STANDING TALL
Developing Leaders Around You through the study of Nehemiah
(Nehemiah Part II)
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developed by Denton Cormany
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STANDING TALL

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(Nehemiah Part II)
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Standing Tall
Developing Leaders Around You through the study of Nehemiah
(Nehemiah Part II)

In Part I of the study of Nehemiah, we spent time looking at a leader’s heart. Through scripture, we followed the journey of Nehemiah, a man who exhibited extraordinary faith, courage, determination, strength and accomplishment. But did we overlook something very significant? Did we focus only on the man and stand in awe or give up because it seemed too hard to follow his example?

As leaders, we are called to rebuild walls. But we are also called to recognize danger, protect those that look to us for help, provide, solve problems, mediate disputes, motivate the troops, stand in the face of our enemies, set an example, and the list goes on. Where are we to find the strength to do all these things? Is it up to us? Was it up to Nehemiah?

We have already learned a great deal about the heart and actions of a leader through the life of Nehemiah. But the greater lesson is to grow in our understanding of the God who made all these things possible by studying this man, Nehemiah, who was totally yielded and dependent on Him.

Nehemiah’s life and our lives are being determined by the God we know through Jesus Christ. This series is designed for us to learn how to navigate life’s problems through trust and dependence on God and His Word. Join us for Part II, as we learn how to develop the leaders around us through the study of Nehemiah, Chapters 5-13.
The video teachers for the Developing the Leaders Around You series are:

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*CRU Raleigh Staff and Crossroads Fellowship Elder.*
Denton has led teams of men and women in the marketplace to present Christ and develop spiritual leaders in cities around the world. God has used Denton’s varied background to prepare him for a lifetime of equipping believers to eternally influence their peers in the power of God’s Spirit.

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Jon’s combined experiences in business and church leadership have equipped him to pursue God’s calling to enlist, encourage, equip and empower men to fulfill their God-given purpose. Jon is driven by a passion to see men understand their redeemed identity in Jesus Christ and to walk in the freedom of God’s saving grace.
The Incivility of Selfishness

When the enemy fails to stop us with his attack from the outside, he attacks within with the weapon of selfishness. It doesn’t seem to matter whether we are leading or following. It is all about being at the center of everything, demanding our way, abusing others or expecting everyone else to agree to our way.

How are we to deal with selfishness not only in ourselves, but also in others, especially those we are trying to lead? We need to change at home, especially, and also in the work place. What can we learn from Nehemiah’s experiences about overcoming selfishness and its effect?
Nehemiah 5:1-19 (ESV)

1 Now there arose a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers. 2 For there were those who said, “With our sons and our daughters, we are many. So let us get grain, that we may eat and keep alive.” 3 There were also those who said, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses to get grain because of the famine.” 4 And there were those who said, “We have borrowed money for the king’s tax on our fields and our vineyards. 5 Now our flesh is as the flesh of our brothers, our children are as their children. Yet we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but it is not in our power to help it, for other men have our fields and our vineyards.” 6 I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. 7 I took counsel with myself, and I brought charges against the nobles and the officials. I said to them, “You are exacting interest, each from his brother.” And I held a great assembly against them 8 and said to them, “We, as far as we are able, have bought back our Jewish brothers who have been sold to the nations, but you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us!” They were silent and could not find a word to say. 9 So I said, “The thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies? 10 Moreover, I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Let us abandon this exacting of interest. 11 Return to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the percentage of money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them.” 12 Then they said, “We will restore these and require nothing from them. We will do as you say.” And I called the priests and made them swear to do as they had promised. 13 I also shook out the fold[a] of my garment and said, “So may God shake out every man from his house and from his labor who does not keep this promise. So may he be shaken out and emptied.” And all the assembly said “Amen” and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised.
Nehemiah 5:1-19 (ESV) - CONTINUED

Nehemiah’s Generosity

14 Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food allowance of the governor. 15 The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people and took from them for their daily ration forty shekels of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God. 16 I also persevered in the work on this wall, and we acquired no land, and all my servants were gathered there for the work. 17 Moreover, there were at my table 150 men, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us. 18 Now what was prepared at my expense[d] for each day was one ox and six choice sheep and birds, and every ten days all kinds of wine in abundance. Yet for all this I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, because the service was too heavy on this people. 19 Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people.

