

Supplementary Materials for KOOL Journal for Parents/Adults

Week 12: 9 to 15 April, 2018 (pp. 100 – 105)

Context

The intense demands on the returned exiles to rebuild the wall had interfered with their agrarian livelihood. There had been a great scarcity of corn through want of rain, which God had withheld as a punishment for the people’s taking more care to build their own houses than His temple (Haggai 1:9-11). While the people generally were cured of their idolatry by their captivity, they were not cured of their other sins, but loved strange women (Ezra 9:2) and were so covetous that they oppressed the poor and needy, violating God’s law (Exo 22:25; Lev 25:35-36, 39, 41) in the practice of exacting usury. And this ill-treatment was done at a time when their enemies threatened the destruction of them all.

9 to 15 April, 2018: Nehemiah 5 – 6

Watch videos

- Internal conflicts (Neh 5:1-13), <http://www2.bhpublishinggroup.com/QR/GetzBible/0472/> (15.02 min.)
- Leading by example (Neh 5:14-19), <http://www2.bhpublishinggroup.com/QR/GetzBible/0473/> (12.14 min)
- Handling enemy attacks (Neh 6:1-14), <http://www2.bhpublishinggroup.com/QR/GetzBible/0474/> (13.49 min)

Review Verse of the Week **Nehemiah 6:15**

So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days.

Date/Read	Reflection and Response (R & R)
<p>Mon. 9 Apr</p> <p>Nehemiah 5:1–13 <i>{Nehemiah 5:9-13}</i></p>	<p>The outcry by the poor Jews against their debt, mortgage, and bondage was particularly great as the oppression was done at about the end of a sabbatical year (20th year of Artaxerxes). In such a year, creditors should cancel all debts as required by God’s law (Deut.15:2), but instead they did the contrary. This sin was all the more grievous, considering that they were themselves so lately delivered out of the house of bondage, and hence should in gratitude undo the heavy burdens of the poor (Isa. 58: 6-7).</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did Nehemiah deal with the problems of social injustice (5:7-8) and why did the oppressors respond positively? • What do we learn when we compare the different methods to deal with the people’s sin as used by Ezra (a man of a mild, tender spirit, and when told of the sin of the rulers, <i>rent his clothes and wept</i>) and Nehemiah (5:6,12)? As the different methods yielded positive responses, consider if we are sometimes guilty of trying to insist on doing things our own way? • When we see social injustice around us (e.g. the exploitation of foreign workers), what should we do to right the wrong? The way we help those in need ought to mirror God’s love and concern (1 Cor 12:26).

<p>Tue. 10 Apr</p> <p>Nehemiah 5:14–19 {Nehemiah 5:15,19}</p>	<p>Nehemiah recounted other measures by which as governor he attempted to relieve the condition of his brethren. During the whole tenure of his office, he provided out of his own purse for the expenses of his official position, unlike previous governors who enriched themselves. Nehemiah and his men were too preoccupied with restoring the wall to interest themselves in the purchase of lands nor were they tempted to make private gain out of mortgaged property (5:10). In contrast, Nehemiah, besides working alongside his men, he was generous as he regularly entertained over 150 officials, and welcomed Jewish strangers to his table. Despite this great expenditure, he took no allowance as governor.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did Nehemiah not behave like the other governors of the past? • When God places us in a position of influence, how do we use that influence? <p>Notes:</p> <p>5:15 – The former governors required daily provisions to be supplied by the province, the cost of which was never less than forty shekels.</p> <p>5:19 – Nehemiah mentioned it to God in prayer, not as if he had merited any favour from God, but to show that he depended upon God only, to make up to him what he had lost and laid out for His honour. He expected no recompense from the people, but from the Lord alone (Heb 6:10).</p>
<p>Wed. 11 Apr</p> <p>Nehemiah 6:1–9 {Nehemiah 6:1-5}</p>	<p>Nehemiah’s enemies appointed two of the most crafty of their number to make these apparently friendly overtures to confer about the common service of their master the king of Persia. Perhaps Tobiah and the other conspirators intended to take advantage of Nehemiah’s absence and make a surprise attack upon Jerusalem. Nehemiah knew his enemies had planned to kill him and so four times he rejected their overtures. In the fifth attempt, the tactics were changed: the silken bag containing the open secret (“fake news” accusing Nehemiah of treason and claimed to be true by Geshem the Arab) was not sealed (as was the custom) with the aim of creating an alarm among the Jews, and to turn them against Nehemiah. Sanballat had hoped to compel Nehemiah to rebut the trumped-up charges, and to meet his adversaries as they proposed to avert the danger.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did Nehemiah respond to the enemies’ deceit and stratagem to derail his work? • How should we respond in the face of false accusations or attacks on our character when we do God’s work? • What can we learn from Nehemiah’s short prayer? (Did he ask to be taken out of the situation?)
<p>Thu. 12 Apr</p> <p>Nehemiah 6:10–14 {Nehemiah 6:13}</p>	<p>Nehemiah did not have the full support of the people. Shemaiah (6:10), hired by Tobiah and Sanballat (6:12); Noadiah (6:14) and many of the officials (6:17) were working together to intimidate him. He was advised to seek refuge in the Temple against God’s Law as he was not a priest (Num. 18:22) while fleeing (despite being a governor) would mean setting a bad example and undermining</p>

