

VOICES

Group Discussion Guide



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Nehemiah

Group Discussion Guide

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Series Overview

This study explores leadership from God’s perspective. God gives us a burden and provides a way for us to fulfill the burden as we have faith in Him. He helps us see the vision and share it with others. He gives us courage to lean on Him. We respond with praises to God.

Purpose of This Guide

The primary purpose of this group guide is to reinforce and deepen the lessons of the Grace Church message series: **Voices**.

You may choose to use this guide:

- ▶ with your Grace Group.
- ▶ with any group of people interested in knowing what the Bible says about these topics.

1-The Weight of Leadership

Scripture: [Nehemiah 1:1-10](#)

Icebreaker: Burden

Have members state the heaviest things they have carried.

- ▶ Were the burdens you carried by choice?
- ▶ Who in the group has carried the heaviest burden?
- ▶ Under what circumstances do you seek help in carrying a burden?

Discussion Questions

- ▶ What would be the spiritual equivalent in our community today of being in great distress and reproach ([Neh 1:3](#))?
- ▶ What hinders us from responding to the distress and reproach of people as Nehemiah did ([Neh 1:4](#))?
- ▶ What was Nehemiah's initial response to the burden God gave him ([Neh 1:1-4](#))? What do you tend to do first when God puts a burden on your heart?
- ▶ Consider the structure of Nehemiah's prayer:
 - ▶ **Praise God** ([Neh 1:5](#)). How often do you begin your prayers by telling God how wonderful He is in your eyes?
 - ▶ **Confess to God** ([Neh 1:6-7](#)). How often do you acknowledge your sins before asking God for something?
 - ▶ **Claim God's promises** ([Neh 1:8-9](#)). Do you know God's promises well enough that you can repeat them back to Him ([2Pet 1:3-4](#))? What can you do to become more familiar with His promises?
 - ▶ **Make the request** ([Neh 1:10-11](#)). Do you remember to say please when you ask God for something? Why is saying "Please" important?

Dig a Little Deeper: Leadership Characteristics

Study the leadership characteristics that Nehemiah demonstrates.

Neh 1:4	Faced Reality	He did not ignore the problem.
Neh 1:4	Personally Cared	He had compassion on the circumstances of the people.
Neh 1:5	Brought the Need to God	He didn't rush off to fix the problem. He sought direction from God.
Neh 1:6-9	Knew God's Promises	He repeated back God's Words, admitting sins then claiming God's promises.
Neh 1:10-11	Was Available for God to Use	He let God know that he was ready to do what He desires.

Application Exercise: Pattern of Prayer

- ▶ Use Nehemiah's pattern of prayer to pray for the people in our community who are in great distress and reproach.
- ▶ Pick one of our outreach partners to pray for each day this coming week.

2-The Faith of Leadership

Scripture: [Nehemiah 2:1-8](#)

Icebreaker: Open Doors

Conduct a quick poll in your group. Is it more difficult to recognize an open door, or is it more difficult to walk through an open door that you see? Why?

Discussion Questions

- ▶ Notice that Nehemiah had never been sad in the presence of Artaxerxes ([Neh 2:2](#)). How can our demeanor affect the way people respond to us? How could our demeanor affect the way God responds to us?
- ▶ Nehemiah responded by first affirming his loyalty to the king, then he said a silent prayer before he made a request ([Neh 2:3-4](#)). When we get an open door, what could help us remember to pray silently before speaking?
- ▶ Nehemiah had a specific plan in mind to present to the king ([Neh 2:5-6](#)). How important is it to think things through as you are awaiting an open door ([Pro 21:5](#))? What types of things are you doing to prepare for open doors?
- ▶ Nehemiah said, “If it pleases the king” ([Neh 2:5](#)). What can help us present requests respectfully rather than make demands or put the person in a no-win situation?
- ▶ When the king approved Nehemiah’s plan, to whom did Nehemiah give the credit ([Neh 2:8](#))? How often do you give God the credit for success ([Psa 52:9](#))?