IT TAKES FIRMNESS AND RESOLVE TO BRING THE ORDER OF GOD TO REST ON SOCIAL AND CIVIC CHAOTIC CONDITIONS.
STANDING TALL - NEHEMIAH

Introduction:

- **God’s Standard in How we Treat One Another**
  (Leviticus 25:35-40) (James 4:17)

- **Great Cry Arose**
  (Nehemiah 5:1-5)

- **Presenting the Case and the Solution**
  (Nehemiah 5:6-13)

  - Conviction (Nehemiah 5:6-9)

  - Repentance (Nehemiah 5:10-13)
• Leading by Example
  (Nehemiah 5:14-19)

Generosity is not contingent on what you receive, but on what you are willing to give.
- Erwin McManus,
  Uprising,
  A Revolution of the Soul
STANDING TALL - NEHEMIAH

Discussion Questions:

1. How did Nehemiah respond to the infighting?

2. Describe what it means to be a servant.

3. What does accepting responsibility as a leader look like?

4. Are leaders to be held to a higher standard? Why or why not?

5. What can we learn from Nehemiah’s handling of the situation in this chapter?

6. Think about the leaders you respect. What is true about them?

PRAYING AND GUARDING - A BALANCED APPROACH TO KINGDOM BUILDING.
PART II, SESSION 1: The Incivility of Selfishness

Action Steps:

1. Expect problems to arise.
2. Confront the problem.
3. Repent.
4. Be sure your integrity is intact.
5. See problem as an opportunity for God to work.

Memory Verse:

“For whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”

- James 4:17 (ESV)
Self - Good or Bad?

For the benefit of our discussion, self is defined as the energy of the flesh, or human nature. Depending on whether we think our self is good or bad, are we pampering it, or denying it? Right? What do you do with the urges of the flesh? Are we doomed to be controlled by a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions? For some of us, we would probably ask is there anything else?

How foreign is it for us to want to honor God with our thoughts and actions? To love others as we love ourselves? To exercise self-control? Are we destined to habitually live controlled by our urges? “As for you, my friends, you were called to be free. But do not let this freedom become an excuse for letting physical desires control you. Instead, let love make you serve one another. For the whole Law is summed up in one commandment: ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’ But if you act like wild animals, hurting and harming each other, then watch out, or you will completely destroy one another.” Galatians 5:13-15 (GNT). Is there more to life than having our way, wanting everything for ourselves, or feeling important?

For the man or woman who desires to walk with God, there is an alternative. But it does not involve trying to make ourselves better, or getting to know ourselves better, or any other activities we might engage in that try to make us good without God. “What I say is this: let the Spirit direct your lives, and you will not satisfy the desires of the human nature. For what our human nature wants is opposed to what the Spirit wants, and what the Spirit wants is opposed to what our human nature wants. These two are enemies, and this means that you cannot do what you want to do.” Galatians 5:16-17 (GNT). But I realize some of you are asking, “Who is this Spirit? Would I want Him to direct my life? Can the Spirit really help me with my addictions and urges that are out of control?”

Walking with God begins by responding to His invitation to personally know Him, and by realizing our need– we can’t fix ourselves. It is being willing to turn from our self-help and trust Him to change us. It is as simple as “God if you are real, I want to know you!” You know what happens – He makes you a new person (self), with a new set of desires, and the ability to act on those new desires. We are free to walk with God.

Overview Questions for Session 2:

**Being Under Attack** (Nehemiah 6:1-19)

*Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.*

1. How do we avoid distraction from our purpose?

2. What can we learn from this passage about handling slander?

3. What is the relationship between fear and sin?

4. In what ways does completion of the task quiet the enemy?
Session 2

Being Under Attack

Nehemiah 6:1-19

Being Under Attack

How we handle personal attacks says a lot about our character. What happens when your character, motives or integrity are personally attacked? How do you react especially when the attack has the potential to harm you, frighten you or discredit you?

Let’s see what we can learn from the response of Nehemiah to the tactics of his enemy.
Nehemiah 6:1-19 (ESV)

Conspiracy Against Nehemiah

Now when Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies heard that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it (although up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), 2 Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, “Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono.” But they intended to do me harm. 3 And I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?” 4 And they sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner. 5 In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. 6 In it was written, “It is reported among the nations, and Geshem also says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall. And according to these reports you wish to become their king. 7 And you have also set up prophets to proclaim concerning you in Jerusalem, ‘There is a king in Judah.’ And now the king will hear of these reports. So now come and let us take counsel together.” 8 Then I sent to him, saying, “No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind.” 9 For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done.” But now, O God, strengthen my hands. 10 Now when I went into the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was confined to his home, he said, “Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple. Let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. They are coming to kill you by night.” 11 But I said, “Should such a man as I run away? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live? I will not go in.” 12 And I understood and saw that God had not sent him, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 For this purpose he was hired, that I should be afraid and act in this way and sin, and so they could give me a bad name in order to taunt me.
Nehemiah 6:1-19 (ESV) - CONTINUED

14 Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, according to these things that they did, and also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who wanted to make me afraid.