	<p>the courage he was trying to instill in his people. Shemaiah implied that his prophetic advice would be sufficient sanction to absolve Nehemiah from the profane act of hiding in the temple. Nehemiah recognized the attacks were aimed at destroying him, if not his life, at least his effectiveness as a leader.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did Nehemiah respond to this form of attack from his enemies? • How did Nehemiah discern the false prophets (6:12, 14)? How can we tell if people are misusing God’s name, claiming they know God’s will? • Spiritual leaders are often targets of attacks. Do we set aside time to pray regularly for our church leaders? Ask God to strengthen them against giving in to temptations and personal attacks (Psalm 38:16). <p>Notes:</p> <p>6:10 – Shemaiah the son of Delaiah was apparently a priest and a prophet, but not sent by God (6:12). The name Delaiah occurs in 1 Chronicles 24:18 as that of the 23rd priestly house. This is different from the Shemaiah cited in 10:8 who signed the covenant. His father Mehetabel was ‘shut up at his home’ perhaps either due to ceremonial pollution (which barred him from mixing in society or from approaching the Temple) or upon pretext of singular devotion and communion with God.</p> <p>6:14 – The law of Moses required the governors of the Jews to punish false prophets; but because Nehemiah was not in a capacity to do it, having such powerful enemies round about him, and so many rich and powerful Jews highly discontented for their great loss by his means, he prayed to God to remember and punish them.</p>
<p>Fri. 13 Apr</p> <p>Nehemiah 6:15–19 <i>{Nehemiah 6:15-16}</i></p>	<p>Nehemiah was evidently calling attention to the remarkable rapidity with which the wall was built. The opposition at the start of the rebuilding process had derided the ‘weak Jews’ about undertaking such an impossible task but with God’s help each step of the way, the walls were rebuilt in 52 days (6:15). Even the enemies perceived that this work was under Divine sanction and help, notwithstanding all the difficulties and discouragements in the way. Now they had great reason to fear God as He is same God who would still watch over Jerusalem and His people, and crush those who should oppose or disturb them. However, in this passage we also see the consequences of inter-marriages which Ezra wanted to stamp out (Ezra 10). Tobiah conspired with the nobles of Judah who communicated to him all that Nehemiah said and did, with the view of supplying Tobiah with materials for charges against Nehemiah to be made before the Persian king, or for slanders to the Jewish people.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nehemiah gave the glory where it was due, forgetting his own heroic part in the work. What can we learn from his example? • Do we let the size of the task or length of time needed to accomplish God’s work (e.g. building His church) deter us from doing it? • “A sinful love leads to a sinful league.” (Matthew Henry). Do we obey God’s law not to be unequally yoked whether in familial or business relationships? <p>Note:</p>

	<p>6:18 – Shechaniah was of the family of Arah, which had come over with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:5). Tobiah had married his daughter, and Tobiah’s son had married a daughter of Meshullam, one of the builders of the wall (3:4; 3:30). This family connection led to a conspiracy by oath to thwart Nehemiah the governor. The names of Tobiah and his son are Hebrew; and probably though naturalised Ammonites, they were of Hebrew extraction.</p>
<p>Sat./Sun. 14-15 Apr</p>	<p>‘A basic reason Nehemiah was successful in resolving problems among his people is that he demonstrated in his own life what he was asking others to do. When he asked the people to rebuild the walls, he worked alongside them. When he asked them to pray, he prayed. When he asked them to trust God, he trusted God. When he asked them to work night and day, so did he. And, ...when he asked them to help the poor, he had already helped the poor. The apostle Paul also illustrated this principle. When he wrote to the Corinthians, he could say with confidence, “Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ (1 Cor 11:1)...”ⁱ</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happens when we parents and spiritual leaders ask others to obey God but we are not doing so in our own lives?

References

<https://bibleprinciples.org/pf-search-book/> (search videos by book and click on Nehemiah)

Tyndale House Publishers, **Chronological Life Application Study Bible**, 2004.

<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/nehemiah/6-19.htm>

ⁱ G A Getz, **Life Essentials Study Bible: Biblical Principles to Live By**, Holman Bible Publishers, 2011, p. 619.