Dig a Little Deeper: Seeking God's Will

Consider four principles for seeking God's will:

1. Remember, changing the heart is one of God's specialities (**Pro 21:1**). **Continue to pray** for the difficult people in your life.
2. Waiting is a companion of prayer. Keep praying as you **wait for God**.
 - ▶ **Psa 25:5**
 - ▶ **Mic 7:7**
 - ▶ **Jas 1:4**
3. Faith is NOT a synonym for laziness or disorder. God honors and expects **careful thinking and planning** (**Luke 14:28-30**).
4. **Expect opposition**. It often reinforces God's will (**Php 1:29**).

Application Exercise: Pray for Those in Authority

Think of the people in your life who have some authority over you. Which one is most difficult for you to relate to well? During the upcoming week, pray for your relationship with that person. Consider including the following in your prayer:

- ▶ Pray that you will have a good demeanor around that person and reflect the light of Christ to him or her.
- ▶ Pray that God will draw that person closer to Him and begin to direct that person's actions for good.

3-The Vision of Leadership

Scripture: [Nehemiah 2:11-20](#), [Nehemiah 3](#)

Icebreaker: Catch the Vision

Discuss what makes it more likely for you to respond to a vision that someone shares with you.

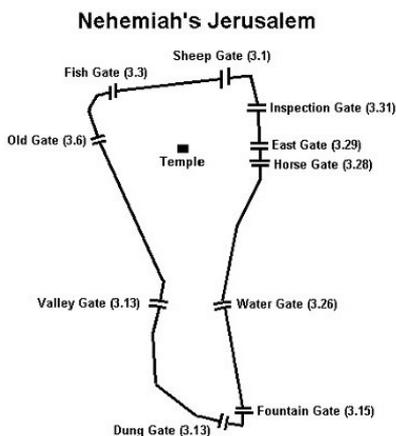
Discussion Questions

- ▶ Nehemiah waited three days before he took his first action related to what God had put in his heart to do ([Neh 2:11-12](#)). Do you pause before beginning a task God has put in your heart to do? In what ways can a pause be helpful ([Mark 6:30-32](#), [Mat 14:23](#), [Luke 6:12-13](#))?
- ▶ Nehemiah's first action was to see where the walls needed repair ([Neh 2:13-16](#)). When creating a plan what are some of the things you consider? How do you make certain you understand the needs?
- ▶ When speaking to the people, Nehemiah told them how God was directing him and how He had softened the king's heart to support the repair of the walls ([Neh 2:17-18](#)). When you present the vision for a task, what would make it more likely for people to rise up and work?
- ▶ Work began at the Sheep Gate ([Neh 3:1](#)). This provided for the sacrifices for the sins of the people. In what way does this indicate our first priority ([Mat 6:33](#))? How can we be sure we set and keep the right priorities?
- ▶ Notice the variety of people that Nehemiah called to the work ([Neh 3](#)). Discuss ways to engage volunteers who are diverse, yet unified in the work ([Eph 4:11-13](#)).

Dig a Little Deeper: The Gates

Meditate on the significance of the order of gates that Nehemiah repaired in [Nehemiah 3](#).

- ▶ Sheep Gate: Is your first priority your relationship with Christ ([John 10:1-16](#))?
- ▶ Fish Gate: Are you seeking faithful fish ([Mat 4:19](#))?
- ▶ Old Gate: Do you slip back into your old ways, or live a life of fruitfulness ([Mat 13:20-22](#))?
- ▶ Valley Gate: How do you respond to and learn from trials ([Jas 5:10-11](#))?
- ▶ Dung Gate: How are you doing at throwing out the rubbish in your life, so you are ready to bathe in the fountain ([2Cor 7:1](#))?
- ▶ Fountain Gate: Do you hear the Holy Spirit ([John 9:7](#))?
- ▶ Water Gate: Do you allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in understanding and applying God's Word ([Eph 5:26](#))?
- ▶ Horse Gate: Are you mounted and ready for spiritual warfare ([Eph 6:10-18](#))?
- ▶ East Gate: Are you looking for Christ to return ([Eze 44:1-2](#) and [1The 4:16-17](#))?
- ▶ Inspection Gate: Do you look forward to Christ's judgment ([Rom 14:12](#))?