The Wall Is Finished

15 So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. 16 And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God. 17 Moreover, in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah’s letters came to them. 18 For many in Judah were bound by oath to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah: and his son Jehohanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah as his wife. 19 Also they spoke of his good deeds in my presence and reported my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to make me afraid.
Review and Introduction:

The Tactics of the Enemy

- **Compromise:**
  (Nehemiah 6:1-4)
  - Intent to harm
  - Nehemiah’s response (vs. 3)

- **Slander:**
  (Nehemiah 6:5-9)
  - Intent to frighten
  - Nehemiah’s response (vs. 9)

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**WHAT IS THE POINT OF HAVING GOD’S POWER IF YOU LACK THE COURAGE TO USE IT?**

- ERWIN MCMANUS, *UPRISING, A REVOLUTION OF THE SOUL* 

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• **Threats:**
  (Nehemiah 6:10-14)
  
  - Intent to discredit
  
  - Deception: A spiritual battle
    (2 Corinthians 11:13-15) (Ephesians 6:10-13)
  
  - Nehemiah’s response (vs. 11)

**The Completion of the Wall**
(Nehemiah 6:15-16)

• **The Need to be Watchful after the Battle:**
  (Nehemiah 6:17-19)
  
  - Underground attack from within the ranks
Standing Tall - Nehemiah

Discussion Questions:

1. What can you learn from Nehemiah about handling attacks on your character, motives or integrity?

2. How does gossip undermine leadership?

3. How have you personally been affected by gossip, rumor or slander?

4. In what areas of your life, are you trying to solve problems yourself, without involving God in the process?

5. How can you recognize potential compromise and avoid it?

6. How did Nehemiah know the intentions of the enemy?

Spiritual discernment is born out of relationship with God and submission to the Holy Spirit.
Action Steps:

1. Stay focused on the task God has given you.
2. Ask God to strengthen you.
3. Trust God to give you spiritual discernment.
4. Celebrate God’s efforts, but don’t let your guard down.

Memory Verse:

“...for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”

- 2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)
A Fight to the Finish

Have you noticed lately the power struggles that are happening in every dimension of life? In nature, somebody has to be in control in a pack of dogs, in a herd of cows or in a flock of birds. But then look at the human experiment. From “Will we have anything to eat?” to “Who will rule the relationship I am in?” to “Who will rule the world?”, there is a power struggle. It is easy to forget that there is a spiritual dimension of our lives, and a power struggle going on there that is a fight to the finish. We are preoccupied with surviving physically, mentally and emotionally with most of our waking hours, but are we leaving out the most overarching, eternal power struggle that is determining our forever? We were born into this eternal power struggle in the heavenlies that is raging between good and evil, between God and Satan. If we could see it with our naked eye, it would scare us to death!

The entire Bible is about that struggle, and about God’s amazing rescue. In the last chapter of the book of Ephesians, Paul lets us in on the nature of this struggle. Listen in, “In conclusion be strong—not in yourselves but in the Lord, in the power of His boundless strength. Put on God’s complete armour so that you can successfully resist all the devil’s craftiness. For our fight is not against any physical enemy: it is against organizations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil. Therefore you must wear the whole armour of God that you will be able to resist evil in its day of power, and that even when you have fought to a standstill you may still stand your ground.” Ephesians 6:10-13 (J B. Phillips).

God thunders His rescue from heaven, “Do not be afraid! Listen, I bring you glorious news of great joy which is for all the people. This very day, in David’s town, a Saviour has been born for you. He is Christ, the Lord.” Luke 2:10-11 (J B. Phillips). In this fight, we are not alone. He has not left us to our helpless condition, but is extending His strong arm of salvation to all who will take His hand in ours. Will you join with me in taking His hand into an adventure of a lifetime? Don’t reject His initiative into your life—He is knocking at the door of your heart today. Let Him in!

Overview Questions for Session 3:

**Integrity that Brings Revival** (Nehemiah 7:1-5 and 8:1-18)

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. What are some common “gatebreachers” in your life?

