

Life Group Material

Update

Welcome back to Life groups. Possibly the last time you met together it was a zoom conference call or maybe it was a 'backyard' connect with your group over the summer. Regardless we are glad to have you all back as we formally launch the fall study sessions.

Some of you will continue to opt for zoom meetings as you did throughout the spring. If that is the case then you know the routine-☺ (FYI – did you know that zoom increased their usership by 330 million more subscribers)

Some of you will want to consider meeting at one of three large spaces that we have in the church. The back of the auditorium, downstairs in the old kitchen /gym area or in the fellowship hall next. Covid-19 protocol needs to be followed but it is an option. With the fall weather upon us it is unlikely that groups will meet outside for more than another week or two. With social bubbles still restricted to 10 we would encourage you not to meet in a home unless there is a MASSIVE meeting space. As the church we need to lead by example and with all our children heading back to school, lets do our part to protect each other.

This fall

During the fall we will be looking at two themes for the Sunday teaching time and we encourage you to use the related guide questions to launch the discussions in your group.

The two themes we are looking at are...

“Uncertainty” and “Rebuilding.” Both themes are found in the book of Nehemiah which will be our reference point for our life group studies. Nehemiah is an amazing book chronicling the rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in a time when hope was slim, times were tough, internal conflicts were in abundance and God seemed distant. Kinda reminds me of this Covid pandemic-just sayin.

Pastor Andrew will be giving the lead to our small group ministry – so stay tuned for updates from him along with the coaching sessions for our leaders and leaders in training. (Perhaps God is nudging you to lead or host a group – if so email Andrew @

This Weeks Study for September 13-20
Nehemiah 1:1-4

Opening: As you gather tonight invite people to share their biggest challenge or triumph related to the past 6 months of navigating this pandemic.

Background information taken from Chuck Swindoll (Have someone read this to the group)

Who wrote the book?

Jewish tradition identifies Nehemiah himself as the primary author of this historical book. Much of the book is written from his first-person perspective. Nothing is known about his youth or background; we meet him as an adult serving in the Persian royal court as the personal cupbearer to King Artaxerxes ([Nehemiah 1:11–2:1](#)). This prestigious position reveals something of Nehemiah’s upright character. Though he remained in Persia after the exiles had been allowed to go home, he was highly interested in the state of affairs in Judah (his brother Hanani [1:2] had returned there earlier).

The book of Nehemiah could be read as a sequel to the book of Ezra, and some scholars believe the two were originally one work. It is possible that Ezra compiled Nehemiah's original accounts with other material to create the book of Nehemiah. However, most scholars believe the book was written by Nehemiah.

Where are we?

The book of Nehemiah opens in the Persian city of Susa in the year 444 BC. Later that year, Nehemiah traveled to Israel, leading the third of three returns by the Jewish people following their seventy years of exile in Babylon. (The previous chapter on Ezra describes the earlier two returns.) Most of the book centers on events in Jerusalem. The narrative concludes around the year 430 BC, and scholars believe the book was written shortly thereafter.

Nehemiah is the last historical book of the Old Testament. Although the book of Esther appears after Nehemiah in the canon, the events in Esther occurred in the time period between [Ezra 6](#) and [7](#), between the first and second returns of the people to Israel. The prophet Malachi was a contemporary of Nehemiah.

Why is Nehemiah so important?

Nehemiah was a layman, not a priest like Ezra nor a prophet like Malachi. He served the Persian king in a secular position before leading a group of Jews to Jerusalem in order to rebuild the city walls. "Nehemiah's expertise in the king's court equipped him adequately for the political and physical reconstruction necessary for the remnant to survive."¹

Under Nehemiah's leadership, the Jews withstood opposition and came together to accomplish their goal. Nehemiah led by example, giving up a respected position in a palace for hard labor in a politically insignificant district. He partnered with Ezra, who also appears in this book, to solidify the political and spiritual foundations of the people. Nehemiah's humility before God (see his moving intercessory prayers in chapters 1 and 9) provided an example for the people. He did not claim glory for himself but always gave God the credit for his successes.

What's the big idea?

Nehemiah recorded the reconstruction of the wall of Jerusalem, Judah's capital city. Together, he and Ezra, who led the spiritual revival of the people, directed the political and religious restoration of the Jews in their homeland after the Babylonian captivity.

Nehemiah's life provides a fine study on leadership. He overcame opposition from outsiders as well as internal turmoil. He exercised his administrative skills in his strategy to use half the people for building while the other half kept watch for the Samaritans who, under Sanballat, threatened attack ([Nehemiah 4-7](#)). As governor, Nehemiah negotiated peace among the Jews who were unhappy with Persian taxes. He exhibited a steadfast determination to complete his goals. Accomplishing those goals resulted in a people encouraged, renewed, and excited about their future.

Questions for your Group Discussion

In the Sunday message Mike unpacked three principles that help you find your footing in times of uncertainty.

The first principle is- "Your unique situation is not a fluke."

Discuss this from the perspective of Nehemiah who finds himself as the key influencer of the King despite the fact that he is in captivity. What applications do you see for your own life and situation whether good or bad?

Some people seem to skip through life while others trip through it. Mike mentioned on Sunday that God puts different people in different places for a specific reason. There is a reason you are where you are going through what you are even if you don't like it. Discuss what you think about that statement.

The Second Principle is – “What sets you apart is how you listen.”

There is a key phrase in verse 2 that says... “ I asked them about the Jews who escaped and who had survived the exile and concerning Jerusalem.” Discuss what it means to be a listening leader. Discuss what listening looks like in a healthy relationship? Share what you think God has been saying to you through this pandemic or to the church at large?

The Third Principle is – “ We find our Purpose when our Heart is in alignment with God’s plan.”

I can't speak for you – but if I was Nehemiah it's doubtful that I would be excited to risk my job, reputation and life to go and rebuild walls of a city 800 miles away. But God spoke to him through Hanani and something happened.

Discuss his four-fold reaction where he weeps, mourns, fasts and prays over what he has heard and what he is to do. Has there ever been a time when God got hold of your heart about something that would move you off your comfy couch and stretch your faith. What was it like and what happened? (Maybe 1-3 of you can share this)

Talk and Pray together

Watch the website for any Covid -19 updates related to Northend.