Application Exercise: Which Gates Need Repair?

Considering your response to the questions above, address any of your gates that need repair.

4-The Courage of Leadership

Scripture: [Nehemiah 4](#)

Icebreaker: It Takes Courage

Discuss times in your life that have required courage. Who are your personal role models for courage?

Discussion Questions

- ▶ When Nehemiah and the Jews faced ridicule, what did they do ([Neh 4:1-6](#))? What is the source of your self-worth? How have you reacted when someone ridiculed you? How would God prefer you react the next time it happens?
- ▶ When the Jews learned that their enemies planned to attack them physically, what did they do ([Neh 4:7-9](#))? In what ways have you combined prayer and safety precautions?
- ▶ Notice how the rubbish was interfering with the work ([Neh 4:10-12](#))? What types of spiritual rubbish can incapacitate us?
- ▶ What would it take for us to remember the great and awesome Lord when we are afraid ([Neh 4:13-15](#))? What daily practices can help us remember?
- ▶ Do you keep a brick in one hand and a sword in the other ([Neh 4:17-18](#))? Discuss how this might look in a typical day.
 - ▶ Beginning your day
 - ▶ During your daily tasks or job
 - ▶ At meals
 - ▶ When talking with others
 - ▶ Ending your day

Dig a Little Deeper: Help Overcome Discouragement

What can a leader do to help people overcome discouragement? Here are some tips adapted from Charles Swindoll's "*Hand Me Another Brick*."

1. Unify people around a meaningful goal [[Neh 4:13-14](#)].
2. Point people toward God [[Neh 4:14](#), [Php 4:6](#)].
3. Encourage people to get back into balance [[Neh 4:16-17](#)].
4. Provide a rallying point for people. They need to know they are not alone [[Neh 4:20](#)].
5. Occupy people in serving to increase morale and confidence [[Neh 4:21-23](#)].

Application Exercise: Sword and Brick

Assess your current spiritual life. To what extent do you have a sword in one hand and a brick in the other?

	<i>Need More - - - - - My Hands Are Full</i>
Sword: prayer, Bible Reading...	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
Brick: applying God's Word	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

5-The Praise in Leadership

Scripture: [Nehemiah 8:1-12](#)

Icebreaker: Worthy of Praise

What are some characteristics of leaders that you find worthy of praise?

Discussion Questions

- ▶ From what [Nehemiah 8:1-3](#) says, who should have the opportunity to hear God's Word? Discuss the advantages of hearing God's Word in a group setting. Discuss other settings where adults and children can hear God's Word. In what ways can we make it intentional to hear God's Word?
- ▶ How does Ezra begin teaching from God's Word ([Neh 8:6](#))? Discuss how we can properly acknowledge God as we open His Word.
- ▶ When we overcome obstacles or accomplish something, how can we make it about what Jesus does through us instead of about ourselves? What role do the following play?
 - ▶ Using His Word to praise Him ([Neh 8:8](#))
 - ▶ Celebrating or feasting to praise Him ([Neh 8:9-12](#))
- ▶ Why did the people weep when they heard God's Word ([Neh 8:8-9](#))? Discuss times when you have wept at hearing God's Word ([Heb 4:12](#)).

Dig a Little Deeper: Lesson

Consider this leadership lesson (adapted from Charles Swindoll's "*Hand Me Another Brick*"):

No life is complete without spiritual dimension.	[Neh 8:8]
No spiritual dimension is complete without input from Scripture.	[Mat 4:4] [Deu 8:3]
No input from Scripture is complete without personal obedience.	[Jas 1:22]
No personal obedience is complete without rejoicing.	[Neh 8:10-12]

Application Exercise: Praise God

Make a list of things that you appreciate about God. Praise God for those things. Use the method that best expresses your heart (prayer, song, letter, poem, work of art...).

Notes



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