2. What is so significant about God’s Word in awakening and reviving us?

3. What are some evidences of revival in your heart as you consider Nehemiah 8?

4. What is the relationship between worshipping God and guarding the gates?

5. What place does integrity play?
STANDING TALL - NEHEMIAH
Integrity that Brings Revival

In what areas of your life are you just “going through the motions”? Is there life out there beyond what you are experiencing in your relationship with God? What is your response to hearing the Word of God read?

“Let the full richness of Christ’s teaching find its home among you. Teach and advise one another wisely. Use psalms and hymns and Christian songs, singing God’s praises from joyful hearts. And whatever work you have to do, either in speech or action, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, thanking God the Father through Him.” Colossians 3:16-17 (J. B. Phillips)

Let’s discover how becoming men of integrity can bring revival to our lives.
Nehemiah 7:1-5 (ESV)

Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, 2 I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem, for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many. 3 And I said to them, “Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot. And while they are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their guard posts and some in front of their own homes.” 4 The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few, and no houses had been rebuilt.

Lists of Returned Exiles

5 Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up at the first, and I found written in it:

Nehemiah 8:1-18 (ESV)

Ezra Reads the Law

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel. 2 So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. 3 And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. 4 And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the
Nehemiah 8:1-18 (ESV) - CONTINUED

people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. 6 And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen. Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. 7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. 8 They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

This Day Is Holy

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. 10 Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” 11 So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.” 12 And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

Feast of Booths Celebrated

13 On the second day the heads of fathers’ houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Law. 14 And they found it written in the Law that the Lord had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, 15 and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem, “Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.”
Nehemiah 8:1-18 (ESV) - CONTINUED

16 So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. 17 And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths, for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing. 18 And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.

Review and Introduction:

Gatekeepers

- Gatekeepers
  (Nehemiah 7:1-5)

  “Gates and walls are only as good as the people who guard them.”

- For example: The Great Wall of China.
  It was breached three times in 100 years, all by bribing the gatekeeper.

- Credible
  (Colossians 1:9-11)
PART II, SESSION 3: Integrity that Brings Revival

The Key to the future is not revelation, but obedience.
- Erwin McManus, Uprising, A Revolution of the Soul

Revival - Understanding the Word
(Nehemiah 8:1-8)
- Instructing the people:
  - The standard
  - Understanding
  - Responding
- What does it mean to understand God’s Word?

The Joy of the Lord is your Strength!
(Nehemiah 8:9-12)
- Have you moved from law keeping to experiencing His grace?
  (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The Place of Celebration
(Nehemiah 8:13-18)
- The Feast of the Tabernacles - celebrating God’s provision during the 40 years in the wilderness.

It is as wrong to mourn when God has forgiven us as it is to rejoice when sin has conquered us.
- The Weirsbe Bible Study Series, Nehemiah, Standing Firm in the Face of Opposition

The Weirsbe Bible Study Series, Nehemiah, Standing Firm in the Face of Opposition
Faith based on the Word will produce joy that will weather the storms of life.
- The Weirsbe Bible Study Series, Nehemiah, Standing Firm in the Face of Opposition

Discussion Questions:

1. What in your life is keeping you from being credible?

2. Where are you being asked by God to be a gatekeeper? How are you doing?

3. What place does the Word have in your life? What are some of the evidences?

4. Tell someone why “the joy of the Lord” is your strength. What do you mean by that?

5. If “this day were holy to the Lord” in your life, how would you live it? What changes would you make?
PART II, SESSION 3: Integrity that Brings Revival

**Action Steps:**

1. Step up and become the gatekeeper of your family, workplace and neighborhood.

2. Rediscover God through His Word.

3. Take steps to become credible (FAITH).

**Memory Verse:**

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

- 1 John 1:7 (ESV)
Faithfulness

Can you be bought? What is the price? Would your peers consider you to be faithful, or unfaithful? Has everything now become relative? Does “you can count on me” mean until something better comes along? When someone says, “trust me!” is your response, “sure”? Are we ready to live in a world where being unfaithful is the order of the day? Have we become so focused on ourselves that we don’t even consider what our unfaithfulness is doing to others?

Why are we unfaithful? Is it weakness, fear, boredom, outside influence? Are we capable of being men of our word, promise keepers, loyal, consistent, trustworthy? One of the nine fruit of God’s Spirit in the life of a follower of Christ is faithfulness. He wants to make us faithiful men and women. Paul in 2 Timothy 2:11-13 says; “The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for He cannot deny Himself.” (ESV). How are we to move from being unfaithful to being faithful? Hard work, discipline, determination, knowledge, trying harder, longevity? Or does it have something to do with faith in the One who is faithful? Are we caught up in a system of belief, a standard of performance, or a set of rules to make us faithful? Are we trusting Christ to be our source of faith, or are we looking to ourselves?

