like to be in five years? Are these the people who will help you get there?

46. Think back over these two chapters, what character qualities have you seen that you would like to emulate?

What character qualities have you seen that you would like to avoid?

47. In verse 17 we see “the nobles of Judah” mentioned again. The last time we read about these men was in Nehemiah 3:5 “...but the nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.” What additional facts did you learn about these men in Nehemiah 6:17-19?

48. We do not know for sure what oath had been taken to bind these nobles to Tobiah. But the verses mention the marriages between their children. What might they have promised each other at the wedding of their children?

49. The New Testament also speaks to this issue. Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. It is very important to ask ourselves, in every area of life, am I attempting to make a partnership with an unbeliever. What did you learn about this subject of being unequally yoked with an unbeliever?

50. The nobles tried very hard to persuade Nehemiah that Tobiah was a great guy. But that simply was not the truth. He was an enemy of the work of God and therefore not a friend of Nehemiah. When the nobles could not convince Nehemiah to befriend Tobiah, what did Tobiah do?

Does this sound like a man one might want for a friend?

51. The NIV says, Tobiah sent letters to intimidate Nehemiah. Intimidation is defined as attempting to make a person timid or fearful to make them do what you want. Bullies often use the tactic of intimidation to get their way. They may use their size or strength to plant a seed of fear in the heart. Tobiah used his words. Has anyone ever tried to intimidate you?

52. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 in several translations. (This can be easily done online) What are we to focus on if someone is trying to intimidate us?

Some teach this verse incorrectly. They say, God is faithful and will not let us be tempted but will get us out of it. Is that really what this verse is saying?

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. What is the promise we are given in these verses?

Biblical References

Day 1

Question 9 - Ephesians 4:26-27

“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.”

Question 10 - Hebrews 12:15

See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Question 11 - Ephesians 4:31-32

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Day 3

Question 31 - Nehemiah 2:7

I also said to him, “If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah?”

Question 33 - Psalm 23:4

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Exodus 14:13

Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again.

Psalm 56:3-4

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. ⁴In God, whose word I praise—in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?

Psalm 118:4-6

Let those who fear the LORD say: “His love endures forever.” ⁵ When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD; he brought me into a spacious place. ⁶ The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Hebrews 13:6

So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”

1 Peter 2:17

Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

1 John 4:15-18

If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.

¹⁶And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. ¹⁸There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Day 4

Question 345 - Daniel 10:19

“Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed,” he said. “Peace! Be strong now; be strong.” When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.”

Question 35 - Psalm 121:2

My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Question 38 - 2 Chronicles 23:6

No one is to enter the temple of the LORD except the priests and Levites on duty; they may enter because they are consecrated, but all the others are to observe the LORD’s command not to enter.

Question 39 - Psalm 19:9

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.

Day 5

Question 41 - 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? ¹⁵What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” ¹⁷Therefore, “Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” ¹⁸And, “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

Question 52 - 1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

...Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.