“Faithful is He who calls you, and He will bring it to pass!” I Thessalonians 5:24 (NASB). I love what the Psalmist says in Psalm 91:1-4 (Amplified) “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, shall remain stable and fixed under the shadow of the Almighty (Whose power no foe can withstand). I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, on Him I lean and rely, and in Him I (confidently) trust! For (then) He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. (Then) He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings shall you trust and find refuge; His truth and His faithfulness are a shield and a buckler.” The good news, it is not up to us to be faithful. It is up to us to trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ in our behalf. He is the source of faithfulness.
Overview Questions for Session 4:

Lay Hold (Nehemiah 9:1-38)

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. Consider Nehemiah 9:1-5 and the need to be always ready to meet God. How do you spend time preparing yourself to meet God face to face, whether in a large meeting, your Quiet Time, or with your wife and family?

2. Nehemiah 9:5-38 is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible. Spend some time in this passage identifying and comparing:

   Characteristics and Actions of God vs. Characteristics and Actions of Men

3. Compose your own prayer out of this passage.
Lay Hold!

Nehemiah 9:1-38

For the former exiles now back in Jerusalem, the walls are rebuilt, the gates are hung, the gatekeepers are in place...there’s safety, security and peace, right? The greatest discipline was still to be learned by them, and also by us. Nothing is more vital to success than to lay hold of the Person and promises of God through prayer.

Nehemiah and Ezra depended on it and lived it, but the people still needed to learn it and experience it in their own lives, and the life of the nation. What about you? Are you satisfied with your prayer life? On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you about prayer?
Nehemiah 9:1-38 (ESV)

The People of Israel Confess Their Sin

Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads. 2 And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. 3 And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the Lord their God. 4 On the stairs of the Levites stood Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani; and they cried with a loud voice to the Lord their God. 5 Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, “Stand up and bless the Lord your God from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

6 “You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you. 7 You are the Lord, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. 8 You found his heart faithful before you, and made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous.

9 “And you saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea, 10 and performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land, for you knew that they acted arrogantly against our fathers. And you made a name for yourself, as it is to this day. 11 And you divided the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on dry land, and you cast their pursuers
Nehemiah 9:1-38 (ESV) - CONTINUED

into the depths, as a stone into mighty waters. 12 By a pillar of cloud you led them in the day, and by a pillar of fire in the night to light for them the way in which they should go. 13 You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven and gave them right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments, 14 and you made known to them your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and statutes and a law by Moses your servant. 15 You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you had sworn to give them.

16 “But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments. 17 They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them. 18 Even when they had made for themselves a golden calf and said, ‘This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,’ and had committed great blasphemies, 19 you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go. 20 You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. 21 Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.

22 “And you gave them kingdoms and peoples and allotted to them every corner. So they took possession of the land of Sihon king of Heshbon and the land of Og king of Bashan. 23 You multiplied their children as the stars of heaven, and you brought them into the land that you had told their fathers to enter and possess.
Nehemiah 9:1-38 (ESV) - CONTINUED

24 So the descendants went in and possessed the land, and you subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gave them into their hand, with their kings and the peoples of the land, that they might do with them as they would. 25 And they captured fortified cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses full of all good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and became fat and delighted themselves in your great goodness.

26 “Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies. 27 Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies. 28 But after they had rest they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them. Yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them according to your mercies. 29 And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey. 30 Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. 31 Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.
Nehemiah 9:1-38 (ESV) - CONTINUED

32 “Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love, let not all the hardship seem little to you that has come upon us, upon our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers, and all your people, since the time of the kings of Assyria until this day. 33 Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly. 34 Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept your law or paid attention to your commandments and your warnings that you gave them. 35 Even in their own kingdom, and amid your great goodness that you gave them, and in the large and rich land that you set before them, they did not serve you or turn from their wicked works. 36 Behold, we are slaves this day; in the land that you gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, behold, we are slaves. 37 And its rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins. They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please, and we are in great distress.

38 “Because of all this we make a firm covenant in writing; on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, and our priests.
Review and Introduction:

“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 3:12 (NASB)

- A Time of Preparation
  (Nehemiah 9:1-5)

- You Alone are God!
  (Nehemiah 9:6)
PART II, SESSION 4: Lay Hold!

- **A Giving God**
  - Past (Nehemiah 9:7-31)
  - Present/Now (Nehemiah 9:32-37)
  - Future/Obedience (Nehemiah 9:38)

- **Summary/Lay Hold!**
  (1 John 2:3-6)
Discussion Questions:

1. What is involved in preparing yourself to hear from God?

2. He alone, among all other gods, is God! Really? Why?

3. What characteristics and actions of God can we identify from this prayer?

4. If you look at the past with the eyes of the present, what will you see differently?

5. Now, what are you going to do with your past, present and future? Lay hold?

YOU WHO SIT DOWN IN THE HIGH GOD’S PRESENCE, SPEND THE NIGHT IN SHADDAI’S SHADOW.

- PSALM 91:1

THE MESSAGE
Action Steps:

1. Make praise a priority.
2. Remember His faithfulness daily.
3. Settle the score/ no controversy.
4. Let obedience characterize your life.

Memory Verse:

"Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus."

- Philippians 3:12 (NASB)
Responsibility

Who is responsible for this? When are you going to take responsibility for your life? How irresponsible can you be? I feel responsible for all that’s happened! Responsibility—culpability; we all can identify. What if we could have a clear conscience for every motive, attitude, thought, word or deed that we have been a part of? Would it free us from responsibility unmet? Would it free us from our past?

Tragically, most of us will choose to not face responsibility. Short term, it is easier to deny, reject, divert, or blame than to accept responsibility. Unmet responsibility has so many unavoidable consequences both now and for eternity. The guilt, the shame, the remorse, the pain that we experience in our own selves, and also try to put on others is overwhelming. All because we are not willing to consider that God has provided a remedy for our sin.

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” Romans 5:1-2 (NIV). The Christian has been acquitted, declared righteous, and given a right standing with God through faith. Our unmet responsibilities have been met through the finished work of Jesus Christ in our behalf. Can we grasp the fact that we can have the peace of God, and peace with God through a relationship with Christ? Not only that, but we can stand firmly and safely in God’s favor and experience a clear conscience before God and man.

A clear conscience comes when we are willing to confess our sins (agree with God), and receive His forgiveness and cleansing. Jesus has taken responsibility for us by taking our place on the cross, and rising again to set us free. It is ours for the asking. But what will be do? He wants to deliver us from a life of irresponsibility into a life of hope and joy. through what He has done for us. Failure on our part, once properly confessed and forsaken, can become a part of our life message to our friends and family.
Overview Questions for Session 5:

Set Apart (Nehemiah 10:28-39)

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.


2. What were they separated from in order to be separated to? Why was this so important?

3. (Nehemiah 10:30-39) What were the promises to keep?

4. “We will not neglect the temple of God!” What should that mean to us who are the temple of God as believers? (1 Corinthians 6:19-20.)
Set Apart

As a follower of Christ, what has changed? We are new creatures in Christ, right? We have a new eternal destination, a new heart and a new boss. But what about our allegiances, our relationships, our values, our thinking and our behavior? Are they to be affected by our new life in Christ?

What does God expect from someone who has been brought out of the darkness of this world and delivered into the Kingdom of His beloved Son? Should there be any change on our part?

Let’s see what we can learn from the children of Israel.
Nehemiah 10:28-39 (ESV)

The Obligations of the Covenant

28 “The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, 29 join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord and his rules and his statutes. 30 We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons. 31 And if the peoples of the land bring in goods or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on a holy day. And we will forego the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.

32 “We also take on ourselves the obligation to give yearly a third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God: 33 for the showbread, the regular grain offering, the regular burnt offering, the Sabbaths, the new moons, the appointed feasts, the holy things, and the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God. 34 We, the priests, the Levites, and the people, have likewise cast lots for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, according to our fathers’ houses, at times appointed, year by year, to burn on the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the Law. 35 We obligate ourselves to bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of every tree, year by year, to the house of the Lord; 36 also to bring to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God, the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, as it is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and of our flocks; 37 and to bring the first of our dough, and our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the wine and the oil, to the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and to bring to the Levites the tithes from our ground, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all our towns where we labor.
Nehemiah 10:28-39 (ESV) - CONTINUED

38 And the priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive the tithes. And the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers of the storehouse. 39 For the people of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of grain, wine, and oil to the chambers, where the vessels of the sanctuary are, as well as the priests who minister, and the gatekeepers and the singers. We will not neglect the house of our God.

Review and Introduction:

Their response to the faithfulness of God was a sealed document.

- **A Commitment to Practical Holiness:** (Nehemiah 10:28-29)
  - Separated from in order to be separated to....
  - (Genesis 2:24) (Romans 12:1-2) (Colossians 3:1-17) (Hebrews 12:1-2)

- **Promises to Keep:** (Nehemiah 10:30-39)
  - An itemized list
  - We will not neglect the temple of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
Discussion Questions:

1. As believers, how are we to live?

2. What are you to do? Should you keep on sinning so God can keep on forgiving?

3. What has changed in your life as a result of knowing Christ? What still needs to change?

4. What commitments do I need to make?

5. What choices do you need to start making as you follow Christ?

6. What is being set apart? What is practical holiness all about?

GOD IS HOLY AND HE HAS MADE HOLINESS THE MORAL CONDITION NECESSARY TO THE HEALTH OF THE UNIVERSE.

- A.W. TOZER, THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY
Action Steps:

1. Choose to believe you are new in Christ.

2. Determine what you need to be separated from.

3. What commitments do you need to make as you choose to follow Christ?

4. What promises are you to keep as God gives you strength?

Memory Verse:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

- 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)
Where Does Goodness Come From?

Good food, good health, good luck, good grief! We like the word “good”, but where did goodness come from? If left to our own resources, can we come up with anything good? We would like to believe that if given the right parents, the right neighborhood, the right opportunities, the right thoughts, etc., that we would all turn out good. But is that true? What’s wrong with that theory? How have we come up with our track record as humans? It has got to be somebody’s fault. It can’t be ours.

There is good in the world. There are good people, good neighbors, good coworkers, good samaritans. But where do they get their goodness? Nations have bought into the lie that to eliminate a whole race of people would take care of the problem, and we would be left with just “good” people. Others have turned to knowledge, or education. We just don’t know enough. The majority of the world has bought into the theory that enough “good” deeds will earn the prize of being called “good enough”.

Who can help us in the dilemma? We can try all the philosophies and religions of the world to find the answer, or we can turn to the Bible. In James 1:17 we read; “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” (ESV). God is the source of all good in the world, whether in believers, or non-believers. But when we reject Him, we have a problem. Look at Psalm 14:1-3. “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good. The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.” (ESV).

The answer to our dilemma is found in God Himself. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” John 3:16 (ESV). Webster in his dictionary defines “goodness” as morally excellent or righteous. And we read in 2 Corinthians 5:21 that; “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (ESV). The “goodness” that is necessary for us to spend eternity with God is only found in Jesus Christ.

Overview Questions for Session 6:

**Facing the Giants** (Nehemiah 11:1-2; 12:27-43; 13:3-30)

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. What place does sacrifice have in your life? (Nehemiah 11:1-2) (Philippians 2)

2. You may have dedicated yourself to God, but what about your work? (Nehemiah 12:27-43) Is God your provider or is your work?

3. What happens when you live an unaccountable life? (Nehemiah 13:3-30)

4. What did Nehemiah do about it? What lessons can you learn?

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**Which Life is to be Consecrated to Him, the Old Self-Life, or the New Christ-Life?**

STANDING TALL - NEHEMIAH
When have you had the opportunity to sacrifice to help someone else? Did you do it? How did it make you feel? Have you ever asked yourself, “Does my work matter to God”? Nehemiah has shown us a resounding “Yes”.

Lastly, when have you risked rejection or ridicule by speaking the truth in love into someone else’s life? It will change your life!
The Leaders in Jerusalem

1 Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. And the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem the holy city, while nine out of ten remained in the other towns. 2 And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.

Dedication of the Wall

27 And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres. 30 And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and they purified the people and the gates and the wall.

31 Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave thanks. One went to the south on the wall to the Dung Gate.

38 The other choir of those who gave thanks went to the north, and I followed them with half of the people, on the wall, above the Tower of the Ovens, to the Broad Wall, 42 And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.
Nehemiah 13:3-5, 10-11, 17-18, 23-24, 30 (ESV)

Nehemiah’s Final Reforms

3 As soon as the people heard the law, they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent.

4 Now before this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, and who was related to Tobiah, 5 prepared for Tobiah a large chamber where they had previously put the grain offering, the frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of grain, wine, and oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests.

10 I also found out that the portions of the Levites had not been given to them, so that the Levites and the singers, who did the work, had fled each to his field. 11 So I confronted the officials and said, “Why is the house of God forsaken?” And I gathered them together and set them in their stations.

17 Then I confronted the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? 18 Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.”

23 In those days also I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. 24 And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but only the language of each people.

30 Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign, and I established the duties of the priests and Levites, each in his work.
Review and Introduction:

- The Need for Sacrifice  
  (Nehemiah 11:1-2)

- The Need to Dedicate Our Work to God  
  (Nehemiah 12:27, 30-31, 38, 43)

- The Need for Continued Oversight  
  (Nehemiah 13: 3-5, 10-11, 17-18, 23-24, 30)
  - Compromising companionship
  - Financial fiasco
  - Secularized Sabbath
  - Domestic disobedience
PART II, SESSION 6: Facing the Giants

• **Lessons to be Learned**

  - Honest observation

  - Courageous conviction

  - Deep devotion

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THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE IS THE HIGHEST CALLING OF LEADERSHIP.

- JOHN MAXWELL,
  *DEVELOPING THE LEADER WITHIN YOU*^2
STANDING TALL - NEHEMIAH

Discussion Questions:

1. When have you been asked to sacrifice?

2. What is involved in dedicating your work to God?

3. In what ways are you investing in other’s lives?

4. Accountability. How are you being accountable? Who are you holding accountable?

5. In what ways can you become a better observer, a man of deeper conviction and a fully devoted follower of Christ?

PEOPLE NEVER RESPECT A PERSON THEY CANNOT TRUST
- JOHN MAXWELL,
DEVELOPING THE LEADER WITHIN YOU
**Action Steps:**

1. Take everything to God in prayer.
2. Become an honest observer.
4. Make a commitment to develop the leaders around you.

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**Memory Verse:**

“9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

- Colossians 1:9-10 (ESV)
Bear One Another’s Burdens

Who has helped you bear a burden lately? Has someone helped carry something that was beyond your solution? It could have been a shattered dream, the loss of a loved one, an addiction that you quit denying or an action that caused great pain and sorrow to yourself and/or others. Whatever it was, why did they help you? Why didn’t they just judge you, criticize you and walk away like everyone else? Why would anyone be willing to risk their life for someone else, especially someone who didn’t help themselves?

“But what happens when we live God’s way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.” Galatians 5:22-23 (MSG).

God comes to our rescue. The very resources we need to deny ourselves, and bear one another’s burdens is given to us through a personal relationship with Christ. He wants to break into our busy self-centered existence and involve us in the miracle of seeing another life transformed.

“Live creatively, friends. If someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself. You might need forgiveness before the day’s out. Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ’s law. If you think you are too good for that, you are badly deceived.” Galatians 6:1-3 (MSG). Paul’s instruction is pretty practical. Get involved no matter how messy it might be, sometimes uninvited! A burden is something that is emotionally difficult to bear, and may be a great worry, stress or weight. Your initiative may be the catalyst to bring a person out of a rut that could easily destroy their lives.

“Share their burdens, and so complete Christ’s law. What is Christ’s law? He summed up all the law in one commandment: “The most important is ‘Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all of your mind and with all of your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Mark 12:31 (ESV). Whose life can you invest in today?

Personal Time with God

Nehemiah’s life and leadership was so dependent on his prayer life. Set aside some time with God, pray through the following and let Him work in your heart.

9 Then this is how you should pray:
   Why do you pray?

“Our Father in heaven,
   How does knowing Him as Father affect your communication with Him?

hallowed be Your name,
   How do you communicate your adoration to God?
   In what areas of your life have you not honored His name?
   Settle the issue of His creditability in your life.
Personal Time with God (continued)

10 Your kingdom come,
   To ask for His kingdom to come, what are we asking?

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
   How are you to know His will?
   What areas are you struggling with right now?

11 Give us today our daily bread.
   What is His plan for supplying your needs?
   Are you in the habit of coming to Him for everything?
   Why or why not?
Personal Time with God (continued)

12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Up to this point, what have you done with the past?
Who is God showing you that you need to forgive?

13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one,

How do you deal with the inner turmoil of your mind?
What behavior keeps getting you into trouble?

for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

In what ways are you living in light of God’s sovereignty?

- Amen.
Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV)

from “Rediscovering God Thru Prayer” by Denton Cormany.
Notes

Session 1 - The Incivility of Selfishness
2. Ibid, 136.

Session 2 - Being Under Attack

Session 3 - Integrity that Brings Revival
2. Ibid, 96.
4. Ibid, 83.

Session 4 - Lay Hold

Session 5 - Set Apart
3. Ibid, 51.

Session 6 - Facing the Giants
3. Ibid.